



the evaluation exchange

A PERIODICAL ON EMERGING STRATEGIES IN EVALUATING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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from the director's desk



Heather Weiss

Twenty years ago the release of *A Nation at Risk*¹ created a sense of urgency to address the mediocrity of the U.S. education system. It set off a wave of reforms that have become part of the educational landscape today—notably the drive toward high academic standards, the improvement of the teaching profession, and the extension of learning opportunities

beyond traditional institutions. While there

is disagreement about the strategies to reform a decentralized educational system, few would contest the need for long-term research and ongoing evaluation to determine which reforms are successful, for whom, and under what conditions.

In this issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* we consider multiple perspectives on current education reform efforts and their evaluation. The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act drives many of the current themes in the practice and evaluation of education reform. The emphasis on scientifically based research (SBR) and experimental research as the gold standard of education scholarship is a watershed for evaluation. In the Special Report in this issue, expert researchers and evaluators comment on the opportunities and challenges that SBR presents.

The increased emphasis on using evidence to inform education practice also carries implications for schools of education to prepare future educators, researchers, and evaluators with solid research skills and a broad conception of what constitutes good educational scholarship. As several authors in this issue note, this conception includes training in and use of multiple and mixed methods because of

the richer understanding that they yield.

Yet education reform proceeds at different levels, and its complex demands call not just for the participation of universities and federal- and state-level education administrations. This issue highlights the role of youth, families, communities, and the broader public in education reform as they too have a vested interest in high-performing schools.

Parents, for example, are participating in new ways in school reform, networking with other parents, and developing leader-

ship skills that allow them to influence critical education issues. Yet in order to effect change and hold schools accountable, parents and the broader public must be educated about the standards-based movement and other education reforms. Otherwise, the public actually may be part of the philosophical resistance to efforts such as standards, as Wendy Puriefoy of Public Education Network points out in Questions and Answers.

The placement of multiple stakeholders and research rigor in the center of conversations on education reform requires a rethinking of methods for evaluating such reform. This issue provides information about several evaluations in key areas of education reform, such as technology in education, comprehensive school-based reform, and reducing the achievement gap. Evaluators share insights on their experiences of participatory action research, formative evaluation, quasi-experimental designs, and large-scale impact studies.

The world of education reform is complex and evolving and certainly not possible to cover comprehensively in one issue. As always we welcome your thoughts and contributions.

Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.
Founder & Director
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in this issue

Evaluating Education Reform

Theory & Practice

Authentic parent participation in school reform 2

Promising Practices

Control and comparison group experiences 5
Participatory action research 6
The framework approach 7

Questions & Answers

A conversation with Wendy Puriefoy 8

Spotlight

Building public accountability 10

Special Report

Challenges and opportunities of scientifically based research 11

Beyond Basic Training

The role of schools of education in reform 15
Analyzing student data 16

Evaluations to Watch

Educational technology 19
Designing evaluations to match program development 20
Flexibility and feedback in formative evaluation 21

New & Noteworthy 23

¹ The National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.



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Beyond Input: Achieving Authentic Participation in School Reform

M. Elena Lopez and Holly Kreider of HFRP present a framework of authentic parent participation in school reform and its implications for evaluation.

Standards-based reform offers a vision of high-quality education for all students. Although educators closely scrutinize how this reform impacts students and teachers, they pay less attention to how it is changing the parameters of parent involvement. As parents and community members learn about school performance and achievement gaps among students, they seek greater participation in the basic decisions that affect their schools. Beyond providing input on school plans, they strive toward authentic participation.

Derived from the study of public administration, the concept of authentic participation refers to people's "deep and continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation" (King, Feltey & Susel, 1998, p. 320). In the context of school reform, authentic participation can be characterized by:

1. A community of parents committed to school improvement
2. Relationships of trust between parents and schools
3. Development of parent participation and leadership skills
4. Parent opportunity to influence the process and outcomes of an issue
5. Parent participation in a deliberation process where all participants are on an equal footing
6. New roles for school administrators and teachers as partners who listen to parent concerns, work with them on issues, and engage them in open dialogue
7. Changes in local administrative systems to support authentic participation

These seven elements offer a framework for developing a parent engagement strategy and evaluating it as well. Below we offer examples of parent and community efforts that reflect these elements of authentic participation.

A Community of Parents Committed to School Improvement

Relationships among parents open a space for the exchange of ideas and concerns, and reinforce the collective energy to make change happen. Parents become role models for each other in leadership development and connect with other parents to extend the circle of participation.

Through formal training and informal networking opportunities, the Parent Services Project (PSP) nurtures a core leadership group in several schools in Marin County, California. It focuses on building a sense of community among parents as a prerequisite to issue identification. PSP's Mauricio Palma notes, "The building of relationships between parents happens through an informal process of dinners and bagel breakfasts. During these times, issues begin to surface in conversations. Then we help people reflect on these issues, such as student safety, nutrition, and homework support." With confidence gained by their PSP experience, Latino parent leaders at one elementary school pressed the district to allow them to participate in hiring a new principal for their low-performing school. The candidate of their choice, a Latino who shared a similar immigrant experience with the parents, is now principal and has begun to improve the school's performance on state tests.

Relationships of Trust Between Parents and Schools

Trust exists when members of the schools and parents show respect and personal regard for one another and demonstrate competence and integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trusting relationships do not preclude disagreement and conflict, but parents and school members work at negotiation and accommodation (Lewis & Forman, 2002).

Susan DeVenny, a parent leader from Parents for Public Schools (PPS), describes the group's approach in working with school administrators, "What I think works is building a relationship to the point where there is mutual respect and then saying, 'I care about your school and I want to support you, and for that reason, I'm bringing you these concerns in a thoughtful manner.'" A core group of PPS parents in her district in Lancaster County, South Carolina participate in policy decisions, reviews of new math textbooks, and a feasibility study on whether to set up a foundation for the schools. "The schools think of us getting involved at the front end. We're stakeholders in school decisions."

Development of Parent Participation and Leadership Skills

Authentic participation requires new roles for parents as advocates and decision makers. To accomplish these roles parents need help with understanding complex reform issues and how they can support and monitor the implementation of reforms.

Through the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) parent leaders learn about Kentucky's standards and how to use school achievement data to initiate school projects that strengthen student achievement. Parent leader Chuck Matthews is implementing a project in which local churches offer parent and community support to a school with low student test scores. He convened pastors who committed their churches to "sponsoring" teams of students—by having congregation members support the students through activities such as mentoring, recognizing children's accomplishments during church services, and serving as advocates in the school when a student's parent is unable to do so.

Matthews explains that he gained principal and teacher buy-in by presenting a plan that could meet the school's family involvement goals, proposing clear measures of progress, and soliciting teacher participation in identifying the priority needs of each team of students. An evaluation of CIPL pointed to the importance of such skills among its parent leaders. Parents had to become "bilingual" to converse well, not only with parents, but with school personnel about important educational issues in order to effect change (Kroll, Sexton, Raimondo, Corbett & Wilson, 2001).

Parent Opportunity to Influence Process and Outcomes

In authentic participation, people are involved at the front end of the decision-making process and are not relegated to the back end of judging decisions previously made by public administrators (King, Feltey & Susel, 1998). Achieving this in an educational context often involves a concerted effort of parent groups to gain partnership status with schools or districts that do not share the expectation of joint decision making. Parent groups resort to both informal relationship building as well as organized collective action.

Boston Parent Organizing Network (BPON), a network of community-based organizations in Boston, Massachusetts, helps build the capacity of its member organizations to help parents take action around educational policy. Director Michele Brooks' past relationships with the school district and BPON's

credibility and respect have facilitated entry into conversations with the school superintendent and mayor.

When the superintendent planned to restructure the family and community engagement component of the system by moving it several levels down the bureaucracy, BPON opposed the change. Brooks recounts, "We felt it would muffle the voice of parents. We wanted them to have a direct line to the superintendent who after all works for parents ... We really fought and came up with an alternative plan that included having a Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement ... We now have this plan in place ... and we can push for the way we want things to happen."

Parent Participation in a Deliberation Process

The boundaries between expert and layperson are blurred in authentic participation. Participants acknowledge the value of the diverse perspectives and engage in a mutual learning experience. In a school context with sharp divisions between professional and layperson, parents gain credibility as partners through the actions that demonstrate their roles as champions of public education.

As communities have access to school data and find out their schools are failing, Parents for Public Schools has noted a growing rift between parents and schools. In Lancaster County, PPS parents were not satisfied with how the state reported school performance. Labels such as "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" did not capture the strengths and weaknesses of schools. Parents conducted their own research on the schools and developed a report card that gave a multi-dimensional assessment of each school. Susan DeVenny comments, "Our goal is to help schools improve where there are problems, but the assessment has to be fair and you have to look at multiple factors."

PPS has formed partnerships with school leaders at the administrative and elective levels to ensure that parent voices are counted at the levels where decisions are made. They meet with principals every other month to have a "candid dialogue" about school issues and to advocate for changes that parents want to see in schools.

More Information About the Parent Organizations

Boston Parent Organizing Network
www.bpon.org

Parents for Public Schools
www.parents4publicschools.com

Parent Services Project
www.parentservices.org

Parents United for Responsible Education
www.pureparents.org

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
www.prichardcommittee.org

New Roles for School Administrators and Teachers

It is not only parents whose roles must change to achieve authentic participation, but also school administrators and teachers. Administrators need to move from protecting their power to grounding it in the needs of the communities they serve. Both administrators and teachers need to transform their roles as experts to that of partners in their relationships with families.

The Parent Services Project combines the principles of family support with community organizing approaches. A key challenge and task is to have schools develop an awareness of family support principles and make them an integral part of the ways schools relate to families. Mauricio Palma describes these principles in the following manner:

- Families must be engaged in making decisions that affect the lives of their children.
- Families have ideas and concerns and can contribute to decision making.
- Family leadership must be defined not as just attending a 30-minute meeting to sign documents that need to be sent to the state, but a range of experiences that allow them to put their dreams into practice and help shape what happens in the school.
- Schools must create a dialogue with parents about what's needed to support children's school success.
- Schools should "do with" families rather than "do for" families.
- A relational culture must be established that transforms parent-parent and parent-teacher "connection" to "communion."

Local Administration Supporting Authentic Participation

Parents and local school administrators can seize the opportunity to promote authentic participation in the context of changing structural reforms in education. Whether the initial system changes are borne out of school district partnerships or agitation by local parent organizations, such changes can elevate parents' voices in school reform.

Parent representation on local school councils in Chicago, Illinois is a powerful example. Chicago's School Reform Act of 1987 requires elected local school councils with a majority of parents on each council. Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) had a key role in passing the act, and now offers training to parents serving on local school councils (LSCs).

