

Resisting the Sirens of Teacher Induction

By *Kate Walsh*



Kate Walsh

Let's begin on common ground. I love teacher induction. What's not to love? Instead of throwing new teachers into a lion's den, they are bestowed with frequent doses of wisdom and experience from the school's veteran teachers and blessed with schedules that provide ample time for reflection, observation, sharing, and dialogue.

I'll admit that this description may contain a tinge of sarcasm—but it isn't because I don't find induction seductive. My skepticism lies in the tendency of induction proponents to misrepresent or gloss over the true costs of "high-quality" induction that they are prescribing. Most importantly, no matter how much money we invest into these Cadillac programs, it won't solve the delivery problem. Induction, highly dependent on the quality of personnel in the school building, is least likely to work where it's needed the most.

The truth is that the price tag for implementing the kind of induction programs that are being touted is not inconsequential. Actual numbers are anyone's guess because costs are only discussed in the context of "You can't afford not to act." There is no shortage of pen and ink demanding high-quality induction programs, but the costs are treated as somehow too crass to consider. The hue and cry to fund universal teacher induction as the reform de jour gets louder, politicians are lured in by the rheto-

ric, and once again we delude ourselves that lots of money will cure the endlessly complex dysfunction that characterizes all too many of our schools.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) is the latest group calling for more and better teacher induction in a report released last month entitled "Tapping the Potential: Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers." The report uses a figure from National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) that estimates that teacher attrition costs \$12,500 per exiting teacher, building a case for states and school districts that argues they can no longer afford to ignore this problem.

However, arguments based on fiscal responsibility are a bit disingenuous, however well-intentioned. AEE's five-point induction program would probably cost about as much as attrition is costing school districts—and that's assuming induction is 100 percent effective and nobody quits. In a former job, I helped to build a high-quality mentoring program, one of only five elements of AEE's design, and it cost about \$8,000 per new teacher per year. Yet AEE contends that its induction program can be done for \$4,000 per teacher and can still build in additional features such as common planning time, ongoing professional development, an external network for teachers, and top it all off with a meaningful evaluation. Even AEE's report doesn't provide any evidence that its design won't be too costly to swallow; not one of the real-life case studies described in the report is able to offer the fully comprehensive induction program that AEE would have districts adopt.

OK, so even if we concede that the kind of program that AEE and others have called for would cost a bundle, isn't it worth it in terms of the damage that prematurely departing teachers have on student achievement? That brings me to my second problem.

Any chance that induction has of working is premised on new teachers being placed in a reasonably well-functioning school that is

led by a good principal and offers a healthy number of available skilled veteran teachers who can provide a big chunk of their time to the cause. Here's the rub: If any of these things were actually true, there'd be no need for these Cadillac induction programs. It's a Catch 22. Good schools don't really need these costly programs (which is not to say nothing is needed; a Chevy will do); weak schools aren't likely to be capable of delivering them with much success. So we not only continue to bleed teachers, we waste a lot of money too.



What is not adequately considered are the chief reasons that many new teachers decide to quit, especially those with other options.

What is not adequately considered are the chief reasons that many new teachers decide to quit, especially those with other options. Most often it's not the kids, but the dysfunctional culture of school systems and the non-sensical daily decisions made by the other adults in their buildings. And if the plan is to get around this problem by handing the responsibility of implementing induction

over to the districts—a move that violates one of the precepts of good induction—that is an even more absurd suggestion. If decision-making at the school level doesn't make sense, you can count on the decisions made at the district level to be even more removed from what is best for kids.

All of this skepticism is not to suggest that supporting new teachers is a waste of time and resources. AEE is right in saying that some strategies work much better than others. However, before we launch into calls for universal funding from the feds, as the AEE report does, we need to understand that all the funding in the world will not transform schools that have been proven incapable of holding on to teachers. We also need to acknowledge that we don't know what the three, five, or ten criteria of a successful induction program are or what features would be considered an add-on versus a must-have. Not even considered by the AEE report, for instance, is the European model of reducing course loads for new teachers, a stress-reduction strategy that is

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Learning Requires More Than Play

By J.E. Stone

Editor's Note—

Over the summer we are reprinting a number of articles that appeared in previous editions of Education Matters. Our newer members have not had the privilege of reading some of those "Golden Oldies." The articles selected received the most positive responses from our members. You may also want to revisit the newsletter section of our web-site and check out other selected articles from previous editions of Education Matters. **EM**



J.E. Stone

For years educational experts have held that the only good way to engage students in schoolwork is by making it exciting, engaging, and fun. Students have been expected to study and learn but only if the subject

wasn't boring. The public has been told that school facilities must be attractive, books colorful, and, above all, studies must be "intrinsically" interesting. Teachers have been expected to be stimulating but not obtrusive, challenging but not demanding of overexertion. They have been told that if their teaching is truly enthusiastic, innovative, and creative, students will learn spontaneously, if not effortlessly.

