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MISSION

The Mission of the Academy is to promote the interests of urban education in both public and private schools and universities in the Metropolitan area.



FROM THE EDITOR



This is the first professional publication by the New York Academy of Public Education. It goes without saying, that we are so very pleased that it is being published in conjunction with our 100th Anniversary. During the last several years, our Academy has moved from its original format of professional discussions to one of being more proactive in the field of education. This includes expanding our original structure to include interactive panel discussions on contemporary “hot topic” issues through our Annual Forum, co-sponsored by Fordham University. We have also surveyed the principals of New York City to determine how to improve the quality of new teachers that are being hired, particularly in “hard to staff” schools. In direct response to suggestions returned in these surveys, the Academy has engaged in a program to create an “apprenticeship” or “internship”

program where education school graduates will work side by side appointed teachers in the classroom, learning what works best in various situations. During this same time that they will be gaining experience in schools as apprentices, they will be studying for a Master’s degree at a sponsoring local college or university. We are currently in the initial stage of obtaining funding to support our pilot program with Manhattan College.

To move into the Twenty-first Century, we created our first website a number of years ago. Today, that website has evolved into an interactive design that has become a major source of communication between the Academy and its members. We are proud of the progress that has been occurring in just a few short years.

Last, but certainly not least, we have moved on with another endeavor, the Professional Journal of the New York Academy of Public Education. We hope to grow through the next several years from a one issue per year publication to a multi-issue periodical. Since we are a not for profit organization, we will be looking for advertisements in later issues, in order to help defray the costs associated with publishing a magazine like this.

The Academy is extremely grateful to the authors of the manuscripts contained in this issue. The topics of these articles are varied and pertinent to what is happening in education today. It is our hope that, when our next call for manuscripts goes out later this summer, we will be overloaded with responses. At this same time, we would like to thank those Academy members who have volunteered to serve as the Peer Editors for the submitted manuscripts.

I invite you now to enjoy the initial edition of this Journal without “commercial” interruption.

John Jangl, Ed.D.
Editor



100 Years of Promoting Public Education in Greater New York

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Message from the President

As the New York Academy of Public Education begins our second century, the direction we take has to change with the times. Public education has evolved from preparing students to enter a manual labor society to preparing students for a technological society. The vision of the Academy remains to create an agora for the exchange of ideas among educators who wish to encourage and uphold the promotion of the highest standards and ideals of Public Education in the Greater New York Metropolitan area. In the inaugural issue of the New York Academy of Public Education's Professional Journal an exchange of ideas is addressed.

The Academy thanks Dr. John Jangl and Robert Spata who have undertaken this challenge and have secured manuscripts that have been peer edited. Authors are public school leaders as well as college professors.

The Academy in its second century is encouraging members to communicate their ideas and opinions through the Academy's Professional Journal, Newsletter and attending our Dinner Meetings.

Once again I thank the writers of the manuscripts, the editors and especially Dr. John Jangl and Robert Spata for their work in producing our first Professional Journal.

Stephen Rappaport
President



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“The Academy In History”

What is an Academy?

CAROL RUSSO, ACADEMY HISTORIAN



Plato - From Raphael's School of Athens (1509).

What exactly is an Academy? As history informs us, one of the earliest was the Platonic Academy founded in Florence, Italy in 1442 by Greek Scholars. Literary academies sprang up throughout Italy, France and Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries. Comprised of a society of learned persons, academies throughout the centuries influenced greatly the fields of education, art, literature, music, and science or some other cultural or intellectual area of endeavor.

More than nine decades have passed since the New York Academy of Public Education was established in 1912. At that time, the leaders of this professional honorary organization focused its primary efforts on the advancement and progress of urban education. The Academy successfully provided a common forum and meeting ground in fostering educational activities between the professional community and the public-at-large.

How does one become a member of the Academy? Membership in the Academy is by invitation by the Board of Directors and is limited to those who have achieved distinction or recognition in the field of education. Individuals who have earned special merit or contributed to the advancement of educational concerns and standards may be considered candidates for membership in the Academy. Each proposed member must first receive the favorable endorsement of the Board of Directors. Life members are designated by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.

As a non-profit organization, the operating revenues of the Academy are obtained from membership dues. The Academy has created a Medalist award annually honoring individuals who have made significant contributions in their fields and whose lives exemplify the Academy's vision of service to society.