Julie Woestehoff, PURE Director, explains the many impacts of these changes. Schools are now very closely scrutinized in Chicago. Monthly local school council meetings which are parent-chaired provide a place and people to whom parents can bring concerns and have them addressed. Chicago now has a special environment, a formalized process, and political machinery for parents to hold schools accountable. Parents elected to LSCs have also caused changes in the educational leadership to better reflect diversity of the community.

Adourthus McDowell, a PURE parent and LSC member, invests considerable time holding the system accountable to parents. He explains that even though funds have been earmarked

for public participation and support, the system tends to monopolize the process and use rhetoric. School systems need pressure to reform, and parents must be prepared for the "long haul" for real changes in the system to occur.

Implications for Evaluation

In the context of standards-based reform and the new roles parents are assuming, evaluations must adopt broader conceptions of participation and use new methods to capture what parents are actually doing. Evaluations of parent involvement programs typically assess activities such as helping parents support student learning at home and improving parenting skills (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez & Kayzar, 2002). Yet the above framework suggests that authentic participation by parents takes other forms, such as advocacy, decision making, and leadership. Evaluations need to capture the expanded roles of parents as well as changes in school roles and systems. The richness of transformations in parent leadership and school change resulting from such authentic participation in education reform also call for assessment approaches, such as mixed methods, that afford a greater understanding of both the processes and outcomes of authentic participation.

Acknowledgements

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Avoiding Unwarranted Death by Evaluation

Lois-ellin Datta of Datta Analysis points to the importance of studying control and comparison group experiences when conducting experimental studies.

Some programs deserve to die. There's been enough time for adequate training, implementation, learning, revisions, and fair evaluations. Direct and opportunity costs are high, evidence of benefits low.

Murder by evaluation is something else. Once it was easy—start a complex program late and demand an outcome evaluation early. But now we know that a fair assessment should examine implementation, gather baselines, offer formative support, seek understanding of factors associated with possible outcomes, involve stakeholders, and wait until the program reaches a reasonable level of maturity.

Another key aspect of evaluation fairness is design. Is value added compared to what would have happened without the intervention? There are many ways to satisfy this yearning, including interrupted time series in which the array of relevant measures is tracked for over 30 observation periods, and logic models that lay out “if-then” linkages with sound empirical reasoning. Randomized experimental designs become particularly attractive when stakes are high, because of the strong inference they offer under appropriate circumstances.

But there are challenges. In one randomized experimental study of new treatments for the homeless, the men in the control and comparison groups, though destitute, often drug abusers, alcoholics, and mentally ill, had their own ideas about preferred treatments and had the street skills to get them. The result was that the groups were too corrupted, in a statistical sense, to reach valid conclusions about treatment effectiveness, leading to “no evidence of benefits” for the new, costlier treatments.

Comer, She Wrote

The Abt Associates evaluation of the Comer program in the Detroit public schools¹ suggests how to deal with such challenges. Comer's program involves a complex effort to change the school's culture to reflect principles of child, family, and community development.² Program implementation in Detroit was well supported for five years. An evaluation design with qualitative and quantitative elements involving randomized control schools was in place for almost seven years.

The envelope, please—comparison of the Comer and non-Comer schools on a wide array of outcome measures showed no detectable differences. Had the evaluation stopped here, it would have resulted in a negative finding that did not support Comer's approach. The evaluators, however, had examined with diligence over five years what made for a “Comer program”

¹ Millsap, M. A., Chase, A., Obeidallah, D., Perez-Smith, A., Brigham, N., & Johnston, K. (2000). *Evaluation of Detroit's Comer Schools and Families Initiative*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates.

² Comer, J. P., Haynes, N. M., Joyner, E. T., & Ben-Avie, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Rallying the whole village: The Comer process for reforming education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

and obtained this information for both the *comparison* schools and the Comer schools. Their analysis showed:

- The comparison schools looked a lot like the Comer schools. At year five, both had about the same variation in degree of implementation of “the Comer program.”
- Children in high-implementing Comer schools had notable benefits compared to low-implementing schools, as did those in high-implementing comparison schools compared to low-implementing comparison schools.
- Children in both high-implementing Comer schools and high-implementing comparison schools did well, but children in the Comer schools did better.
- Length of time in a Comer school predicted outcomes.

These findings, together with rich qualitative data, suggested that:

- The comparison schools were not chopped liver. They were part of the stream of “new initiatives” flowing through most of the Detroit schools.
- Some of Comer's ideas were part of the zesty educational mix being tried to varying extents in many Detroit schools.
- The principles underlying the Comer program seemed associated with positive results, regardless of the banner under which the principles were implemented.

The Importance of Control/Comparison Experiences

This example suggests the importance of understanding the experiences of control/comparison groups as well as the treatment/intervention groups, because some control groups are likely to be active and “no treatment” or placebo conditions are not necessarily meaningful.

For example, without such attention, the requirement of randomized experimental designs in the Congressionally mandated national evaluation of Head Start has more than a slight risk of murder for the program. Here the “control group” parents, required to get work as part of welfare reform, may be anything but inert. The alternate services the control groups find may range from custodial care to well-implemented programs similar to Head Start in that they embody the child development principles and standards of Head Start. This is likely to add to variability when child development changes are compared, and to a small effect size or a no difference finding.

If in-depth knowledge is obtained about the actual experiences of the control groups, then the Abt analytic design could be applied. Possible murder by evaluation could be replaced with a fairer test of underlying principles and with more valid conclusions on which to base social policy.

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Youth Reframe Questions of Educational Justice Through Participatory Action Research

María Elena Torre and Michelle Fine describe the process and potential of participatory action research with youth researchers to investigate race, ethnicity, class, and opportunity gaps in education.

Witness a scene from a workshop on participatory action research (PAR) methods:

Sara, a white middle schooler, speaking to her peers Nicole and Tasha, both African-American, says, “The survey is fine, but I don’t think we should have to ask about race or ethnicity—it just divides us.” Nicole responds, “No, I think we have to ask, ’cause our experiences may be really different and we won’t know that if we don’t ask about it.” Tasha adds, “Yeah, it might help black kids or Asian kids.” Sara repeats her concern, “That’s the kind of thing that just separates us.”

Participatory action research is based on the belief that knowledge is rooted in social relations and is most powerful when produced collaboratively through action. The above conversation signals the radical potential of PAR when used by intentionally diverse research collectives in settings where deep “local inquiry” and democratic methods are designed toward social change. In the young women’s exchange, a discourse of “colorblindness” mirrors institutional resistance to examine how racially and ethnically different youth experience school. PAR invites analysis of such local tensions and the larger political dynamics of institutions that they reflect. Our study of race, class, and achievement illustrates this potential of PAR and suggests processes for developing the skills of youth researchers to participate in social justice in education.

The Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Opportunity Gap Project

In January of 2002 the Rockefeller Foundation invited our research team¹ to investigate youth perspectives on the “achievement gap” within racially integrated suburban school districts in New York and New Jersey. In focus groups with differently situated students, we learned that once students pass through hard-won integrated school doors, they are mostly funneled into classes segregated by race, ethnicity, and social class. They call it “separate and unequal—in the same building.” Students insisted that we reject the label “achievement gap” and rename the project the “race, ethnicity, class, and opportunity gap.”

¹ The Graduate Center of the City University of New York research team includes Janice Bloom, April Burns, Lori Chajet, Monique Guishard, Yasser Payne, Tiffany Perkins-Munn, and Kersha Smith.

Our collective research questions focus broadly on:

- How do students, across racial, ethnic, class, and academic levels, view their opportunities, motives, and the “achievement gap” in schools and in the nation?
- Where do youth perceive issues of racial, educational, and social (in)justice in school and community?
- How well prepared are students across racial groups, ethnic groups, and academic tracks for college postgraduation?
- What are the sites of racial-, ethnic-, and class-based justice and equal opportunity in school and the community?

Research Methodology

We intentionally brought together a diverse collective of youth researchers to address (and constantly negotiate) these questions. We formed a Youth Research Community of over 50 students that collaborate in and across schools and in research “camps” on college campuses. Youth researchers are: white, African-American, Latino, Asian, and Afro-Caribbean; wealthy, middle-class, and poor; in special education and advanced placement; and from urban and suburban schools with financial and curricular inequities.

We crafted “radically inclusive” and democratic research spaces to conduct our research. Diverse and divergent experiences and standpoints shape our research questions, determine methods, influence analyses, and invent our “products.” Varied perspectives can be aired, challenged, and thoughtfully discussed—without the imposition of “making nice” or reaching consensus.

This doubled research practice explicitly recognizes power relationships, situates the work in a social-historical context, and calls for both micro and macro levels of analysis. We purposefully seek places of disjuncture within our team, as these sites often provide new understandings that each of us, as situated individuals, would not likely come to on our own.

We fostered methods skills and the co-construction of instruments and analysis. In an initial research camp, youth participated in “methods training,” learning the nuances of interviews, focus groups, and survey design. Together we crafted a survey of questions focusing on distributive justice in the nation and their schools. The youth researchers insisted on including cartoons for respondents to interpret, a chart of the achievement gap, and open-ended questions (such as, What is the most powerful thing a teacher has ever said to you?). We distributed the survey to ninth and twelfth graders in 13 urban and suburban districts and received 3,799 surveys back, brimming with rich qualitative and quantitative data that could be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and “track.”

continued on page 22

At a recent “speak back” an African-American male ... persisted, with the courage of speaking his mind to educators who may or may not listen.

Using a Framework Approach to Improve Youth Participation in Informal Learning

Megan Beckett, Sandy Berry, and Kristin Leuschner of RAND Corporation describe a framework approach for transforming research findings into a practical tool for policymakers, parents, and practitioners.

A number of studies in recent years have focused on the role that community-based organizations take in supporting informal learning opportunities among youth in such locations as libraries, parks, museums, and youth centers. While the knowledge gained from these studies is valuable, its benefits have been limited. Institutional barriers and the need to operate in a day-to-day crisis mode have tended to keep practitioners in these organizations from sharing lessons across fields.

For example, small, underfunded community-based organizations serving disadvantaged youth are rarely able to look at what art museum personnel have learned about designing effective informal learning opportunities for their traditionally more advantaged audiences. In turn, most museum educators have not had the opportunity to apply lessons from youth development on how to reduce barriers to participation among disadvantaged youth.