Laurence Steinberg's *Beyond the Classroom, Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need to Do* (Simon & Schuster, 1996) takes a decidedly different view of why successful students pay attention, complete their assignments, and succeed. Distilling the results of studies carried out over ten years, Steinberg concludes that high-achieving students treat their studies as work, not fun and games. Although the central point of Steinberg's research pertains to parent and peer influences, his broader message is that successful students approach school as an important opportunity and they work hard to make the most of it. A growing number of experts agree with his observation.

Dr. Tommy Tomlinson, the researcher who was instrumental in producing the "Nation at Risk" report, similarly identified student effort as the inescapable essential for school improvement.

After 25 years of trying to fix things, it is time to face a few facts of human nature: Setting higher standards and expectations is one thing, persuad-

ing students to try harder is another. Students who study too little, learn too little; and educational reforms that do not change the study habits of students are unlikely to improve achievement.

In fact, what Steinberg, Tomlinson, and so many other experts are finding reflects an often disagreeable truth about learning: Learning takes study and study takes time and effort. Today's students are immersed in a world of competing attractions; and no matter how teachers go about making learning attractive, students responding only to "edutainment" are unlikely to make the kind of effort that quality learning requires.

The idea that learning should be motivated solely by interest and enthusiasm not only ignores the role of work, but also skews the focus of education. Despite the fact that learning requires a concerted effort by the student, teachers and parents frequently finding themselves doing most of the work. They may arrange stimulating lessons and dutifully help with homework but little is accomplished if the student makes no more than a token effort to learn. So long as the student is expected to make an effort only when he or she feels genuinely inspired, study is merely an option, not a responsibility.

A Student Work Ethic is Indispensable

As an educational psychologist, I have no disagreement with learning that is exciting, engaging, and thoroughly enjoyable. What I find unrealistic, however, is the pedagogical orthodoxy that worthwhile learning occurs only when studies are exciting and fun. In truth, many valuable lessons in both school and daily life are not fun at all.

Students who study because they feel obliged to do so (i.e., who study even when they do not feel especially interested or enthused) learn both the easy lessons and the difficult ones; and they learn something important about life as well. They learn that real achievement usually requires a real effort.

If parents, teachers, and, indeed, the larger society want children to benefit fully from school, they must insist that students study and make an effort to learn whether they feel like it or not. However, increased effort will not somehow ensure academic excellence for all, it will ensure improved achievement for virtually all. Even with their best effort, some students will not achieve within expected time frames. Nevertheless, a level of effort

commensurate with timely achievement is a reasonable expectation.

American expenditures on schooling are some of the highest in the world; yet attendance, not study, is compulsory. The result is cost-ineffectiveness on a grand scale. Taxpayers are providing educational opportunities and students are wasting them. Many teachers find students attentiveness and diligence so lacking that many no longer expect them. Longer school days and school years are required to overcome the resulting inefficiencies. Progressively smaller pupil/teacher ratios are needed to accommodate the resulting differences in achievement and rates of progress. Progressively greater curricular overlap from grade to grade is needed to accommodate increasingly varied levels of entry-level skills. All of the above require the hiring of more teachers and other school personnel.

In general, more of that which the average student used to learn in elementary school is now learned in high school, and more of that which was formerly learned in high school is now learned in college. Colleges divert ever greater resources into remedial studies. Taken together, these trends are resulting in increasing expenditures that produce little net change in academic achievement. Given that education is already the greatest single element of governmental expenditure, the efficiency with which students make use of publicly funded educational opportunities has a significant bearing on taxes. If schools continue to ignore this relationship, they are on a collision course with reality.

A Work Ethic Can Be Learned

In my view, one of the greatest improvements that could be made in education would be to convince parents, teachers, students, and the public that "no pain, no gain" applies to learning just as it does to athletics and other worthwhile endeavors. For the most part, individuals who have distinguished themselves know that meaningful accomplishment in any endeavor takes hard work because they themselves have

worked hard. Of course, there are individuals whose unusual talents or fortunate circumstances afforded them success with little effort or sacrifice but they are the exceptions. Permitting or encouraging young people to believe that they too "can have it all" without a determined effort is a disservice to them and to their communities.

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NAS Laments Decline in Reading; Cites Parallel with Decline of Higher Education

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) offered reflections on the release of *Reading at Risk*, a major survey by the National Endowment for the Arts, underscoring the decline of literacy and reading among adult Americans. According to the survey's report, reading of any kind has diminished significantly, especially within the 18- to 24-year-old range. Particularly striking, though, was the report's finding of a steep decline in the percentage of readers who avail themselves, even minimally, of the canonical works of British and American literature in poetry, fiction, or drama.