Now in its 100th year, the New York Academy of Public Education is looking ahead to celebrating the beginning of its second centennial in the year 2012.

The Autonomy Gap: Implications for Raising Student Achievement

Anthony P. Cavanna, Susan Bowles Therriault, and Chrys C. Marcus

Introduction

While the need for strong school leaders in American primary and secondary education is widely recognized, little effort has been made to determine whether today's principals actually possess the authority to exercise strong leadership. Simply stated, it is not clear that school leaders have the flexibility they need to get the results demanded by state and federal accountability systems. Are their hands tied by government regulations, contract provisions, and district mandates? What do principals regard as the greatest impediments to effective leadership? How does this impact the way the school principal is viewed?

These questions became the impetus for a research study conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. The study interviewed and surveyed 33 district and charter school principals from five districts in three states. This effort focused on answering whether these principals, in an era of standards and accountability, had the autonomy they needed to impact student achievement. The following is a discussion of our findings and their implications for school leaders.

How the Standards and Accountability Movement Affects the Autonomy of Principals

Researchers, policymakers, and educators look at the principalship through a framework in which the principal is the leader of a school in a loosely coupled public education system (Weick, 1976). In such a system, schools are able to act relatively autonomously. However, state and federal policies have altered the public education system so that schools, districts, and state departments of education are no longer loosely coupled. Rather, they are being tethered more tightly as the links between the accountability measures found in state and federal law are strengthened. Thus, they have a greater influence upon one another. A more intertwined relationship requires skills, resources, and capacity at each level to be reorganized and focused to function in a system where there is more interdependence on student outcome measures. This is in contrast to the autonomy at different levels of the education system that existed in previous decades. As an important facet of this change, leadership must be revisited and redefined, and this is especially true for school principals.

Our findings suggest that barriers exist but are perceived as surmountable. Principals reported that there are significant barriers to their autonomy that affect their ability to serve the children in their schools and to meet the demands of state and federal accountability systems. Some principals accepted this as part of the constraints of their positions. But others described ways to work around these barriers; most relied on the power of their personalities and strategic relationships to increase their autonomy in the areas of personnel, curriculum, and resource allocation.

Placed between the federal, state, district, and classroom levels, the principal is in essence a middle manager. Morgan, Bacon, Bunch, Cameron, and Deis (1996, p. 360) define middle managers as “those who occupy positions between the strategic apex and the operating core of an organization.” School principals act as such between the state and district levels where strategy is laid out and the classroom where teaching and learning occurs. Principals must ensure that the demands of the larger system are being met and most importantly that students are learning. Middle managers, like principals, “play a critical role in ensuring a constancy of purpose in public organizations that have multiple sources of authority” (Morgan et al., 1996, p. 363). Indeed, principals must reconcile the tensions between federal, state, and local demand so that they make sense for the school and the classroom. The principals interviewed for this study were not ardent about changing the system of public education, rather they viewed their job as managing or muddling through the system, using relationships and informal networks.

To lead, principals choose between “bucking the system” or working the system to make changes that will ultimately raise student achievement. To understand bucking versus working the system, it is important to understand different types of change. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) distinguish between first and second order change (Exhibit 1). First order change is described as an extension of

the past, and second order change is a break from the past. Most educational research agrees that to meet the demands placed on states through NCLB, schools (particularly secondary schools) will have to tackle second order change processes. Not surprisingly, each school requires a different set of leadership skills.

Exhibit 1: Characteristics of First and Second Order Change

First Order Change	Second Order Change
An extension of the past	A break from the past
Within existing organizational norms	Inconsistent with prevailing organizational norms
Consistent with prevailing values	Conflicting with prevailing values
Easily learned using existing knowledge and skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to learn
Implemented with existing knowledge and skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to implement

First order change fits the style of many of the principals who participated in this study. Principals described how they had learned to function within the existing culture, norms, and boundaries of the public education system. Relationships, communication, and focus are a few of the more important characteristics of a first order change principal and were often mentioned during the interviews with principals in both district and private schools. Second order change was most frequently mentioned by charter school principals who, by the nature of the charter school movement, are trying to seek alternatives and break the mold of the traditional public education system.