Recognizing the value in synthesizing and disseminating important lessons about informal learning that cut across institutions, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds is sponsoring RAND to research how youth come to participate in informal learning and how this participation might be expanded. Our approach to this task involves what is known as a *framework*.¹

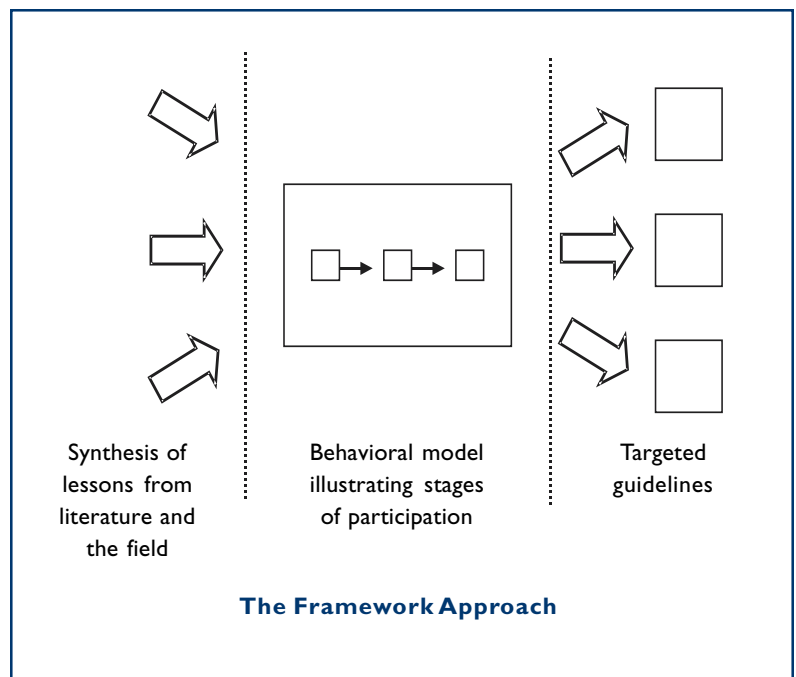
What Is a Framework Approach?

The framework approach transforms the key lessons from studies into a practical tool that can be used by practitioners, parents, and policymakers. As illustrated in the figure, there are three main components.

1. *The approach starts with a literature review that cuts across disciplines to identify and synthesize key lessons in the field.* This review captures the richness of field experiences, and integrates and synthesizes the range of ideas and lessons found in previous studies drawn from a variety of fields. This review can be supplemented with additional fieldwork, as needed. The result is a clear, practical body of information on informal learning.
2. *The synthesis of key lessons helps us create a behavioral model that provides a more complete understanding of the participation process.* The model illustrates the multiple stages of participation and the factors that can influence an individual's stage. For example, in our model the initial stage of participation focuses on a youth's inclination to consider participation in informal learning, while the final stage focuses on the experience of participation in a specific program and full engagement in the informal learning process. The model assumes that the effects of a particular set of factors on the decision-making process can be moderated at specific points along the way.

mal learning, while the final stage focuses on the experience of participation in a specific program and full engagement in the informal learning process. The model assumes that the effects of a particular set of factors on the decision-making process can be moderated at specific points along the way.

3. *The model is used to provide a set of targeted guidelines that can be used to increase participation.* The understanding gained from the interdisciplinary literature review and the model help us to develop guidelines targeted to individuals at different stages of participation. For example, for those youths not yet inclined to think about participating in informal learning, guidelines might focus on how to market the potential benefits of participation. In contrast, for those youths already inclined to participate, guidelines might focus on eliminating barriers by providing transportation for or reducing the costs of participation in a specific program.



Advantages of the Framework Approach

The framework approach offers several advantages:

- Practitioners and other stakeholders have access to a practical tool that they can apply to their specific needs. They can see where they fit into a complex field and develop more targeted strategies for increasing participation.
- The synthesis of key lessons from the field provides stakeholders with a clear, practical body of the facts, real-world experiences, and coherent approaches needed to influence participation.

¹ McCarthy, K. F., & Jinnett, K. (2001). *A new framework for building participation in the arts*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. [Available at: www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1323]

continued on page 18

A conversation with Wendy Puriefoy

Wendy Puriefoy is President of Public Education Network (PEN). Prior to joining PEN, she worked on the desegregation of Boston public schools and was Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Boston Foundation. She holds Master of Arts degrees in African-American Studies, American Studies, and American Colonial History from Boston University.

PEN believes community engagement is the missing ingredient in school reform. Its standards and accountability initiative is designed to build community accountability so that all children have the supports they need to meet high standards of achievement.

Q Why do you believe that standards-based reform represents the best tool available for public schools to improve student achievement?

A Requiring all students to meet the same high standards makes the process of learning and everything about education public. That includes what teachers are doing, what's expected of students, and who's accountable for helping students reach high levels of learning. It covers the relationship between teacher and student, classroom and school, and the school system and the community.

Standards-based reform clarifies expectations in terms of content. It introduces a level of specificity about what is required of the curriculum and what teachers and parents have to do. It begins to put in place a system—not of punishment but of consequences—for students and for everyone. The expectation that everyone can learn, and learn at a high level, has consequences for a community's economy and the capacity of its members to lead a good life.

Standards-based reform represents not only an intellectual revolution, but also a social revolution. It affirms that poor kids with uneducated parents can achieve the same high levels of learning that rich kids with educated parents do. That flies in the face of what we have been taught. In the U.S. and other countries there is a philosophy that some are worthy of great knowledge and others follow the anointed. It is misleading to confine standards-based reform to education reform. Although implemented in schools it is a societal reform because of the way it posits the responsibility to develop human potential and the means to do that.

Q What is the role of evaluation in standards-based reform?

A Evaluators need to look at both its technical and cultural dimensions. On the technical side, standards-

based reform is a system that functions almost like a scientific lab in the sense of finding out what children are learning, how they are learning, and how teachers are teaching. It operates to find out what works best to help all kids get to the levels that the standards call for them to reach. It says we are not going to let children fail. So evaluation has to demonstrate promising practices that allow better alignment and implementation of standards.

*Standards-based reform
represents not only an
intellectual revolution,
but also a social revolution.*

On the cultural side, evaluators can work to help identify resistance to the implementation of standards. We find a parallel in the research of Carol Gilligan¹ in which she looked at classrooms where girls' voices were suppressed. People were unaware of it because the cultural norm was domination by males. The problem of getting to scale is not that we lack scaleable techniques of teaching and learn-

ing, but resistance to the fundamental change that standards call for, so the role of evaluation in understanding resistance is critically important.

Q What does the public need to know about standards-based reform and how well is the information being communicated?

A The impact of a good education system moves well beyond the people who receive it, the people who deliver it, and the people who regulate it. Standards-based reform was adopted and managed by the educational establishment, but full implementation needs to be fulfilled by all parts of society.

Knowledge is the first responsibility of the public. The public needs to be educated about the work of standards, the implementation of standards, and what results to expect when we are done with the full implementation. Then comes the alignment of

¹ Gilligan, C., Lyons, N. P., & Hanmer, T. J. (Eds.). (1990). *Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

this knowledge with action—for example, voting for public officials who can best represent the community in the allocation of resources to implement the standards.

There are gaps, however, in the public understanding of what it takes to invest in a quality education. For example, the public understands that if you want to get good teachers you have to pay them more and give them more power and prestige in the community. They don't understand that teacher quality requires more teacher professional development, a different arrangement of the school day, evaluation and feedback, and policies that allow teachers to form learning communities.

Another example concerns assessment. Standards-based reform promotes multiple assessments, but it costs more money to provide multiple sources of evidence compared to a single standardized test that can be administered inexpensively. The standardized tests don't tell you much; they lack texture and quality; they don't measure learning. If you want to change that we have to invest more money.

Unfortunately, there has been insufficient public information and inadequate public engagement and, therefore, no kind of public responsibility around standards-based reform. The information system is not consistent. People get different types of information from different states. This missing public information and engagement strategy is the Achilles heel.

Q How can communities be equipped to understand standards-based reform?²

A Philosophically, part of the difficulty in standards implementation is our resistance to the idea that all people can learn and learn at high levels because it will completely change the social order. The public sometimes cannot provide the kind of accountability that we would look for because the public is part of the resistance to what standards-based reform is positing. Part of our work at the Public Education Network is to create a set of indicators—a civic index—that builds awareness about public accountability in the implementation of standards.

Technically, the public really connects well to evidence and data. When the public sees whole schools and whole groups of kids beating the odds under circumstances that you would not have expected them to they will buy more into the standards movement.

There are a number of districts such as District 2 in New York City that have moved kids toward higher achievement for all. This accomplishment depends on strong school leaders—where the principal and the teachers agree to a shared vision and execute it. Whole schools have beat the odds, and getting

² William Miles, Director of Policy and Public Engagement at PEN, responded in part to this question.

that story out in popular media helps start changing people's attitudes and beliefs about children and their potential.

Q What are the opportunities and challenges of the No Child Left Behind Act?

A No Child Left Behind (NCLB) proposes and makes public the theory of standards-based reform. It begins to put together the first element of a public engagement strategy, which is information. It mandates that parents and the public have a right to know how schools are doing. It outlines what it takes to implement high standards—a curriculum aligned with standards, multiple assessments, quality teachers, and public accountability.

The reality is that implementation takes time and money. The federal government has put this on the fast track and is running the new train on old tracks, and I'm not sure that this will get us there. We need more infrastructures to change the existing culture. Each of the systems (data, teacher quality, curriculum aligned with standards, assessments) that standards-based reform depends on for success is problematic.

For example, data systems need to be upgraded. It is problematic when schools are labeled failing and the data for this judgment are not uniform. In addition, the goal of having quality teachers for all children by 2005 is being proposed in the face of a teacher shortage, and the system of preparing, recruiting, and sustaining quality teachers is all over the map. Also, if schools fail in rural areas, there are no other schools where parents can send their children. The problem of assessment is that although standards provide for multiple assessments, the federal government will be using one assessment system in allocating its dollars. To compound things,

states are going through one of the worst budget crises in 50 years and it will take resources to fully implement NCLB.

But the work needs to be done and can be done. Kentucky began its standards-based reform years ago and developed state standards, a curriculum aligned with standards, teacher certification and professional development, and a public engagement strategy. Has Kentucky succeeded in bringing children to higher level of standards? Absolutely! Are there more poor kids who are reaching high standards? No doubt about it. While Kentucky continues to move forward with this work, it is not just the education system that implements and supports standards. It involves an informed and engaged citizenry.

For more information about PEN and its work, visit www.publiceducation.org.

M. Elena Lopez, Senior Consultant, HFRP
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Wendy Puriefoy

Reframing Accountability for Urban Public Schools

Based on their research with community-organizing groups, Eva Gold and Elaine Simon from Research for Action and Chris Brown from the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform describe four strategies for building public accountability for education.

Two predominant responses to calls for accountability in public education are bureaucratic and professional accountability. Bureaucratic accountability refers to the accountability of schools to various levels of administration for student performance; professional accountability refers to the accountability of school staff in fulfilling their educational roles. These two forms of accountability are often seen as complementary (Elmore, 2002; Fuhrman, 1999; O’Day, 2002), but even when combined, their influence on schools is limited. They are built on the assumption that schools exist in isolation from the complex social and political contexts in which they function. In studying the contribution of community-organizing groups to urban school reform, we found a form of accountability that includes this context and so adds value to the predominant models (Gold, Simon & Brown, 2002). We call this form “public accountability.”