NAS President Stephen H. Balch assessed this ominous trend: "While undoubtedly multiple factors have combined to produce this sorry state of affairs—widespread television addiction certainly comes to mind—no one should underestimate the long-term deterioration of American higher education as a major

contributing influence. General education requirements have become notably lax, so that students often graduate without taking so much as a single course in English literature. And the picture doesn't much improve with English majors, either. A 2000 study, "Losing the Big Picture: The Fragmentation of the English Major Since 1964," demonstrates that English departments at the most selective liberal arts colleges have largely discarded Shakespeare, Dickens, and Melville as required components of the English major, in favor of increasingly unstructured elective-based curricula, with a big infusion of topical courses reflecting contemporary social and political issues. These policies have been widely replicated throughout American higher and secondary education; and if the English literary tradition isn't imparted there, it certainly won't be anywhere else. The result, as we see it, is that the formative works of literature aren't read."

Copies of the report, "Losing the Big Picture: The Fragmentation of the English Major Since 1964," are available upon request from the National Association of Scholars headquarters in Princeton, NJ.

For more information go to www.nas.org or call 609-683-7878.

New Resource for Teacher Quality Advocates

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) and Learning Point Associates launched an excellent new web-site that offers quick and easy access to a whole range of data and research on issues of teacher quality. Check it out at www.tqsource.org. **EM**

Lack of Pay Premium for Best Teachers has Reduced the Attractiveness of Teaching

Research has demonstrated that teachers' aptitude test scores are the best predictors of their students' achievement. As more opportunities have opened for women, has teacher quality fallen?

Researchers analyzed the test results and career choices of individuals in five high school classes from 1964 to 2000. They found that average teacher scores are about the same today as a generation ago. However, the best female students—those in the top 10 percent of their high school classes by test score—are much less likely to become teachers today.

Whereas close to 20 percent of females in the top decile in 1964 chose teaching, only 3.7 percent of the top decile females were teaching in 1992.

In 1964, more than one out of five young female teachers came from the top 10 percent of their high school classes, but by 2000 that had dropped to just over one in ten.

Thus the average score is about the same because schools aren't hiring as many

teachers at the very bottom—while fewer of the best students are entering teaching.

Is the decline of quality of teachers due to poor pay? Using the teacher college's mean SAT score, Harvard researcher Caroline Hoxby found that wage compression among teachers explains 80 percent of the change:

Women who went to a college in the top 5 percent by average SAT score earned about a 50 percent pay premium in the 1960s—but earn about the same as other teachers today.

Women who went to a bottom 25 percent of colleges earned about 28 percent below the average teacher in the 1960s, but now earn about as much as the average teacher today.

They conclude that if women from top colleges still earned a premium, a lot more would teach. **EM**

Source—National Center for Policy Analysis, 601 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 900, South Building, Washington, D.C. 20004. Phone: 202-628-6671. Web-site: www.ncpa.org.

And the Winner is...

Once again, higher education rose to the challenge—to produce events that qualify for recognition by the Young America's Foundation as the Top Five Campus Follies. Here's the 2003 list:

1. Wesleyan University offers a "gender blind" dormitory floor for incoming students unsure about their gender identification.
2. Professor Nicholas De Genova of Columbia University declares at a campus teach-in that, because of the war in Iraq, he would like to see "a million Mogadishus."
3. A professor at Citrus College in Glendora, California, forces students in her Speech 106 class to write anti-war letters to President Bush and penalizes the grades of those who refuse.
4. The University of Arizona president sends out a formal letter to the class of 2003 prohibiting the throwing of tortillas at commencement—a long-standing tradition—on the grounds that it is offensive to Hispanics and American Indians.
5. Students at all-female Smith College vote to remove all feminine pronouns from the school constitution on the grounds that they might offend transgendered students. **EM**



Americans Clueless on How Much Money Spent on Education

A new survey shows that when Americans hear how much public schools now spend per pupil, a clear majority think schools already have enough to do the job.

The survey was sponsored by the Education Testing Service, the same people who administer the SAT and GRE.

Most people have no idea how much money public schools spend per child. Almost half of those surveyed (48 percent) estimated that public schools spend less than \$5,000 per pupil. Nearly three in ten Americans think that public schools spend between \$5,000 and \$10,000; only 14 percent believe that schools spend over \$10,000 per student.

The U.S. Department of Education says total spending was actually \$9,354 per student in 2001-02.

That means 86 percent of the public underestimates how much money public schools get.