School principals accept constraints as part of their job description. Principals in district-operated schools in this study accepted constraints to leadership as part of their job and as part of the public education system. This was unexpected, as we did not expect to find principals who saw themselves functioning within these challenges without any real drive to change the system. Our team identified a few possible reasons for why these principals tolerate the system as it exists. First, many of the principals have moved through the ranks of the public education system. Second, these leaders know how the system works, and more than likely were able to

rise to the level of principal because they functioned highly within the system. Last, principals seemed to have ways around the system and its constraints through the positive relationships they had built with the community, teachers, district staff, and the superintendent. Most of the school leaders felt anchored in a system in which union collective bargaining agreements and district policies removed this control from their domain.

Principals are school leaders who adapt to their circumstances. In line with first order change skills and characteristics of middle managers, principals in district-operated schools attributed effective leadership to personality and building positive relationships rather than instructional leadership. The principals considered themselves realists who needed to do the best job they can with what they have, and most agreed that working in the public education system is about finite resources and working within constraints. The more experienced principals reported the least constraints, and this seemed to be rooted in the relationships they had formed inside and outside of the school and in their knowledge of the local context.

Local context makes a difference. It is clear in this study, albeit a common finding, that the local context largely dictates the ability of principals to exert influence over their school and determines their ability to lead. In districts in which principals felt supported by their superintendents, their own sense of self-efficacy to overcome barriers appeared to be greater. Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill, Hayes, and Wierba (1997) found that the role of a middle manager making changes within an organization is highly influenced by the context in which that manager works. If a change violates norms, the manager may become politically vulnerable within the organization, or if the manager has a distant relationship with upper management, then the middle manager may be discouraged from making changes or taking risks. If upper management expresses a willingness to listen to middle managers and if the overall organizational culture is supportive, then middle managers are more likely to implement change and take risks. Likewise, tenured principals expressed a sense of autonomy at a level not felt by less experienced principals. The “de facto” sense of autonomy as described by these experienced principals, was

felt because they were familiar with the system and had a working relationship with teachers, district staff, and the superintendent. Not surprisingly, these principals felt the least amount of constraint.

Relationships are critical. Rather than change the system through formal mechanisms, the principals chose to work around the system through informal networks and relationships. Interviews with principals revealed that positive working relationships played an important role in school leadership. A good relationship between a principal and district staff and the superintendent improved the formal and informal communication between them. Thereby, they had a better understanding of each other and negotiated for necessary resources on formal and informal levels. Also a principal who built relationships inside the school reported a greater ability to use persuasion to lead teachers and staff.

Conclusions

At first, the findings of this study seem to contradict each other. First, principals believe they have the skills necessary to lead their schools. Second, many of these principals identify common barriers to leadership, such as staffing decisions and the allocation of resources. But, how do these findings fit together? Principals find themselves balancing the demands of building a school vision, maintaining a school climate, and developing professional learning communities that are conducive to teaching and learning, while taking on outside pressures of reporting requirements and demands of the district and state. Many principals described their job in terms of “juggling” many responsibilities. Indeed, principals pointed out that they feel responsible for buffering their staff from sometimes volatile external demands and policies to maximize the potential of the learning environment at their schools. With this understanding, it is important to reexamine the way in which we understand school leaders and to make appropriate adjustments so they can make optimal decisions for improving student achievement. First, policymakers, researchers, and educators need to alter their perceptions of the principal as an autonomous leader of the school. It seems that many

of the frustrations expressed by principals throughout this study are similar to those of middle managers in the corporate sector. Thus, it would serve policymakers, researchers, and educators well to alter their perceptions of principalship from that of an autonomous leader to that of a middle manager. Second, as accountability measures have centered on student achievement and school indicators have become the measure for assessing the performance of districts and state education agencies, a stronger sense of co-dependence among the levels of the public education system has also grown. This places more scrutiny on schools and requires principals to possess exemplary and strategic relationship-building skills. Managing these relationships outside of school can increase a leader’s sense of empowerment to make critical decisions aimed at student improvement in the school. Indeed, in testimony from secondary school principals, it is clear that the better they manage these relationships, the more autonomy they muster to focus school efforts on raising student achievement. This suggests that maybe it is time to recognize that informal networks and relationship building are an inherent part of being an effective school leader. It seems that these skills are often overlooked and avoided because they are not easy to teach to future principals. However, it is clear that they are the skills that gave the more experienced principals in this study a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

Last, the difference between first and second order change must be explicit. If principals are expected to choose between the two to fulfill the mandates of state and federal accountability policies, then principals must be trained to understand these decisions and districts must create an environment in which this is acceptable. The weight of accountability indicators is placed squarely on the shoulders of principals, and pressures from districts and states add to that weight. However, we cannot expect principals to function as anything but middle managers, making incremental changes and working the system, if maintaining the system is rewarded. Second order change can only come about when educators and administrators at the state, district, and school levels understand, encourage, and reward such behavior.