The Predominant Forms of Accountability

Bureaucratic accountability is the basis for the vast majority of formal accountability systems. It is top-down and holds schools accountable to the district, state, or federal government for student performance on standardized tests. Rewards and sanctions serve as external motivators for improving student achievement. Because failure to improve test scores can have significant consequences, these tests are often referred to as “high stakes.”

In professional accountability the principal and teachers are mutually accountable for meeting a standard of teaching, which is reinforced by their collaboration and a sense of collective re-

sponsibility for student achievement. This form relies on intrinsic motivation to improve teaching practice and student performance.

To improve schools, both of these forms of accountability rely on the professionals within the system. Public accountability, on the other hand, connects schools and their communities, broadens the range of actors who take responsibility for school improvement, and uses a public, deliberative process to engage stakeholders and maintain the pressure for school improvement.

Public Accountability

Community organizing is a set of practices for building community leadership and a powerful base of community members who can take collective action in the interests of low-income neighborhoods. In our case study research with five community-organizing groups,¹ four common strategies emerged for creating public accountability for education.

Public Conversations Public conversations are open and deliberative processes in which a range of stakeholders examines information, engages in problem solving, and makes commitments to work for solutions. All of the five community-organizing groups we observed created accountability “events” where public conversations that included school staff and parents, as well as mayors, city council representatives, superintendents, and others in positions of authority made commitments to school improvement efforts.

Monitoring Programs and Policies Parents and community members monitor programs and policies when they collect and look at data to make judgments about the adequacy of their schools, the authenticity of school improvement efforts, and the credibility of results. Community organizing in all of the sites used test scores and other data as tools for drawing attention to where problems were not being addressed and for engaging a broader range of stakeholders in problem solving.

Participating in the Political Arena By participating in the political arena, community-organizing groups take action to counterbalance the influences on elected and public officials that have allowed poor conditions in schools to exist. To create the political will to take action, all of the groups we observed participated in the political arena through get-out-the-vote campaigns, individual and public meetings with elected representatives, and by turning out large numbers of constituents for accountability events.

Joint Ownership and Relational Culture Community organizing has a methodology for developing relationships of trust
continued on page 22

Although public accountability is not widely acknowledged, we feel that it is essential for improving urban public schools.

Related Resource

Gold, E., Simon, E., & Brown, C. (2002). *Strong neighborhoods, strong schools: The Indicators Project on Education Organizing*. Chicago: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. Available at www.crosscity.org/pdfs/StrNbrhdsStrSchls.pdf (Acrobat file). This report provides a methodology for understanding the contribution of community organizing to education reform by presenting an indicators framework, a theory of change, and the accomplishments of five organizing groups in effecting institutional changes in schools and districts.

¹ The groups were the Alliance Organizing Project (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Austin Interfaith (Austin, Texas), Logan Square Neighborhood Association (Chicago, Illinois), New York ACORN (New York, New York), and Oakland Community Organizations (Oakland, California.)

The Evaluation Exchange Special Report on Scientifically Based Research

This special report offers commentaries from experts on the challenges and opportunities presented by the current federal policy's emphasis on scientifically based research for the practice and evaluation of education reform.

As described on the U.S. Department of Education's website, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law by President Bush in January of 2002, signifies "a new era in education."¹ One of the central tenets of NCLB is the use of scientifically based research (SBR) as a basis for targeting federal funds for education programs. Aspects of scientific quality prioritized in the legislation include: experimental control (or comparison) groups, replication of results through multiple studies, an ability to generalize results, rigorous standards especially via peer review, and convergence of results between studies.

The federal policy emphasis on SBR, and particularly on experimental studies, is a watershed in education research and evaluation. It is a policy development whose obstacles, opportunities, and implications for the field deserve careful consideration and open dialogue. It is in this spirit that HFRP sought commentary from seven experts in education research and evaluation to address the following question: **What are the critical challenges and opportunities of scientifically based research for those concerned with the practice and evaluation of education reform efforts?**

Howard Gardner²

Professor, Human Development and Psychology, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Experts concur that American educational research is deficient; indeed, some imply that it bears the same tenuous relation to "real research" as "military justice" does to "real justice." And, at least on the political front, a solution seems clear. Educational research ought to take its model from medical research—specifically, the vaunted National Institutes of Health (NIH) model. On this analysis, the more rapidly that we can institute randomized trials—the so-called "gold standard" of research involving human subjects—the sooner we will be able to make genuine progress in our understanding of schooling and education.

Perhaps, but perhaps not. Minds are not the same as bodies;

¹ Retrieved May 12, 2003, from www.nclb.gov.

² This commentary has been excerpted with permission from the author and publisher from an article that first appeared in *Education Week* (Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 72, 49) on September 4, 2002. The full article is available at: www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=01gardner.h22.

schools are not the same as home or workplace; children cannot legitimately be assigned to or shuttled from one "condition" to another the way that agricultural seeds are planted or transplanted in different soils. It is appropriate to step back, to determine whether educational research is needed at all, whether it should be distinguished in any way from other scholarly research, what questions it might address, what are the principal ways in which it has worked thus far, and how it might proceed more effectively in the future.

If I had average means, but flexibility in where I lived, I would send my infant to day care in France, my preschooler to the toddler centers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, my elementary schoolchild to class in Japan, my high schooler to gymnasium in Germany or Hungary, and my 18-year-old to college or university in the United States.

What is striking is that none of these good schools is based in any rigorous sense on educational research of the sort being called for by pundits. Rather, they are based on practices that have evolved over long periods of time. Often, these practices are finely honed by groups of teachers who have worked together for many years, trying out mini-experiments, reflecting on the results, critiquing one another, co-teaching, visiting other schools to observe, and the like. In the past—indeed, in the present—much of the best school practice has been based on such seat-of-the-pants observations, reflections, and informal experimentation. Perhaps we need to be doing more of this rather than less; perhaps, in fact, re-

search dollars might be better spent on setting up teacher study groups or mini-sabbaticals, rather than on NIH-style field-initiated or targeted-grant competitions.

Barbara Schneider

Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

The recent passage of the No Child Left Behind Act places the science of research in education at center stage. The emphasis on promoting a solid scientific research base that recommends how education studies should be conducted may lead to stronger designs and dispel impressions that most educational research is of poor quality.

One of the directives in the current legislation is the call for more clinical trials that use random assignment. Yet the use of this methodology, often viewed as the gold standard of medical and social science research, has been challenged by some education scholars as impractical and inappropriate for the complex

The real danger of "scientifically based research" is that its perceived rigor would still allow for the continued and sanctioned neglect of those who have been left out for generations.

—Jennifer Greene,
University of Illinois

and transient environments of classrooms and schools. There is also the concern that education is not medicine, and educational research, no matter how it is designed, is unlikely to find the cure for all ailments.

Certainly if all education studies were required to follow the random assignment model, it would undoubtedly restrict possibilities for discovery and experimentation as particular questions cannot be investigated within this paradigm. However, this is a critical period for educational research as considerable resources have been expended on promising reforms. Many initiatives, such as Accelerated Schools and Success for All,³ incorporate the best, up-to-date evidence on what works in schools for helping students learn. While evaluations of these programs are limited and the designs to test their effectiveness are often flawed, one cannot view legislation that calls for SBR as a threat to the credibility of these and other programs. Instead, we should consider employing rigorous designs under stringent conditions, an effort that might result in findings that are meaningful and replicable.

The current research emphasis on random assignment offers educational researchers a leadership role in designing studies that deal with the complexity of sample selection and attrition, cooperation, contagion, and other issues. Educational research has a tradition of producing significant contributions to methodology and statistics. Solving the problems that plague studies in education and other disciplines would again position education at the forefront of methodological research. The current legislation provides opportunities for enhancing the quality of educational research and building capacity in the profession. It is an opportunity worth taking.

Robert Boruch

Professor, Psychology in Education Division, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The challenges facing evaluation of school-based reform are similar to those encountered in efforts to change other kinds of institutions and organizations, such as changing hospital practices or the delivery of health care in medical units, deploying programs throughout entire housing projects to improve residents' capacity to get jobs, and revising approaches to reduce crime. All involve entities that have been the units of random assignment and analysis in what are called place randomized trials, cluster randomized trials, and group randomized trials. These trials are the scientific basis for estimating the relative effects of interventions deployed system-wide.

The common challenges in these include:

³ See www.acceleratedschools.net and www.successforall.net.

- *Identifying entities that are ready to change and to participate in a trial that produces evidence on the effects of the change.* Readiness includes being educated about trials and assuring that there are incentives to participate in them. The task also requires patience because learning what works better takes time.
- *Determining how to deploy the intervention in multiple schools, hospitals, and villages* because the intervention, though it must be uniform in some respects, often has to be tailored to suit the setting. It includes developing systems to train people, such as teachers, physicians and nurses, and beat cops and their superior officers, who need to know what to do and be reinforced in the learning.
- *Learning how to monitor the deployment of the intervention and assure its fidelity or integrity at a reasonable cost.* In addition, combining numerical and narrative evaluation methods

has been a major sub challenge on account of intellectual provincialism in the universities.

- *Trying to assure that randomized trials are used where appropriate* to estimate relative effects, as well as to counter ignorant claims that randomized trials cannot be done or that nonrandomized approaches will produce unbiased estimates of effect. These claims made about nonrandomized trials are sustainable only if one is willing to make often-heroic assumptions.

Partly as a prophylactic to naïve claims, the Campbell Collaboration has developed an electronic register of randomized and possibly randomized trials that is accessible to the public. (See box on page 14.) There are about 11,000 references including about 200 on place-randomized trials.

Information on solutions to such challenges is also implicit in the experience of organizations that run such trials in the social and health sectors. The U.S. Department of Education's new Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has emphasized the use of randomized trials when the research aim is causal inference. Moreover, IES has assured through program announcements that resources are made available to support such trials.

Jennifer Greene

Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois

Education is among humankind's highest and most demanding callings. It involves sharpening the analytic mind, cultivating the creative imagination, nourishing the developing persona, and comforting the social conscience. Education is a complex social practice that invokes scientific/technical, aesthetic/humanistic, and moral/ethical demands on our theories, our resources, and our capabilities. It is contextual, dynamic, and value-engaged. Given this complexity, no one particular lens on human endeavors can meaningfully capture and represent what is "good" or

Not since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society of the 1960s have evaluators of social programs been so well positioned to do what they do best—harness the rigor of scientific inquiry for the service of the public good.

—Lisa Towne, National Research Council

“high-quality” teaching and learning.

Yet, scientifically based research claims to do just that. It aims to restrict what counts as valid knowledge about educational matters to just one narrow lens, a lens that privileges a technical perspective on “effective” educational practices and disavows humanistic, aesthetic, and moral perspectives about good and meaningful education. In accordance with this technical perspective, important knowledge is limited to what kinds of educational materials, curricula, and teaching strategies cause “good” learning for the average student.