The pollsters, using a conservative figure for spending (leaving out capital costs like construction), told people in their survey that public schools spend between \$7,000 and \$9,000 per student. Once they heard that, 62 percent said that amount should be enough. **EM**

Exit Exams

According to a recent report, the high school exit exams taken by a growing number of students measure math taught in most other countries in middle school and English that falls well below college admissions standards. Achieve, a nonprofit organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders to raise academic standards and achievement in public schools, studied the high school exit exams from six states: Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas. These states enroll roughly one-quarter of all high school students in the U.S. and one-half of the students who must pass an exam to graduate. On average, researchers found that students

can pass math tests by correctly answering questions that appeared in seventh- or eighth-grade curricula worldwide. Similarly, students can pass English tests by tackling questions that resemble those on an exam developed by the testing company ACT for eighth- and ninth-graders. However, Achieve does not counsel against exit exams. "Though these tests are less rigorous than most parents and taxpayers might expect, the states that give them are doing the right thing," declared Achieve President Michael Cohen. "They are using the exams to stretch their students and schools beyond the previous performance levels. Initially low passing rates are yielding to improved performance." For more information, please go to www.achieve.org. **EM**

Georgia on My Mind

Georgia public charter schools continue to maintain an impressive track record. According the Georgia Department of Education's 2004 charter school report, nearly half (48 percent) of students in Georgia charter schools are minority students compared to 38 percent in traditional district schools statewide. A greater percentage of charter students scored at the "Meets" and "Exceeds Standards" level on state testing than their traditional school counterparts. And twenty-four of the thirty-one eligible charter schools (74 percent) met Adequate Yearly Progress while only 64 percent of schools across the state met the same goal. Parent satisfaction was also gauged in the poll and shows that more than 95 percent of respondent parents indicated that the school's "new and different ways of teaching" students was an important or very important reason for choosing the school. Teachers surveyed responded with overall levels of high satisfaction with their schools. **EM**

Source—*The Center for Education Reform's Newswire*. Web-site: www.edreform.com.

Just the Facts about Federal Funding

The federal share of K-12 spending has risen very quickly, especially in recent years. In 1990-91, the federal share of total K-12 spending was just 5.7 percent. Since that time, it has risen by more than one-third to 8.2 percent. Further, the historic federal funding increases since 2001 are only now reaching into the classroom.

Total education funding has increased substantially in recent years at all levels of government, even when accounting for enrollment increases and inflation. National K-12 education spending has increased 101 percent since 1990-91, 48 percent since

1996-97, and 22 percent since the 1999-2000 school year. When this is calculated on a per-pupil basis and is adjusted for inflation, funding has increased 7 percent in the last three years for which data are available, 15 percent over five years, and 21 percent over ten years.

Federal funding for the two main federal K-12 programs will increase \$9.3 billion since 2001 under the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2005. Sixty-three percent of the U.S. Department of Education's elementary and secondary school funds will go to help schools with economically disadvantaged students (ESEA, Title I) and to support children with disabilities (IDEA, Part B). If President Bush's FY 2005 request is enacted, the increases in these programs will have substantially exceeded any previous increases since their creation.

For more information, go to www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/. **EM**

Princeton Tackles Grade Inflation

From the most prestigious research universities to the least selective of colleges, grade inflation is a reality. That's why, in its report "Degraded Currency: The Problem of Grade Inflation," American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) called upon colleges and universities to take immediate corrective action to reward solid achievement. Now, institutions of higher education have started to take note.

Princeton University announced that it would address the problem of grade inflation head on. By a 2-1 margin, professors voted to slash the number of undergraduate A-plus, A, and A-minus grades they award by from 46 to 35 percent. Princeton college dean Nancy Malkiel told the *Washington Post* that the measure was designed to "do a more effective job at giving our students finely calibrated feedback, so they know the difference between outstanding work and good work." The new measure is designed to return Princeton to grade percentages prevalent in the early 1990s.

As outlined in ACTA's report, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, grades have increased at every type of institution by more than a quarter point. While there are a number of causes, many attribute the rise in A grades to a "consumer culture" that has spread widely through the high education system and that is focused on keeping students happy and enrollments high.

Before the faculty vote, more than 45 percent of all grades awarded at Princeton from 1997 to 2002 were As, compared to just 30 percent twenty-five years earlier. **EM**

The Impact of Block Scheduling on Subject Area Exam Scores

By Dr. Jay Smith and Dr. Ron Styron



Dr. Jay Smith



Dr. Ron Styron

Perhaps no other piece of federal education legislation has created such a paradigm shift for our nation's schools as the No Child Left Behind Act. Among the federal directives contained within this legislation is the mandate that requires states to conduct annual assessments aligned to state standards, by which schools and districts are held accountable based on student performance. Consequently, states are developing subject area exams to fulfill these requirements.