Dr. Anthony Cavanna served in the New York City Department of Education as a teacher, principal, deputy superintendent and superintendent. After leaving NYC he worked as a school reformer throughout the nation for the American Institutes of Research. Currently he is serving as Superintendent of the West Orange New Jersey Public Schools. Ms. Therriault and Ms. Marcus are Researchers for the American Institutes for Research based in Washington, DC.

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What is Emotional Intelligence? Why Is It Essential In The Urban Classroom?

Giovanna Delucchi, Ph.D.

Emotional Intelligence is a term coined by Salovey and Mayer who defined it as, “The subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Polat and Ulusoy-Oztan, 2009, p. 2). Another researcher, Golman, claims that Emotional Intelligence encompasses abilities such as self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy and dealing with relationships (Polat and Ulusoy-Oztan, 2009). Maurice Elias, Rutgers University psychology professor, defines Emotional Intelligence as, “the set of abilities that help us get along in life with other people in all kinds of life situations”, he calls it the “missing piece” in American education (Edutopia, 2001).

Students in urban settings are often confronted with poverty, unstable family lives and exposure to violence. Many children face obstacles in an effort to succeed academically, socially and personally. McKinney, Flenner, Frazier and Abrams, 2006, state that “urban teachers need to be conscious of and understand the ecology of the environment that has a profound influence and impact on the urban child’s success in school. Additionally, urban teachers must respond to the needs of their students by creating culturally responsive classrooms that spotlight a variety of instructional practices and methodologies that reduce the risks of school failure (p. 1). Culturally responsive classrooms are sensitive to the cultural values and norms of all children who make up the classroom environment. Teachers use the experiences and backgrounds of their students in order to engage all students and provide additional opportunities and entry points into their lessons. This makes learning more meaningful because children can make personal connections with classroom content.

How can we instruct teachers and give them the time to create culturally responsive classrooms when schools are inundated with the high stake tests? Research has shown that the skills to communicate appropriately, to work with others, in teams, to empathize, persevere, control impulses, make thoughtful decisions and solve problems are all skills that are critical to academic achievement, but not always seen as priority in the classroom (Edutopia, 2001).

P.S. 43 is located in one of the poorest congressional districts in the United States. Our population is 70% Hispanic, 27% Black and 3% Asian. We have a large population of immigrant families and 17% of our families are living in shelters or temporary housing. Our school identified the need to develop Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills. We realized that the first step would be to work with our teachers so we engaged the resources of Dr. Janet Kremenitzer, professor of childhood education at Lehman College. Professor Kremenitzer who researches on the Emotional Intelligences, and Ms. Maureen McNeil, Educational Director of the Anne Frank Center USA provided professional development for our staff. In initiating the professional development program for the teachers as well as guidance counselors and paraprofessionals, Dr. Kremenitzer prefaced the need for teachers to be good role models for EI for children.

Administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals, in addition to guidance counselors each received an EI journal. Common practice required writing about our ongoing analysis of problematic situations relevant to school culture, as well as a regiment of reading consisting of several published articles. We would read to share in small planning groups.

Professional development continued in small groups, leading to the emergence of a focus group of teachers. The purpose of the focus group was to initiate the conversations and reflect upon the implementation of EI practices, and how it impacts our school culture and climate, our teaching and our students’ lives. This focus group volunteered to meet on a weekly basis during their lunch period to discuss situations and how they were handled. In addition, we worked on developmentally appropriate units of study for our fourth and fifth grade students that used the Diary of Anne Frank as a vehicle to explore one’s feelings, emotions and personal interactions under adverse conditions. Part of the curriculum included creating self-portraits, journaling, creating poems and skits as well as reading and discussing excerpts from the Diary of Anne Frank.

The Anne Frank story is one of hope in the face of a never ending struggle to eradicate oppression and intolerance, bullying in schools, indifference and cruelty to others. Anne Frank’s story of hope in

humanity, resiliency, and awareness of self and others will be increased for the good as we journey through our professional and personal development.