This is an important issue to consider. If there is a benefit to the contemporary demands for SBR it is this intent to elevate the stature and importance of educational research and evaluation within the government and the society at large by offering a set of guiding research principles. These, in turn, advance the renewal of a strong scientific culture of open and constructive critique as the surest safeguard against bias and insufficient claims to know something about the educational world.

Yet, knowing what is “effective” for the average is but a small piece of the education puzzle. Left out are understandings of the quality of the learning experiences themselves, their potential for developing the human spirit as well as the human mind, and their connections to human pathos, community, and morality. In this pluralistic era, multiple frameworks for educational research and evaluation are well accepted and they are all vitally needed to refocus our national commitments on ensuring high-quality and equitable educational opportunities for all of our children. The real danger of “scientifically based research” is that its perceived rigor would still allow for the continued and *sanctioned* neglect of those who have been left out for generations.

William A. Morrill

Senior Fellow, Caliber Associates,
Fairfax, Virginia

The emphasis on SBR in education represents a substantial opportunity with a number of challenges embedded in the road to its realization. This view is built on four points:

1. *National resources supporting educational research and its application are embarrassingly inadequate, but not fixed.* Clarity of purpose, soundness of methodology, and a strategy with priorities can help to expand resources.
2. *The quality of the research is crucial and must start with real-world questions derived from educational settings.* All questions require a clear understanding of what, in fact, is known and a strategy for getting at the additional knowledge that is needed. Different methods are appropriate for different questions, but for causal impact questions, high-confidence answers require the best we know how to do, and that, in turn, requires random trials or quasi-experimental studies in combination with high-quality implementation studies. In the lifecycle of research on particular interventions, there is a logical sequence from small-scale to full-scale causal inference studies, unless the preliminary work has been done. It is also im-

portant that the research portfolio include studies of how students learn particular curricula, when basic questions about such learning are yet to be answered.

3. *The involvement of educators in research is increasingly recognized as necessary to ground the research in operational realities and increase its relevance and utility.* Learning communities are an example of techniques for achieving this goal, as they strengthen both the research and the capacity of educational institutions to internalize new knowledge. Furthermore, the value and use of research has been missing for too long from the education and training of teachers. If we are going to indeed *leave no child behind*, that gap must be closed to make the whole knowledge-building enterprise work.
4. *The inventory of random trials and sound quasi-experimental studies is insufficient* and educators will need to make choices in the near term based on other information and personal experience. It is important that such evidence be openly recognized as less than the best possible, yet certainly the best available at the time. Only with such candor will support for more rigorous work grow. In addition, it will be important to hone our priorities to focus on the most important issues from a user perspective as well as from a research or policy perspective. An agenda with this dual focus should overcome the challenges and lead to realizing the opportunities.

Bill McKersie

Project Director, Ohio High School Transformation Initiative at
Cleveland Heights High School, Cleveland, Ohio
Former Senior Officer, The Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio

Peter Robertson

Chief Research and Information Officer, Cleveland Municipal
School District, Cleveland, Ohio

We write from the front lines of urban education reform, where the knowledge and insight of researchers still is not well connected with the work of practitioners. Working within the district and through local foundations, we and others set out to help institutionalize these links in Cleveland four years ago. Since then the district’s data capacity has been overhauled, and the *CATALYST: For Cleveland Schools* newsmagazine has been established to independently monitor Cleveland school reform.

Unfortunately, organizing researchers and district leaders into a common unit has been a tough go. Only this year the Northeast Ohio Research Alliance (NORA) emerged—a partnership between local universities and nonprofit agencies to support research for enhanced student learning in the Cleveland school district—and it faces tenuous support from universities buffeted by funding cutbacks and busy school district leaders.

Our experience prompts us to be optimistic about the new federal emphasis on SBR. Our story, while underscoring the often repeated challenges of connecting researchers and practitioners, does suggest a way forward.

It is our hope that SBR mandates provide incentives for scholars to work with their local school districts in a sustained

manner on a selected set of priority research questions. School districts will not be the standard bearers of SBR as too few districts have research or program evaluation capacity, and few people at the state or local levels will push school districts on SBR.

The key will be to channel federal research monies in ways that shape the incentives and structures in research universities, leveraging more entities such as the Consortium on Chicago School Research and NORA. These should begin as small, high-level, locally based, and focused entities, with ample doses of foundation funding and mutual agreements about how to address the often divergent interests of practitioners and researchers. “Interest-based research” must become the watch phrase, guiding local teams of researchers and practitioners to commit to long-term partnerships that tackle technically and politically tough questions. If federal agencies, in defining research priori-

ties and budgets, can ferret out and fund such entities, they will become the catalysts for meaningful SBR.

Lisa Towne

Senior Program Officer, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.
Co-Editor of *Scientific Research in Education*

A strong belief in science as a tool to promote sound public policy led Congress to charter the National Academy of Sciences back in 1863. This quintessentially American ethos is as strong as ever and in recent years has manifested in nearly ubiquitous calls to transform education into an “evidence-based” field. Evaluators and reformers alike ought to stand up and cheer that the political elite are calling for research and evaluation to drive education reform.

Of course, rhetoric and reality do not always square up and implementation invariably involves devilish details. Politically devised definitions of research and evaluation can be alarming and there are other early indicators that are troubling. Expectations that SBR alone can and should find the ever-elusive silver bullet of reform sets up the field for certain failure, underestimates the complexity of education, and degrades the wisdom of practice. The notion of narrowing the field to a short list of questions and an even shorter list of “approved” methodologies is an uncomfortable prospect.

In this context the National Research Council, the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences, has assembled an interdisciplinary committee to articulate the nature of scientifically based research in education. The product of their deliberations, *Scientific Research in Education* (see box), strongly endorses a larger role for research in education reform, and clears up many of the dangerous misconceptions that crop up in implementing SBR. Science is an evolving enterprise that advances in fits and starts through the collective professional skepticism of the field; it is not a linear process that follows a strict algorithm. Science is enabled by the appropriate use of methods to address the question at hand; it is not, however, uniquely defined by methods, and certainly not by any one method.

We need clarity on these points as we go forward, and forward we should go as the opportunities definitely outweigh the challenges. Not since Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society of the 1960s have evaluators of social programs been so well positioned to do what they do best—harness the rigor of scientific inquiry for the service of the public good. As a profession that commingles the principles of science with the practical, yet often messy, purpose of improving programs, evaluation can help promote meaningful, systematic connections between research and reform. It is a long-term challenge to be sure, but one that must be met with all of the intellectual firepower and humility the profession can muster.

This special report was compiled by Holly Kreider, Project Manager at HFRP. She can be contacted by email at holly_kreider@harvard.edu.

Related Resources

Scientific Research in Education, the influential education report edited by Richard Shavelson and Lisa Towne in 2002, describes the nature of scientifically based education research and offers recommendations for how the federal government can best support high-quality scientific research in education. www.nap.edu/books/0309082919/html

In *Doing What Works: Scientifically Based Research in Education*, a recent article in *The Evaluation Exchange*, Suzanne Bouffard defines SBR and discusses its implementation challenges and implications for research and evaluation. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue21/bbt1.html

The **Campbell Collaboration** is an international effort designed to prepare and promote access to systematic reviews of studies on the **effects of social and educational policies and practices**. Systematic reviews provide high-quality evidence on “what works.” The Campbell Collaboration is also a partner in the development of the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse (see below). www.campbellcollaboration.org

The **What Works Clearinghouse** was established by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences to provide educators, policymakers, and the public with a central and independent source of scientific evidence of what works in education and to summarize evidence of the effectiveness of different programs, products, and strategies intended to enhance academic achievement and other important educational outcomes. www.w-w-c.org

How Schools of Education Can Strengthen Education Reform

Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, Dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and leading education historian, speaks to the role of schools of education in preparing future researchers and in contributing to the public discourse on education.

Schools of education can play critical roles in strengthening education reform. Schools of education should serve and shape professionals. We can help develop solid research skills among the next generation of educators, researchers, and evaluators. If we are a profession, there have to be things in common that we know and are able to do. For example, everybody who goes through a school of education should be introduced to education research and evaluation. Specifically, we need to teach students:

- *To be critical consumers of education research.* This is true whether they are going to be an education researcher or a first-grade math teacher.
- *To bring together quantitative and qualitative methods.* The split between quantitative and qualitative methods is way overdone, and everybody should have at least one core course that deals with various different methods.
- *To create “usable knowledge” by translating research findings into the kinds of tools and applications that educators and learners can use.* Students also should be able to take the problems of practice back to research.
- *To understand that education is an evidence-based craft.* Intuition and imagination are important, but teaching is not just an individual art. We must try to base decisions in educational practice on evidence.
- *To think about the purposes of education* through humanities in education—history, philosophy, and the arts. So often we think in technical terms—how can we do this as opposed to why are we doing it, which is also very important.

Schools of education can also powerfully *inform public discourse* about education reform. To be successful in the future education reform has to involve all of its constituents. However, the public has lost its sense of why public education matters. A coalition of education schools could help to rearticulate why public education is so vital. We ought to be finding more effective ways to push our research, thinking, and values into public debate and policymaking. This means testifying, writing to congress, and publishing op-eds that will shape public opinion. We should stand for reasoned, balanced debate, and evidence.

Schools of education can help the public, as well as future

educators, adopt *a broader conception of what good educational scholarship is*. I served on the committee that produced last year’s *Scientific Research in Education*¹ report. If you read that report carefully, it argues for a variety of different methods—not only for randomized trials and experiments, but also for quasi-experiments, case studies and ethnography, and educational history and philosophy. But only the first of these methods has been picked up in the public discourse. If we only do quasi-experimental and randomized trials, we are going to narrow what we can know about education. Humanistic approaches to the study of social phenomena are also very important, and schools of education can help broaden such conceptions.

Finally, schools of education can *conduct research to inform practice and policy*. Experimental research, for example, can deeply inform educational practices. A problem in education is that we conduct experiments every single day on every single kid in this country because many educational practices in schools have not been tested. There is no question that we need experiments. But we need to become much more explicit about experiments, and get the controls right so that ethical experimental research is possible.

Research in the future also can help people realize the importance of families and family processes. Families are crucial educators and social policies are needed that enable families to be families and have time with their children. Children spend so much time just studying for tests. I’m in favor of standards and testing, but other important things are being driven out by an excess of testing. I think we are not very family-friendly at a time when family values are being touted.

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Related Resource

Lagemann, E. C. (2000). *An elusive science: The troubling history of education research*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

¹ See box on page 14 for information on the report.

We need to teach students ... to create “usable knowledge” by translating research findings into the kinds of tools and applications that educators and learners can use.

“Cooking With Data” to Target Education Gaps

Craig Jerald of the Education Trust describes several basic ways of analyzing data to reveal a more complete picture of what education offers different groups of students.

The debate about who is to blame for large gaps in reading and math scores between minority and nonminority students has been playing out for decades in national education policy circles. However, only recently has this debate erupted with specificity in local communities, such as those in New York State last year.¹ It’s not hard to understand why. So far, fewer than half the states have published school- and district-level test scores broken out by race and poverty.