In our state, Mississippi, exams were piloted over two years and beginning in 2003, individual schools were given their accreditation status ranging from 1 to 5 based on the results of these exams, with a 1 indicating a school is "low achieving" and a 5 indicating a school is "superior." Schools failing to make acceptable improvement of their test scores within a specified amount of time face the dire consequences of teacher, principal, and superintendent removal. Additionally, these exams are now high-stakes exams whereby students must pass Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History to qualify for graduation.

Records indicate a considerable number of schools in all geographic regions of Mississippi have implemented some form of block scheduling. Considering the importance of exam scores and their implications, the authors of this article have conducted a study that can provide readers with data pertaining to the effectiveness of block scheduling as related to student achievement on state exams. Within this work, the reader will find a description of the difference in student achievement on the Mississippi Subject Area Exams in the content areas of Algebra I and Biology I between high school students who receive instruction on a nonblock period format and those who receive instruction on a block schedule format.

No Child Left Behind: Accountability Programming

The jobs of all teachers and administrators are on the line over the outcome of students assessments. The *Mississippi Code of 1972* was amended in 2001 to hold teachers and principals accountable for student scores.

Section 37-9-59 states:

If, after one year, the teacher fails to perform, the local administration shall reevaluate the teacher's professional development plan. . . . If, after the second year, the teacher fails to perform, the administration shall recommend and the school board shall *dismiss* the teacher. At the end of the second year, if a school continues to be a Priority School and a *principal* has been at that school for 3 or more years, the administration shall recommend and the school board shall *dismiss* the principal.

It is evident that teachers and principals will be held accountable for low student performance. This increased accountability as related to student achievement on standardized and/or high-stakes tests has led school leaders to search for any instructional strategy that may lead to improved student achievement. Hence, the birth and ongoing debate over block scheduling began.

Block Scheduling

One way in which districts have sought to improve school achievement is by increasing instructional time in block periods through the manipulation of the master schedule. This creation has become known over the years as block scheduling. The block scheduling movement began in the 1960s as a result of Joseph Carroll's observation that students who took summer classes did better than they did during the regular school year, the thought being that students obviously performed better because they had received instruction in large amounts of block time during the summer.

The Mississippi Department of Education reported that during the 2002-2003 school year, 1,469 schools across the state used block scheduling in one of three forms. There were 139 schools using the 4X4 block model; 1,116 schools using the AB block model; and 214 schools using a modified block model. This compares to 1,568 schools that still operate under a nonblock format. It is important to note that the Mississippi report does include elementary and middle schools in the data.

Most schools moved to block scheduling because of promising research and impassioned pleas by educators to reorganize the traditional school structure. Because of the transition to block scheduling, many educa-

tors realized students could take a variety of courses while simultaneously improving attendance, grades, and reducing the number of disciplinary referrals. However, although several studies have shown that there are some positive trends towards improved student achievement when using block scheduling, nationwide a considerable number of schools have reverted back to nonblock forms of scheduling.

Common characteristics of those schools reverting back to nonblock scheduling include (a) poor classroom management, (b) poor curriculum, (c) too much teacher lecture, and (d) failure to provide sufficient staff development. The most significant factor was the lack of time and attention needed to implement a well-planned and ongoing staff development plan.

As stated earlier, not all schools have reverted back to nonblock scheduling. Some have found that after moving to block scheduling (a) the number of discipline referrals decreased, (b) attendance improved, (c) the number of students on the honor roll increased, and (d) failure rates declined.

Considering these seemingly conflicting factors, the most pertinent question becomes: Does block scheduling assist or impede student achievement? One point is certain if block scheduling has no effect or a negative effect on student achievement, in light of the mandates and implications of the No Child Left Behind Act, careful study should be made before considering a switch from nonblock to block.

Does block scheduling make a difference on exam scores?

In spring 2004, data from 2,000 students in thirty high schools were compared and analyzed. Of these thirty schools, fifteen used block scheduling and fifteen used nonblock scheduling.

The schools selected consisted of ten from each of three geographical regions of the state, north, central, and south. To produce a reliable representative sample, socioeconomic status, accreditation status, number of students tested, and size of the school were considered in the selection, with no significant differences found in any of these factors. Data collected included average scores and passing percentages for Algebra I and Biology I subject area exams.

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Charter Schools Successfully Providing Disabled Students with a Quality Education

A new report released by the Reason Public Policy Institute (RPPI) found that California charter schools are successfully providing students having disabilities with a quality education. The report also found that charter schools are reducing the number of students labeled “special education” through early intervention programs designed to keep students performing at grade level, despite school districts that withhold significant amounts of money intended for their students with disabilities.