Teachers also began to use the RULER in the classrooms for themselves – to become more aware of their own emotions. The RULER was a tool for Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating emotions. Brackett and Kremenitzer (2011) state the RULER “is vital to effective teaching, successful academic performance, and quality relationships” (p. x). It states teachers with high emotional literacy, have more positive emotions in the classroom, received more support from colleagues, demonstrated more effective coping strategies during stressful situations and claimed to have less burn out and more job satisfaction than colleagues who are less emotionally literate.

Once the teachers were comfortable using the RULER, students were asked to use it if they were involved in a conflict. This tool encouraged self reflection, thoughts about what could have been done differently, and empathy for others.

In addition, we added the 4R’s (Reading, Writing, Respect and Responsibility) curriculum to our school week. This is a literacy based program taught one period per week which examines character traits.

The program was initiated with 17 teachers volunteering to receive the professional development

and participate in the program. Currently the entire staff is involved. These two programs, in conjunction with our PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) program, have made a difference in our school. The tone of the building is calmer, students are happier and the number of incidents requiring suspensions is steadily decreasing.

According to Edutopia, 2001, “social and emotional learning programs work best when parents and teachers are partners, and that means that schools need to train both parents and teachers in ways to promote behavior that improves communication, empathy, self-awareness, decision-making and problem-solving” (p.2). Working with parents, we aim to create a common language so each child hears the same message as we build a foundation for character education.

The team knew that our school needed to build capacity in emotional literacy. We strive to coordinate our efforts with the ongoing culture of the school in creating and maintaining a natural and cohesive program that includes emotional literacy. “Emotional literacy provides a foundation for students’ successful cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development, which enables schools to make a genuine commitment to supporting the holistic development of their students” (Brackett & Kremenitzer, 2011, p. xii).

We are excited to see how our school, our children, and our lives, evolve because of it.



Dr. Giovanna Delucchi has spent all of her professional years as an educator in the New York City Department of Education. Starting out as a special education teacher then cultivating her craft as a reading teacher, she stepped into a leadership role as staff developer, adjunct professor – Brooklyn College, assistant principal and finally principal. Giovanna received her PhD from Fordham University in May 2010 and has served as principal of P.S. 43 in the Bronx for the last seven years. Under her leadership, she was able to transform her school from failing to making adequate yearly progress, to an A school.

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Strengthening Family Involvement Practices for English as a Second Language Learners

Lisa Vacca-Rizopoulos, Ph.D.

Abstract

Research suggests that successful involvement of families in the school environment and in the home is a product of school-initiated efforts. Today English language learners spend the largest percentage of their school time in regular education classrooms with teachers who do not feel well prepared to meet their needs and engage families in school partnerships. This article presents practical strategies and resources for teachers to use in fostering school and home collaborations for ESL families. These strategies are designed to nurture a symbiotic partnership among all members.

Strengthening Family Involvement Practices for English as a Second Language Learners

A person's ascendance to the Oval Office is not the achievement of a single individual. An athlete's Olympic Gold does not mark the success of an individual effort. Similarly, the levels of mastery of academic skills are not the lone product of the student but a reflection of the cooperative commitment of the learners, teachers, and family unit. For students whose native language is not English and who are enrolled in public schools, family participation is even more crucial.

While most schools embrace the concept of parental involvement, it seems that very few have translated these beliefs into concrete plans or into strategies for action. Today English language learners spend the largest percentage of their school time in the regular education classrooms with teachers who have never taken a course dedicated to supporting non-English speaking learners. General education teachers express that they are not properly trained to accept assignments involving non-English speaking learners. These teachers report that they do not feel well prepared to meet students' needs (Persad, Lewis, Farris, 2000) and effectively engage families in fostering school partnerships. Therefore, this article presents practical strategies and resources for teachers that foster at-home and in-school collaboration between ESL families and the school designed to nurture a symbiotic partnership between all members.

Overview

"We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams" (Carter, 2011). English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of the public school population (Van Roekel, 2008). In New York State, there are 237,634 English as a Second Language students (number of limited English proficient students in the state who meet the LEP definition under Section 9101(25)) enrolled in public schools (The Office of English Language Acquisition, 2010). These students represent over one hundred languages spoken. In New York City alone, approximately 36% of the city's population is foreign born (NYC Dept. of City Planning, 2005). The most commonly spoken language, other than English, is Spanish with an enrollment of over 149,396 students. In contrast, elementary school teachers are predominantly middle class, monolingual, European-American females whose first, and for the most part only, language is English (Zeichner and Hoeft, 1996). This disparity compels teachers to create cultural connections with the support systems that exist with ESL learners and develop ways to encourage and improve the relationship between the school and their non-English speaking populations.