That soon will change. The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that all states publish test scores by race and poverty over the next year. It also requires them to institute accountability systems that hold schools and districts responsible for sufficient levels of achievement by each student group, including poor, African-American, and Latino students.

While some educators already have begun consciously working to close achievement gaps, many think of them as a normal and largely unavoidable consequence of differences in family background, a kind of natural phenomenon well outside of their control. Educational leaders and practitioners will have to seriously reexamine such beliefs if they hope to begin making a dent in local achievement gaps.

Robust data analysis can help get the ball rolling. To start, practitioners must begin to more aggressively investigate whether the things that matter *most* for student learning—qualified teachers, a rigorous curriculum, challenging courses, effective instruction, adequate time, and sufficient resources—are just as available to youngsters on the bottom of the achievement gap as they are to those on the top.

That’s no small order. The vast majority of American educators—classroom teachers and administrators alike—have never been trained to deal with quantitative information. Here’s where evaluators can help practitioners understand and use basic data tools.

One obstacle has to do with technical terminology. Statisticians have developed a technical language to describe what they do, but for people with no formal training in statistics, words like *disaggregated*, *longitudinal*, and *cross-tabulated* can seem incomprehensible. An overreliance on technical terminology also makes education data much harder to communicate to essential partners like families and community groups.

Let me offer my favorite example. Last year I decided to learn how to cook. I started with nearly no knowledge about cooking. My idea of a personal culinary achievement involved Cocoa Puffs and cold milk.

I purchased a couple of thick cookbooks and set out to learn my way around the kitchen. But I soon ran into a frustrating

obstacle—the cookbooks used words I didn’t know: *glaze*, *reduce*, *puree*, *brown*, *braise* The list went on and on!

Sometimes I’d try to figure out from context what the terms meant. But words like *reduce* flummoxed me. Fresh ingredients were expensive; why would anyone want to “reduce” them? Should I “brown” the meat with a crayon or a magic marker? I very nearly gave up in frustration.

Over time, however, the words have become less mysterious to me, and I am beginning to realize that cooking isn’t as complicated as those technical words at first made it seem. I also have learned that I can accomplish most of what I need to do in the kitchen with just a handful of basic maneuvers. The same, I believe, is true of basic educational data tools.

Below I offer three basic ways to analyze data that go beyond the tried and true averages and basic percentages. While averages are useful for making generalizations about, say, a group of students, they often obscure just as much as they reveal. The key is to *dig beneath the averages* to reveal a more complete picture of what an education system offers different groups of students.

Technique One: Disaggregate

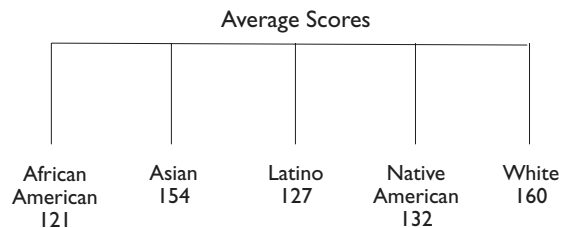
I like to think of this as *slicing* a piece of data to find out what the picture looks like for different subgroups hidden within an average or basic percentage. For example, the average score on the nation’s eighth-grade science test is 149, but that average is substantially different among different groups of eighth graders (see figure 1).

Technique Two: “Longitudinate”

I know that “longitudinate” isn’t exactly a real word, but it’s a chef’s privilege to coin words in his own kitchen! What I mean is looking at data over time with what are known as “longitudi-

Figure 1: Disaggregate

- Start with simple statistics—averages, percentages
- Disaggregate = “slicing” a piece of data

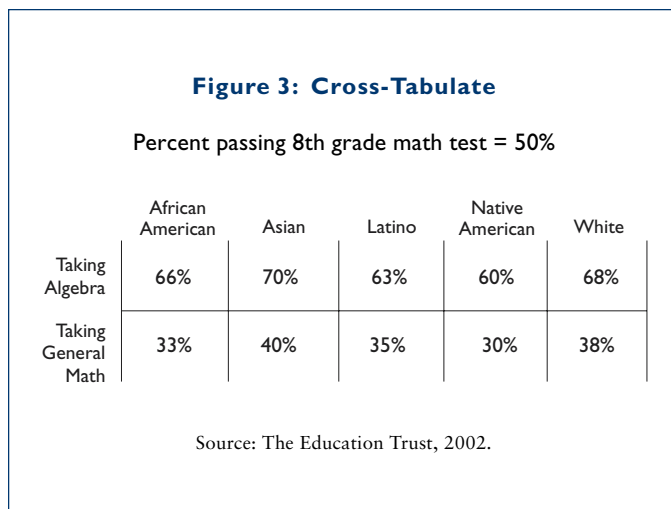
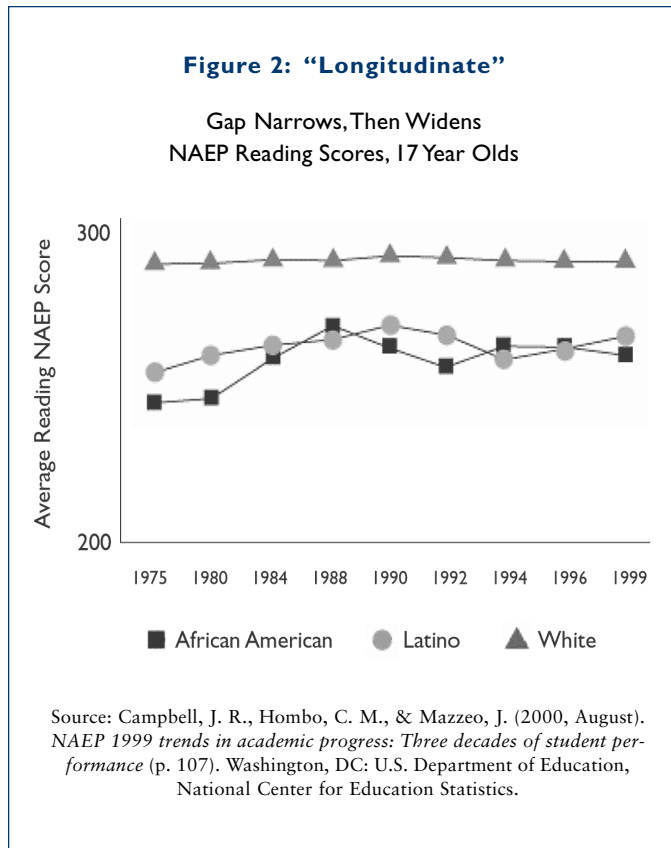


Source: The Education Trust, 2002.

¹ Hartocollis, A. (2002, March 28). Racial gap in test scores found across New York. *New York Times*, pp. A1.

nal” statistics. I like to think of this as stretching a simple statistic out over a period of weeks, months, or years.

Obviously, such statistics are important for finding out whether something is getting better or worse. However, stretching a disaggregated statistic also can tell you whether things are getting more or less equal over time. For example, we know that during the 1970s and 1980s U.S. achievement gaps narrowed substantially, but during the 1990s they stayed the same or grew slightly wider (see figure 2).



Technique Three: Cross-Tabulate

If disaggregating is like slicing, cross-tabulating is like dicing. Dicing data offers valuable glimpses into how an education system advantages or disadvantages different groups of students, and how the situation can be improved.

Here’s how it works. Begin by slicing a simple statistic by race, family income, or some other student characteristic. Then dice it by an important educational opportunity.

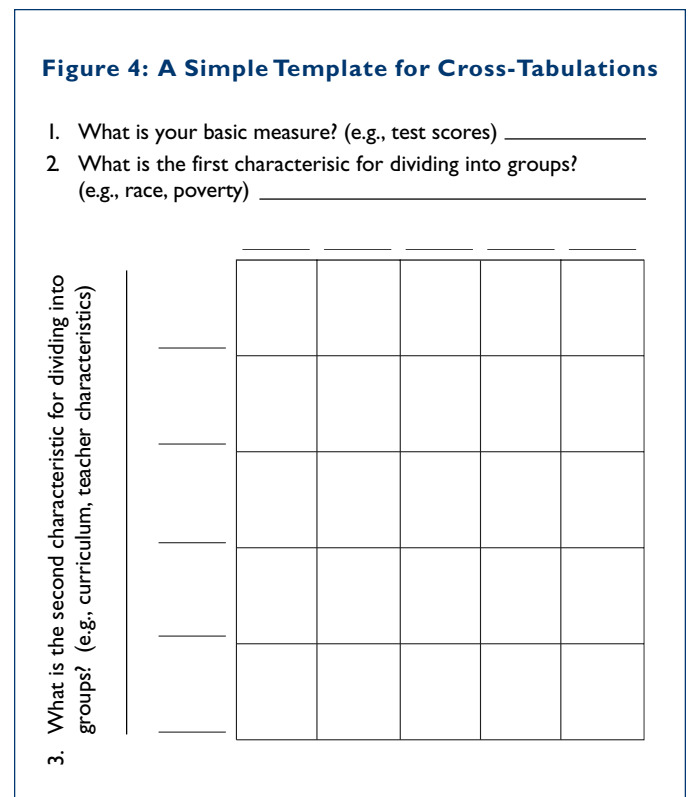
Say, for example, that you slice the 50 percent passing rate on your district’s eighth-grade math test and find large achievement gaps by race. Next dice those numbers by another set of student groups—those taking algebra and those taking only general math, for example, and another pattern will likely emerge, one that shows a gap not only by race, but also by course level and curriculum (see figure 3).

* * * * *

These basic ways of analyzing data depend on obtaining data for analysis. Because many state and local education officials are unused to providing data, obtaining data can be a time-consuming and difficult task. But there are tactics that make acquiring data easier too.

Data Matrices

I often resort to a simple template for planning and requesting cross-tabulations. The “matrix,” as I call it, is an easy way to describe to officials what cross-tabulated data you want by framing it as a fill-in-the-blanks request (see figure 4).



> beyond basic training

Creative Data Linkages

I also have found that it helps to become informed about what information your local education organizations collect. If someone tells you that a question can't be answered by the data files on hand, ask for a full list of all of the data elements in those files. By looking for connections across them, you can determine whether it would be possible to link them up to answer your questions.

For example, if a district has a data file on secondary courses taught in the district, a file on teachers in the district, and a file on schools, it might be possible to combine them to answer the question, What percentage of high school courses are taught by uncertified teachers in the district's high-poverty versus low-poverty schools? (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Push for Data Creativity

Sam Puree Unified tells you it can't dice teacher certification by school poverty level, because it "doesn't have all of those things in one file."

A course-level file including who teaches the course

A teacher-level file with each teacher's subject-area certification and which school he or she is at

A school-level file with student demographics

Now that federal law requires closing the achievement gaps that have plagued American society for decades, educators have a choice. They can commit to taking action by improving the distribution of educational opportunities and resources, or they can continue to believe that they are powerless because family circumstances ultimately determine learning.