The report entitled “Special Education Accountability: Structural Reform to Help Charter Schools Make the Grade” concluded that “California charter schools do a better job of meeting ‘inclusion’ goals by educating disabled students with their nondisabled peers, using individualized curriculum and small class sizes to meet the instructional needs of special education students, and using early intervention strategies to catch learning problems early and avoid the ‘wait and fail’ special education model.”

“When public school teachers are given the ability to tailor programs to meet the needs of their students, including students with disabilities, student achievement goes up and kids escape the damage of a lifetime label,” said Caprice Young, CEO of the California Charter Schools Association. “Charter schools are excelling at fully including students with disabilities in regular public school classes. More importantly, charter schools are providing innovative programs that can be introduced into the broader public school system.”

The RPPI report cited several charter schools that have created individualized programs in order to keep students with disabilities on track. This includes CHIME Charter School in San Fernando, a public elementary school that is nationally recognized for effectively teaching students who are gifted, typical, or who have disabilities in a fully inclusive environment. CHIME shares its successful program by training many of Los Angeles Unified’s special education teachers. The report also lauded Bowling Green Elementary Charter School in Sacramento and Redding School of the Arts as models of full inclusion for students with disabilities.

“Charter schools are fast becoming successful laboratories for changing the way we think about the instruction of students with disabilities,” said Julie Fabrocini, principal of San Fernando’s CHIME. “Given the autonomy and commitment to make public education work for all kids, we’ve been allowed to individualize instruction in a manner that benefits everyone.”

“This report offers recognition and promise for the work that charters are doing,” said Don Shalvey, CEO of Aspire Public

Schools, which operates ten charter schools in California. Shalvey was recently selected as Vice Chair to the California Advisory Commission on Special Education. “By giving educators the freedom to innovate, charter schools are developing successful new special education models that are spurring reforms in school districts all across the state.”

The RPPI report follows the landmark study released in 2003 by the RAND Corporation, which found that California charter schools are more likely to mainstream special education students (39 percent) than matched public schools (19 percent). RAND researchers concluded that, “Clearly, charter schools tended to rely heavily on mainstreaming their special education students where matched conventional public schools tended to rely heavily on pullout programs.”

The full text of the Reason Public Policy Institute’s report can be downloaded at <http://www.rppi.org/ps319.pdf>. **EM**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
“Charter schools are fast becoming successful laboratories for changing the way we think about the instruction of students with disabilities.”

New Resource—

What Works Clearinghouse Debuts

After two years in development, the U.S. Department of Education introduced the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC).

This new Internet service is designed to provide up-to-date evidence-based research on curricula that is working—actually showing improvement in student performance.

Check it out on the Web at www.whatworks.ed.gov. **EM**

AI Science Tutors Never Get Tired

No matter how many times a student asks a Quantum Tutor to go over a chemistry or physical science problem, the tireless tutor won’t get frustrated or irritated about having to explain the material all over again. That’s because the nine Quantum Tutors available from Holt, Rinehart and Winston are Artificial Intelligence Tutors, the latest three being released in January.

“These new Quantum Tutors will give teachers another level of learning support to help students with difficult concepts in chemistry and physical science,” said Judy Fowler, Holt president.

For students who need personal coaching to develop a better grasp of complex science concepts and for teachers, the Tutors provide an on-demand Web-based educational resource that may be used in class, in the computer lab, or at home at any time.

Providing hints and step-by-step instructions, the Tutors enable students and teachers to practice at their own pace on problems of their choice, rather than being limited to a selection of pre-stored problems. Students and teachers enter their own problems, and the Tutors interpret their work and coach them through the problem-solving process. Like human tutors, the AI Tutors provide guidance and advice in developing a solution to the chosen problem, helping the student or teacher understand why the answer is correct or incorrect.

The Quantum Tutors address complex science topics and complement the lessons in *Holt Chemistry*, *Holt Modern Chemistry*, and *Holt Science Spectrum Physical Science*, as well as *Holt Professional Development* for teachers. The nine Tutors are Stoichiometry, Chemical Reactions, Chemical Bonding, Elements, Ionic Compound Formulas, Mathematics of Chemical Formulas, Measurement, Equation Balancing, and Oxidation Numbers.

Holt, Rinehart and Winston is a leading publisher of textbooks and educational materials for grades six through twelve and is part of Harcourt Education, a global education provider serving students and teachers in Pre-K through grade twelve, adult learners, and readers of all ages. Quantum Simulations, Inc. is a business-to-business provider of artificial intelligence tutoring engines that power existing software, hardware, and distance learning products. **EM**

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The Impact of Block Scheduling...