Research attests to the fact that family involvement has a positive impact on minority students' academic achievement across all races (Jeynes, 2003). The National Education Association (2011) supports and confirms that parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. "When schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs" (p. 1). Therefore, effective outreach strategies need to be infused throughout the curriculum to include practices both inside and outside of the classroom that reflect the rich diversity of English as a second language learners and their families.

At Home Family Involvement Strategies

Under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), teachers are required to “provide materials and training to help parents work with their children at home to improve their children’s achievement.” According to Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), teachers need to support community-based education programs that inform parents about school values and expectations and work with parents to help them become advocates for their children. However, since language has been cited as one of the most significant barriers for family involvement (Tinkler, 2002), this may represent a challenge for many teachers. Translation services may be used to overcome this obstacle.

Free Online Translation Services: Families need to be informed in order to be proactive about their children’s education. Teachers can use online translation services during parent-teacher conferences and for announcements and homework assignments to enlist ELL families’ help at home. Translation services are meant to help families understand documents that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to read due to language barriers. Free translations are available for over 30 languages are available at <http://babelfish.yahoo.com/>. However, a word of caution: at times the site doesn’t offer a direct word for word translation, and the meaning of the message may be altered. To avoid misunderstandings at home, bilingual support staff and parent volunteers should review all correspondence for accuracy before distributing correspondence to parents.

Picture Books: “Many parents can’t actively support their children’s literacy through reading and writing because they don’t read or write well themselves, or can’t read or write in the same language their children do” (Tompkins, 2010). Teachers can send home picture books that reflect culturally relevant and sensitive themes, so families can make connections between their lives and the school. “High quality, culturally authentic picture books are vital to the cultural and literacy development of both Latino and non-Latino children and their families” (Naidoo, 2009). The pictures will provide clues about the story and support students’ comprehen-

sion of unfamiliar vocabulary. Families can “read” the pictures together and discuss the illustrations and the characters in the book in either their first or second language. The discussions help create an awareness of story structure and emphasize the importance of paying attention to picture cues to increase comprehension. Through dialogic conversations about the illustrations, ESL students will develop their expressive language, thus improving their socialization and comprehension skills. A list of multicultural picture books can be found at <http://www.duluth.lib.mn.us/YouthServices/Booklists/Multicultural.html>.

Online Bilingual Stories: Families can also be directed to Internet sites that offer stories in their child’s first language and in their new language. For example, at The StoryPlace, a digital library for children with stories in both English and Spanish, families can listen to tales and complete activities that relate to the text. Stories are also read aloud to the students, so they can experience fluent reading and enjoy the story, at this site: (<http://storyplace.org>).

At-School Involvement Strategies

Teachers also need practical resources and strategies to use in school to nurture collaboration among ESL stakeholders.

A 2004 survey of California teachers (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005) found poor communication among students, teachers, parents, and the community to be a significant issue. Therefore, one of the priorities must be to improve communication for all parties

Bilingual Staff: Bilingual staff should welcome new families on their first day of school and continue to be liaisons to address questions and focus on students’ needs throughout the school year. Walls inside and outside of the school should be print rich, with multilingual bulletin boards and multicultural images, welcoming families from diverse cultures. Important places, like the office, bathrooms, and nurse’s office, should have signs that are written in several languages with supporting visuals.

Word Walls: A word wall is an organized display of important words students should know. There

are many different types of word walls, but all have the goal of helping children learn to spell and read and develop conceptual connections to the world around them. In-class word walls should have the highlighted words in English, along with the second languages used by the students in the class. A picture must accompany each word to help ESL learners understand the meaning and make connections between the word and its meaning in both English and in their first language. This strategy will not only be an effective way of learning new vocabulary and making connections, but more importantly, it will show your students that their first language is important. To help the new student feel welcome, their name and picture should be on the word wall. Children recognize their names first, before they are able to read other words, so they will be able to identify something familiar to them in foreign surroundings. The newcomer's picture should be placed next to their names on the word wall, along with the other students, to foster a sense of community.