Here's my advice. Test your assumptions. Slice and dice the data. Dig beneath the averages. Make sure you know how your system works differently for different groups of students. You'll be surprised at how much progress you can make by identifying and eliminating opportunity gaps in your own backyard.

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Excerpted from: Jerald, C. (2003). "Cooking with data" to reduce achievement gaps. ENC Focus, 10(1), 24-28. Available at: www.enc.org/features/focus/archive/data/document.shtm?input=FOC-003007-index. Reproduced with permission from Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (www.enc.org).

Using a Framework Approach

continued from page 7

- The behavioral model offers a systematic and visual means of understanding the factors that can influence an individual's behavior.

Although the framework draws on lessons learned in the field, it does not "tell you what to do" or try to define every aspect of a complex issue. The model recognizes that an individual's decision to take a specific action involves a complex mix of attitudes, intentions, constraints, behaviors, and past experiences. The value of this approach lies in its ability to reduce, but not eliminate that complexity by elucidating the distinctions among types of influences on decisions. The approach can help us recognize the important differences between individuals as they go through the decision-making process.

For more information, visit RAND's website at www.rand.org/child/projects/effinlearn.html.

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New Resources From HFRP

The Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) has added two new resources to the FINE website (www.finenetwork.org):

- An updated bibliography on family involvement and student achievement. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/bibliography/student-achievement.html
- The Spring 2003 issue of the *FINE Forum* e-newsletter. This edition examines promising practices centered on family involvement in mathematics, including a university-school partnership, teacher-led innovations, and parent-initiated projects. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/fineforum/forum6/director.html

Balancing Priorities in the Evaluation of Educational Technology

Education reform policies place new emphasis on educational technology. Katherine McMillan Culp and Margaret Honey from the Center for Children and Technology have learned the importance of research rigor and local validity in their evaluations of educational technology.

For 22 years Education Development Center's Center for Children and Technology (CCT) has explored how new technologies foster learning and improve teaching in schools and informal learning settings.

CCT partners with diverse organizations, including schools and districts, private and corporate philanthropy, government and policy groups, cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, and after school programs that are working to bridge the digital divide. Working closely with practicing educators, administrators, policymakers, and curriculum and tool developers has pushed us as researchers to reflect regularly on our theoretical and methodological groundings, and to strive to conduct our research in ways that are respectful of and responsive to the needs and priorities of the educators whose work we hope to inform and support.

In our evaluation projects, we seek to produce findings that can improve programs and practice at every level of program development, delivery, and implementation. All of our evaluation work begins from a belief that effective evaluation must produce both research-based knowledge of how technological applications can best support teaching and learning, as well as practice-based knowledge of how the technology integration process can best be designed to meet locally defined learning goals in schools. Conducting rigorous research while maintaining a high level of local validity and utility is our primary goal for all of our evaluation projects.

Below we share two examples of our approach to evaluation, each of which illustrates a response to a specific challenge to balance these multiple priorities.

What Is the Right Level of Analysis?

Some of the most challenging work we have done recently has involved bringing our evaluation strategies to bear on large-scale projects that reach tens and even hundreds of thousands of teachers. Working in this context has challenged us to find new ways to sustain our emphasis on producing locally relevant findings while also developing a broad portrait of program reception and impact.

Intel Teach to the Future is a professional development program for K–12 teachers that reaches in-service and preservice teachers in 29 countries. The primary focus of our evaluation has been the U.S. program for in-service teachers, which has reached over 100,000 teachers over the past three years. The Intel Teach to the Future curriculum focuses on helping teachers support students in pursuing original inquiries and long-term projects, and invites teachers to create a unit plan that includes student use of software to create publications and presentations that communicate their findings. This structure

allows teachers to expand their technical skills in the context of a curriculum development process.

Throughout this evaluation, now in its third year, we have combined in-depth examination of the program's implementation and impact in specific contexts with broad looks at the same topics across a much larger sample of the participants. Our initial focus was on how participation in the program might be changing teachers' practices and overall use of technology. However, over time, both elements of our data collection have demonstrated that while the program has had a considerable impact on participants' ability to integrate technology into their teaching, it is also having a more systemic impact at the school and district level.

For example, some districts are reshaping their overall professional development programs about technology to create a sequence of trainings that are consistent with the approach taken by Intel Teach to the Future. Consequently, we have designed our third-year data collection to examine these school- and district-level impacts more systematically, which will result in a more complete picture of the impact of this unusually large-scale professional development initiative.

What Are the Key Factors for Success?

Clients often hope that evaluations will not only determine the relative success of their program, but also help them to understand what makes the program successful. Paying careful attention to emerging formative evaluation findings has allowed us, in many evaluations, to begin hypothesizing about these factors early on and to refine our examination and definition of them over time.

Since 1997, the CCT has evaluated IBM's Reinventing Education initiative. Reinventing Education has charted a distinctive course focused on cultivating long-term, flexible educational research and development partnerships with urban school districts and state education departments. These partnerships respond directly to the immediate needs of each partner state or district, whether targeted on student achievement, teacher professional development, or some other dimension of the reform process, with an eye toward producing systemic reforms that can alter teaching practice and the circumstances of student learning across subject areas.

After a pilot study in 1996–1997, CCT engaged in a comprehensive study of how the specific solutions to each site's needs were being developed and implemented, and the impact they were having on schools. Our study focused on how the Reinventing Education program was helping to address the specific educational challenges identified by each site, but also sought to understand what common challenges and opportunities were emerging at each site, and what factors shaped the likelihood of success in each site. The evaluation included: (1) measures customized to gather data about the nature of the particular problem, the design and implementation of each site's solution, and its impact over several years; and (2) questions and methods

continued on page 20

Designing Evaluations to Match Program Development

E. Kinney Zalesne reveals how College Summit since its inception has used evaluation techniques that correspond to the different stages of the program's development.

The College Summit program is based on the premise that many high-potential, low-income students do not attend college because they are unaware of their options and have difficulty navigating the college admissions process. The program seeks to remedy this situation with three core components, all designed to improve the college-going culture in low-income schools:

1. *Four-day summer workshops* in which the most influential 20% of a high school's rising seniors—mid-tier performers chosen by their teachers as being “better than their numbers”—complete their college applications. These “peer leaders” return to school their senior year with a plan for college and a confidence that their classmates cannot ignore.
2. *Training and support for high school teachers* to help them play the “manager” role that college-experienced parents play in higher-income communities. The combination of trained teachers and peer leaders triggers lasting change in the schools' culture of postsecondary planning.
3. *Partnerships with colleges who host the workshops*, and in return receive early, pre-screened portfolios of students most likely to do well on their campuses.

Internal Evaluation

Since its beginning, College Summit has used internal evaluation for continuous improvement and to track program performance. All workshop students and staff rate the workshops on various dimensions. Ratings are used formatively to improve workshop content and process. Data over time have shown improvement in workshop ratings, especially where curricular changes have been made.

The program also tracks college enrollment and retention. Student participants are contacted the fall after high school graduation to determine if they have enrolled in college. Once enrollment is determined, 50 percent of college enrollees from each workshop are randomly selected, and students' registrars at their respective colleges are contacted to assess college retention, defined as persistence toward graduation. Internal evaluation data reveal that about 80 percent of participants who graduate from high school enroll in college, and retention rates average about 80 percent.

External Evaluation

Now that the program has had time to develop, two separate external evaluations in Chicago and California are examining program impact.

Both evaluations will examine the impact of College Summit on the college-going culture of participating schools. The Chicago evaluation, being conducted by Public/Private Ventures,¹ has already helped guide College Summit toward a more struc-

tured, school-day implementation of its senior-year curriculum. Ultimately, the summative evaluation will compare the college enrollment and retention rates of participating high schools before and after College Summit's intervention.

Similarly, the California evaluation² will measure the program's impact on whole schools' college enrollment and retention. Once the model is fully implemented, entire senior classes' enrollment and retention data will be tracked over time and compared to baseline data.

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¹ The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education are funding the first stage of the Chicago evaluation.

² The James Irvine Foundation is funding the California evaluation.

Balancing Priorities

continued from page 19

that were common across districts that helped us to decipher implementation and sustainability issues more generally.

Over time, we have found that while there is enormous variation among the participating districts and states, a clear set of common factors—including consistent sustained leadership, clarity of goals for student learning, and commitment to investing in professional development—have shaped their abilities to build on and benefit from their partnership with IBM.

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For more information about Intel Teach to the Future, visit www.intel.com/education/teach. For more information about IBM Reinventing Education, visit www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives/grant/education/programs/reinventing.

Flexibility and Feedback in a Formative Evaluation

Marjorie Wechsler of SRI and Jane David of the Bay Area Research Group describe the importance of flexibility and feedback in conducting formative evaluation.

How do you evaluate a reform agenda that is constantly adapting to changing circumstances and feedback? That is the challenge we face as formative evaluators for the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). Created in 1995 in response to the Hewlett-Annenberg Challenge,¹ BASRC is a San Francisco-based reform organization dedicated to improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap. Schools and districts receiving BASRC funds participate in regional networking opportunities and inquiry-focused activities around teacher practices, equity, assessment, and leadership. The cornerstone of BASRC is inquiry- and data-driven decision making—not just for its grantees, but for itself. Accordingly, BASRC contracted with the Bay Area Research Group and SRI International to conduct a formative evaluation to help increase its effectiveness.

Given BASRC's learning stance and the developmental nature of its work, the goal of our formative evaluation is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its organizational learning. Ironically, it is BASRC's learning stance that complicates our task, because as BASRC learns, it adopts new strategies for supporting reform. With the launch of its second five-year funding period in 2001, BASRC changed from focusing on individual schools to providing support for collaboratives of schools and their districts. In 2002 BASRC again shifted its emphasis, providing comprehensive support to five districts and lighter support for school collaboratives in other districts.

Asking the Right Questions

Our research questions not only get at the heart of our formative task, but also remain pertinent in a changing environment. The following overarching questions guide our work: To what extent are BASRC's strategies to promote and support reform effective? How might they become more effective, through either modifying or better implementing the current strategies? For each of BASRC's primary strategies, we gather data to answer three questions:

1. Is the intent of the strategy clear to BASRC staff and to the field?
2. Is the implementation of the strategy consistent with its intent?
3. Does the strategy contribute constructively to the progress of reform in schools and districts?

Each question includes an implied "why or why not," from which we draw inferences about how strategies might be better designed, targeted, or strengthened in practice. These questions are applicable to any new strategies implemented.

¹ In 1995, the Hewlett-Annenberg Challenge was established for public school renewal in the San Francisco Bay area's six counties. The five-year \$100 million grant has been supported by William R. Hewlett, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, and matching local funds.