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For both subject area exams, average scores were not significantly different; but student scores in schools using block scheduling were slightly lower than student scores in schools using nonblock scheduling. The same results were found after analyzing passing percentages. There were no significant differences in passing percentages for students in schools using block and nonblock scheduling, but students in schools using block scheduling had a slightly lower passing percentage than those in schools using nonblock scheduling.

These results were similar to two other Mississippi studies conducted by Handley in 1998 and Marchette in 2002 for the purpose of analyzing the effects of block scheduling on student achievement.

In Handley's 1998 study, student test data were used from one Mississippi public high school to compare student achievement on the Algebra I state exam from one year to the next within the same school. In year one, the students were instructed on a nonblock of instructional time as compared to year two when a different group of students were instructed on an extended block of instructional time.

He concluded that assigning students to block or nonblock instructional time had no significant increase or decrease in student scores, and increasing instructional

time would not necessarily increase student achievement on state exams.

In 2002 Marchette analyzed test data from Mississippi schools to determine if an extended period of instructional time would have a positive impact on student achievement in biology. His research revealed that a school's schedule did not significantly impact the average scores of students.

In summary, the data collected up to this point suggest that extending instructional time through block scheduling, in and of itself, will not have a positive impact on student scores on state exams.

Recommendations for School Leaders

The authors of this work advise school leaders to consider the following suggestions prior to moving from nonblock to block scheduling in an effort to increase student achievement:

1. Adjust the master schedule to incorporate extended instructional time only for math and/or science courses.
2. Explore alternatives other than extended time to improving student achievement in math and science.
3. Evaluate instructional practices of teachers. If instruction is ineffective in a 50-minute block, it will probably be ineffective in a 90-minute block. Hence, increasing instructional time without improving instructional practices will not improve student achievement.
4. Evaluate remediation and enrichment programs as an alternative to or in conjunction with block scheduling.

5. Provide teacher training.

The most important realization for school leaders is that changing the master schedule to incorporate extended instructional time without proper staff development and support will not necessarily improve student achievement.

Conclusions

The authors of this work contend that moving to a block scheduling format will not guarantee an increase in student achievement, nor will it serve as a catalyst for academic decline. Factors such as socio-economics, teacher preparation, teacher experience, curriculum alignment, school leadership, class size, instructional methods, and parental involvement each play a significant and vital role in student performance. Therefore, it is incumbent upon school leaders to use a variety of current research including studies such as this one to make data-driven decisions while simultaneously pursuing the task of fulfilling the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act. **EM**

Dr. Jay Smith is currently the principal at Gary Road Intermediate School in the Hinds County Public School District. Dr. Smith has also served as a middle school assistant principal, high school assistant principal, and more recently as a high school principal at Wingfield High School in the Jackson Public School District.

Dr. Ron Styron is in his second year as Assistant Professor at the University of Southern Mississippi. Prior to this appointment, he was a teacher and administrator for the St. Tammany School District for twenty-five years.

Learning Requires More Than Play

(Continued from page 2)

Parents, teachers, and others who work with young people can make a huge contribution to both their educational success and their lifelong habits by teaching them to put school work before pleasure. This principle is an American essential, and it is the essence of responsible behavior. The ability to delay gratification by putting work before pleasure practically defines self-discipline and maturity. It is a habit, however, that is acquired gradually and progressively. Children do not naturally recognize that long-term satisfaction often requires one to forego immediate pleasures. The alternative of permitting young people to be irresponsible in matters such as schoolwork and then expecting them to become self-disciplined adults is utterly unrealistic.

Study is a Matter of Civic Responsibility

Making an effort to study and learn should be treated as a matter of civic responsibility. All citizens are expected to contribute to be common good, thus it is entirely fitting that students be asked to do their part in school.

In my opinion, we have undermined the ability of young Americans to play a responsible role in society by placing too great an emphasis on their disadvantages and disabilities and not enough emphasis on their strengths. Without question students are sometimes impaired by social and economic conditions, but educational improvement cannot wait until all of these conditions are corrected. In spite of sometimes adverse life circumstances, young Americans have opportunities and advantages only dreamed of by students elsewhere in the world. In any case, we cannot expect them to heed the message that they are the parties who must work much harder in school if we continue to talk like everyone else is to blame for their lack of achievement. In truth, America can afford to waste neither educational opportunities nor the talents of another generation. **EM**

Dr. J.E. Stone is an educational psychologist and a professor in the College of Education at East Tennessee State University. He also heads the Education Consumers Clearinghouse (<http://education-consumers.com>), PO Box 4411, Johnson City, TN 37602. Phone: 423-282-6832; Fax: 423-282-6832; E-mail: professor@education-consumers.com

Resisting the Sirens of Teacher Induction

(Continued from page 1)

much less dependent on the quality of personnel in the school building than the AEE model and perhaps no more expensive. So, let's not leap to costly federal funding solutions based on thin data and analysis and that will inevitably end up being directed to the schools that need it the least. **EM**

Kate Walsh is currently the Executive Director for the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a nonprofit organization devoted to the pursuit of teacher quality as defined by gains in student achievement. She leads a policy board comprised of a dozen prominent education reformers, working together to reshape American education policy.