Teamwork: Bilingual families can form teams to help acquaint newcomers to the school. These teams become invaluable resources for non-English speaking families because they help newcomers become familiar with the layout of the school, their child's teacher, and other families with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These teams act as supports and "mentors" to the new family, and once newcomers feel confident about their role in the school, they reciprocate and become leaders and representatives of their team. The names of bilingual contacts from these teams should be placed in the main office, the nurse's office, and in the classroom just in case of an emergency.

Technology: If in-person resources are not available, or to supplement face-to-face interactions, a welcome greeting and tour can be videotaped in different languages by volunteers. Newcomers can watch a welcome greeting and school orientation in their own language (Haynes, 2007, p.125). These videos can then be posted on school websites for future reference. ESL families must be made aware of this resource and explicit instructions in the first language must be given to families about how to

gain access to this information.

Families as Tutors: During class time, the linguistic expertise of bilingual family members helps build confidence and encourages students to participate in both English and in their first language. For example, during a guided reading lesson, family members work with students, in small groups, who are learning English. Since students are with their peers that have similar language abilities, they will feel more confident to read aloud and answer questions. Furthermore, during small group instruction, ESL tutors can differentiate instruction to specifically meet the individual learning and language requirements of the students in the group, as opposed to using the "whole class" approach to teaching. Tutors may point out examples of cognates in familiar words and help students create illustrations of unknown vocabulary in their personal bilingual dictionaries. They can also supervise computer time activities and provide additional one-on-one support for ELL learners.

Families as In-Class Readers: "Reading a book is a unique opportunity to see the world from another person or thing's perspective. When a child reads a book, whether it is a fantastical story about an object come to life or a very real article about a neighboring country, he or she becomes a part of that world and sees life, however briefly, through the eyes of another. Children are uniquely able to accept and invest in the reality created in what they are reading" (Allyn, 2010). In order to broaden students' understanding about different cultures and foster an appreciation and respect for diversity, family members can read stories to the class that reflect their background and that have universal themes. As students are encouraged to make connections with the text, they will develop an appreciation for the similarities that are shared and the ways other cultures are different and positive. There are many books that are written in two languages, so the English speaking child can read one part, and the family member could read the story in their first language. Books that are read in at least one more language can be found at Children's Books Online, <http://www.childrens-booksonline.org/library-translations.htm>. On this

site, families can access books in Chinese, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, just to name a few of the languages available.

Family members who cannot read should be encouraged to engage in storytelling. Many families tell stories that reflect cultural aspects and themes that all students will identify with. Storytelling involves both choral and echo reading using a multisensory, interactive approach. Family members can share personal stories about growing up in their country and bring in props to engage all students in the retelling. An example of bilingual storytelling can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA8f9f71Vn4>. An example of an American Indian folktale, shared by using bilingual storytelling, can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIHtzU133NI>.

Virtual Visits: If families are reluctant to come to class, or if they can't find the time, they may share oral stories via Skype. Skype is an online system that involves the use of the Internet for making voice and video calls and that enable users to "chat." One unique feature of this program is videoconferencing. This approach allows the storyteller and the students to interact in "real time." For example, Skype was used in an elementary class to interview a multicultural author/storyteller. Rather than the author actually visiting the class, which wasn't economically feasible, the class video chatted with the author/storyteller online. For the mainstreamed learner, this opportunity meant discovering new cultures, languages and ideas, all without leaving their classroom. For the ESL learner, it also meant interacting with authors and illustrators from similar cultural backgrounds who write about themes that are familiar to them.

Classes can take a virtual "field trip" to any part of the world to learn about a specific culture or visit a particular destination. Skyping transcends the traditional classroom and allows students to talk to museum curators and librarians from around the world. Once students get to their destination, they can conduct interviews, take tours, and be a part of a class from another country. This is accomplished through videoconferenced collaborations that reflect a culturally sensitive course curriculum. Skyping allows students and families an opportunity to col-

laborate and learn from people that live all across the globe. It fosters a global perspective and helps the newcomer realize that home is just a click away.

Family Education Programs: In order for newcomers to understand the new culture and to successfully become an integral part of the school community, teachers must provide them with a positive educational and social experience. If schools offer programs that support family inclusion, the school will become an extension of the family and the community. Small group meetings, based on the families' cultural background, can be held in the evenings to build community and to help newcomers become acclimated to the school and to people in their neighborhood. During these meetings, resources can be provided, monthly expectations and deadlines can be discussed, and family literacy classes can be held. To encourage participation, childcare may have to be provided.