Being Flexible and Responsive

Because BASRC's reform effort is complex and is coupled with a serious attempt to learn along the way and adjust accordingly, plans never roll out exactly as expected. As BASRC adjusts to feedback from the field directly and from us, its plans and strategies change. Our evaluation tasks must change accordingly. For example, when BASRC's focus on creating collaboratives of schools shifted to concentrating attention on both schools and central offices in fewer districts, our emphasis shifted as well.

Timely Feedback

BASRC develops its annual strategic plan for the following academic year while it is still implementing the plan for the current year. Our feedback must correspond with BASRC's planning and decision-making cycles. Therefore, an end-of-year report is not sufficient. BASRC also needs just-in-time feedback so it does not waste time or resources on failing strategies and builds on success.

Continual Feedback

We provide feedback in multiple ways throughout the year, including brief memos and occasional reports summarizing data collected from grantees, "real-time" feedback during events, and frequent email and conversations with staff in response to observations or questions. We meet regularly with planning groups and with management teams to present findings, hear reactions to our interpretations, discuss strategies, and solicit their questions to guide subsequent inquiries. Such an approach encourages staff to think about what their next steps will be. The key to making feedback useful is to ensure that there is a mechanism for translating the results into actions.

Our guiding questions and flexible stance have enabled us to provide constructive feedback to BASRC. Some of our influence is tangible. For example, our recommendations contributed to BASRC's decision to differentiate training for experienced and novice reform coaches who help schools implement inquiry-based practices. Often our influence is subtler. For example, we may steer thinking in a different direction by the questions we raise, or provide validation to support a decision. Either way, our task as formative evaluators is to focus on BASRC's strategies and actions that are amenable to feedback and improvement, and to direct our energies and BASRC's attention to the areas where changes will have the biggest impact on its grantees.

For more information visit SRI's website at: www.sri.com/policy/cep/edreform/BASRC.htm.

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Participatory Action Research

continued from page 6

In a second three-day camp students analyzed qualitative survey responses, focus group transcripts, and field notes and interview transcripts from school visits, working across borders of race, ethnicity, class, neighborhood, and biography. They also developed an interview schedule to be used with a sample of recent graduates.

We are working with youth researchers to “speak back” to their schools. Now one year into the project, youth present critical data to their schools about themselves and their peers who filled out our survey. At a recent “speak back” an African-American male, Nozier, raised a concern about unfair disciplinary practices to the almost all-white teacher group, “I’ve spent lots of time in the suspension room ... and you notice it’s mostly black, right?” Hesitant nods were followed by immediate explanations about how in June it gets whiter or “sometimes there are white kids, maybe when you’re not there.” But Nozier persisted, with the courage of speaking his mind to educators who may or may not listen, standing with peers across racial and ethnic groups—peers he would not have suspected as supportive before—and adults who bore witness as he spoke truth to power.

Nozier is no more optimistic than we that his critique will transform his local school policy. But in a chorus, he joins a movement of youth asking America to make good on the promises of Brown versus the Board of Education. In his presentation he assures us that he will not “walk away, to swagger the policies of life,” that instead he will continue to deepen his analysis and outrage, using the critical skills of participatory research toward social justice.

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Reframing Accountability

continued from page 10

and collective responsibility, as well as a willingness to take action. Community-organizing groups share a set of practices, such as “one-on-ones” and “house meetings,” that build a culture in which relationships are not personal, but “public” in the sense that they lead to collective action.

The Added Value of Public Accountability

You can judge an accountability system by its ability to produce relevant information, motivate individuals, build knowledge to improve practice, and allocate resources appropriately (O’Day, 2002, p. 294). Standing alone, none of the three forms of accountability will work to accomplish these ends. Neither bureaucratic nor professional accountability can be fully realized without public accountability.

The added value of public accountability is to enhance the use of information generated by bureaucratic accountability by mobilizing the school community to take action in light of the data. In addition, the practices related to building joint ownership can stimulate, strengthen, and sustain the kind of collaborative school culture in which professional accountability flourishes. Finally, public accountability addresses resource allocation by generating the political will to stimulate action in the interest of low-income students. Although public accountability is not widely acknowledged, we feel that it is essential for improving urban public schools.

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In this section HFRP offers “New and Noteworthy” resources on the evaluation of education reform efforts, including reports, tools, and organizations of interest.

Books, Reports, and Journal Articles

The Annenberg Foundation. (2002). *The Annenberg Challenge: Lessons and reflections on public school reform*. Providence, RI: Author. This publication outlines the achievements and failures of the Annenberg Challenge’s efforts to improve public education and summarizes its use of intermediary organizations to facilitate large-scale urban reform. www.annenbergchallenge.org/pubs/Lessons/lessons.html

Bloom, H. (2003). Using “short” interrupted time-series analysis to measure the impacts of whole-school reforms: With applications to a study of accelerated schools. *Evaluation Review*, 27(1), 3–49. This article introduces a new approach for measuring the impacts of whole-school reform, discussing a conceptual rationale, statistical procedures, an explanation for interpreting findings, and strengths and limits of the approach. The approach is illustrated through an evaluation of Accelerated Schools, a major whole-school reform.

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2002, November). *Comprehensive school reform and student achievement: A meta-analysis* (Report No. 59). Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Johns Hopkins University. This evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform initiatives explores whether these models and their effects on student populations are statistically significant and whether or not there is adequate evidence to identify successful programs. www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report59.pdf (Acrobat file)

Center on Education Policy. (2003, January). *From the capital to the classroom: State and federal efforts to implement the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: Author. This report is the “first comprehensive study” on the execution of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The report provides assessment and conclusions and includes a list of “issues to watch” as NCLB continues. www.ctredpol.org/pubs/nclb_full_report_jan2003/nclb_full_report_jan2003.htm

Chatterji, M. (2002, Fall). Models and methods for examining standards-based reforms and accountability initiatives: Have the tools of inquiry answered pressing questions on improving schools? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 345–386. In this synthesis of research on standards-based reform and accountability, the author concludes that studies have not been systemic in design and are therefore not adequate to help direct schools.

Gott, R., & Duggan, S. (2003). *Understanding and using scientific evidence: How to critically evaluate data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. This book outlines the importance of critical analysis of scientific evidence and lays out the principles of scientific investigation so that readers will be better prepared to understand, collect, and explain data. www.sagepub.com/book.aspx?pid=5160

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. This synthesis of over 50 research studies since 1995 explores the effects of different models of school, family, and commu-

nity connections on student achievement. www.seidl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam33.html

Miron, G., & Horn, J. (2002, September). *Evaluation of Connecticut charter school and the charter school initiative, final report*. Kalamazoo, MI: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University. This study contains findings from the evaluation of the charter school initiative in Connecticut. The report contains school-specific data from the operating schools, while focusing on an evaluation of the initiative as a whole. www.wmich.edu/evalctr/charter/ctcharter.html

Nevo, D. (Ed.). (2002). *School-based evaluation: An international perspective*. Amsterdam, Holland: JAI. This volume discusses the concept of school-based evaluation and presents case studies of school evaluations from across the world. The book advocates for a combination of both internal and external evaluation for the benefit of school accountability and school improvement. www.elsevier.com/inca/publications/store/6/2/4/6/0/4

Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform. (2002). *Miles to go: Reflections on mid-course corrections for standards-based reform*. Bethesda, MD: Education Week Press. After 12 years, the Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform held its final meeting in June of 2002, the result of which is this last collection of short essays on standards-based reform issues. Authors include Deborah McGriff, Sandra Feldman, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Checker Finn, among others. To order call Education Week Press at 800-346-1834.

Quigley, D. D. (2000, November). *Parents and teachers working together to support third-grade achievement: Parents as Learning Partners (PLP) findings*. Los Angeles: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, University of California. This report describes, evaluates, and summarizes findings of one initiative developed to unify parents and teachers in the goal of supporting children’s academic progress. The report focuses on communication, parenting, and learning at home. www.cse.ucla.edu/CRESST/Summary/530.htm

Evaluation Tools and Resources

The Rhode Island Department of Education’s School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) survey system measures educational progress of Rhode Island schools. Results of these survey efforts provide an annual representation of school climate, student academic progress, social skills, and parent involvement that can be used to examine education reforms over time. www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2002/default.asp

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform’s toolbox for accountability offers practical approaches to gauge the progress of school reform and to improve student achievement. The site includes a “drawer” for surveys and an upcoming drawer on standardized testing. www.annenberginstitute.org/publications/toolbox.html

Organizations of Interest

The Civil Rights Project (CRP) (www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu) at Harvard University is a leading organization devoted to civil rights research, focusing on diverse aspects of K–16 education reform including: bilingual education, resegregation trends, benefits of racial

diversity on education, dropout tendencies and remedies, impacts of Title I reforms on minority children, high-stakes testing, and racial disparities in school discipline and special education. Some of CPR's most recent work related to K–12 education includes:

- Frankenberg, E., Chungmei, L., & Orfield, G. (2003, January). *A multiracial society with segregated schools: Are we losing the dream?* Cambridge, MA: Civil Rights Project. This study focuses on national resegregation trends in American public schools and highlights patterns of racial enrollment and segregation at all levels of public schools (national, regional, state, and district). www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/reseg03/reseg03_full.php
- Ma, J. (2002, June) *What works for the children? What we know and don't know about bilingual education.* Cambridge, MA: Civil Rights Project. This paper weighs evidence to consider whether English immersion programs in California have improved education for English language learners. www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/bilingual02/bilingual_paper02.php
- Civil Rights Project. (2002, June). *Racial inequity in special education: Executive summary for federal policy makers.* Cambridge, MA: Author. This study highlights how inappropriate practices in both general and special education classrooms have resulted in overrepresentation, misclassification, and hardship for minority students, particularly black children. www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/specialed/IDEA_paper02.php

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) (www.cpre.org) unites researchers from leading research institutions in an effort to improve elementary and secondary education through practical research. CPRE is currently examining how alternative ap-

proaches to reform—such as instructional improvement, new accountability policies, teacher compensation, and whole school reform approach—address issues of coherence, incentive, and capacity. Some of CPRE's recent work includes:

- Consortium for Policy Research in Education. (2003, March). *Systemic reform in practice: Merck Institute for Science Education.* Philadelphia, PA: Author. This publication describes the implementation and impact of the Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) program, in which MISE partnered with four school districts to improve teaching and learning in science. www.cpre.org/Publications/mise.pdf (Acrobat file)
- Tighe, E., Wang, A., & Foley, E. (2002, February). *An analysis of the effect of Children Achieving on student achievement in Philadelphia elementary schools.* Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education. This report evaluates the Children Achieving Challenge, a systemic reform initiative in Philadelphia's public schools. www.cpre.org/Publications/children06.pdf (Acrobat file)
- *Evaluation of Title I accountability systems and school improvement efforts (TASSIE).* (forthcoming). A five-year evaluation of Title I accountability systems, conducted by SRI and CPRE. To review the project's goals and study design and track the progress of the effort, go to www.tassieonline.org/index.html.

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