Prior to NCTQ, Walsh worked with the Core Knowledge Foundation, where she directed the development of a new elementary curriculum focusing on reading comprehension. She also spent more than a decade working for The Abell Foundation, where she designed and built a portfolio of education reform projects that had a focus on educating the urban poor. Walsh has also served as senior administrator for the Baltimore City public schools.

Study Finds High-Stakes Tests Are Reliable

A newly published peer-reviewed study by Manhattan Institute researchers Jay P. Greene, Marcus A. Winters, and Greg Forster finds that scores on “high-stakes tests,” where the results hold consequences for either schools or students, are reliable indicators of academic proficiency. The study appears in the latest issue of *Teachers College Record*, published by Columbia University. The study adds important evidence to the debate over the costs and benefits of high-stakes testing, which all states must implement in order to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act.

Many fear that high-stakes tests are fundamentally distorted because they might create incentives for schools to cheat or for teachers to “teach to the test” to avoid the negative consequences of poor performance. The study, which evaluated nine school systems nationwide including the entire states of Florida and Virginia, found that high-stakes tests produce results very similar to those from nationally respected tests that have no consequences tied to the results, or low-stakes tests. Since there is no reason for schools or students to manipulate the results of low-stakes tests, the similar results from both types of test indicate that we can believe the results of high-stakes tests.

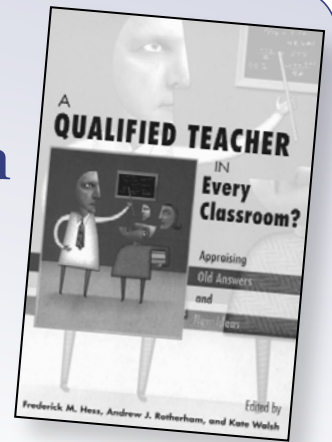
Greene, Winters, and Forster find that if high-stakes tests cause teachers to “teach to the test,” then they do so in a positive way. The study shows that if teachers are changing their curriculum and classroom techniques in response to high-stakes tests, they are doing so in ways that convey real skills to students. This sort of “teaching to the test” is a positive development.

For more information about the study, or to set up an interview with one of the authors, please feel free to contact Marcus Winters at 954-680-8083 or by e-mail at mwinters@manhattan-institute.org. **EM**

B O O K R E V I E W

A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom? Appraising Old Answers and New Ideas

By Frederick M. Hess, Andrew J. Rotherham,
and Kate Walsh



This new Harvard Education Press book arrives at a time of real urgency in the era of No Child Left Behind. A diverse mix of contributing authors offer a variety of practical, analytical, and research perspectives, providing a frank assessment of the obstacles that lie ahead. The book concludes by asking four experts from across the ideological spectrum each to propose a model for reform, proceeding under the common assumption that the current “system” is untenable.

Much of the political debate over No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has distracted the nation’s attention from the pressing

need to improve the quality of our teachers. The bipartisan goal of NCLB to agree upon a higher standard for preparing and licensing teachers is no less important now than it was when the law was drafted. Meeting this challenge means that states will have to change how they train and license teachers. Unfortunately, procrastination, a lack of fresh thinking, and outright stonewalling is hampering this essential transformation. By providing both new empirical data and four compelling reform models, *A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom? Appraising Old Answers and New Ideas* may jump-start discussions about meeting this crucial challenge. **EM**

Special Opportunity— Learning the Japanese Way

The Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program (FMF), administered by the Japanese-United States Exchange Commission and the Institute of International Education, and funded by the government of Japan, offers teachers and administrators of grades 1-12 an opportunity for a fully funded three-week professional development opportunity in Japan. The program, commemorated in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the J. William Fulbright Scholarship, seeks to encourage a lasting, peaceful, and fruitful partnership between the people of the United States and of Japan.

Now in its ninth year of existence, FMF sends 600 educators annually to Japan to take part in an educational and cultural study visit.

The deadline for the 2005 FMF competition is December 10, 2004. Those interested may apply directly via an online application found on the FMF web-site at www.iie.org/fmf <<http://www.iie.org/fmf>>. To request more information, additional materials, or if you have any questions, please contact FMF at 1-888-527-2636 or fmf@iie.org <<mailto:fmf@iie.org>>. **EM**



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