Multi-lingual School Websites: Many schools in New York State already have bilingual websites, and many of their announcements are circulated in different languages. However, it is not enough to have the site available to families, but English as a second language families need to be explicitly told, in their language, about these resources. It cannot be assumed that families are utilizing these resources if they are not sure how to navigate the site or which tools to use.

A copy of the bilingual handbook that reflects the many cultures and languages celebrated in the school can be scanned on to the school website. The handbook contents must contain ESL liaison information, a yearly calendar with important dates to remember, and important neighborhood resources, like the public library. Ideally, the teacher should give the handbook to the family member who picks up the child on the first day of school. This initial welcoming to your class will set the stage for the rest of the year and help family members perceive the school as a place where they belong and are wanted.

Multicultural Literature: Culture is ideally woven throughout the curriculum and not just celebrated as a one-day-a-year event or during one month out of the year. One suggestion for integrating culture in

to the curriculum is through the use of multicultural author studies or genre studies.

Multicultural literature is a powerful tool to teach children about the world and themselves. It is used to enrich mainstream students' lives and include culturally and linguistically diverse students in making personal connections with literature. Author studies enable all students to appreciate and learn about the nuance of diverse cultural backgrounds while closely examining the work of one particular author. Through the examination of the author's use of authentic names, foods, customs, and images, students gain an understanding of their own heritage. Importantly, the newcomer will see themselves in these stories and share a little piece of their home and life with their classmates.

Family members can enhance these studies by bringing in realia, real life objects, based on the storyline. They can also share pictures and videos from their country to supplement the author's stories. Resources that outline how to conduct an author's study based on Pam Munoz Ryan, a Hispanic author, can be found at <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/collection/pam-munoz-ryan-author-study>. This site will provide many suggestions on how to design and implement an author's study and information about the author and her works.

During a genre study, students learn about a particular type of literature, such as folktales or biographies. Specifically, teachers may consider using folktales to help students learn about different cultures. A place to start might be with one of over 354 Cinderella variants from around the world. In the Caldecott Award winning book, Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter, Steptoe (1988) depicts the African-American version of Cinderella. The format of the

story is a folktale, but the illustrations, names, and location reflect Zimbabwe culture. The moral is universal, so all students can relate to the theme; it teaches the importance of being kind. These studies foster cultural sensitivity in the classroom and an appreciation for diversity. The Spanish version, *Las Bellas Hijas de Mufaro*, is also available for Hispanic students. A list of Cinderella variants, as well as other multicultural folk tales, can be found at The Children's Literature Web Guide <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/cinderella.html>.

Closing Thoughts: "Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common. Celebrate it everyday." (Anonymous) Our classes consist of a rainbow of diverse backgrounds, languages, ethnicities, and religions. Teachers need to strengthen and create partnerships with non-English speaking students and the nucleus that is the extended family in order to promote growth and success. They need to foster this feeling of family and caring and encourage a strong sense of community. It is crucial that all cultures are represented and valued in every school and that families understand the importance of their involvement in their child's education. Teachers must embrace the diversities and unique qualities of their populations.

These suggestions are only a springboard to stimulate teachers' reflection of their own methods for including ESL families. Hopefully, these recommendations will initiate and catapult professional discussions about creating collaborative and cooperative relationships. Parental involvement for ESL learners must be a priority in order to close the achievement gap between a child's first teachers, their families, and their teachers at school.



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Changing Partnerships between Parents and Teachers since the New Millennium

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During this millennium, there have been many changes in education and families. Typically, the family name, socioeconomic status, religion, cultural and ethnic background, and number and type of members help to define the family system. The federal, state and local communities help to define the school system, along with the shared identities of its constituent members. As the children are the common link between the systems, parents and teachers have a common goal to build partnerships.

Roles of teachers have been changing during this millennium to accommodate cultural and economic stress within families. The best way for schools to accommodate changing family demographics is to ensure that every school has a strong academic program, and highly trained, respectful and nurturing teachers (Wadsworth & Remaley, 2007). Teachers today are held more accountable for the implementation of the education process.

The No Child Left Behind Acts (2001, and 2004), call for more “highly qualified” teachers than in the past, as measured by the passing of certification competency tests. Teachers in the new millennium need expertise in student learning styles, differentiated instruction, inclusive practice, balanced literacy, and literacy across content areas. Now teachers are also held to higher educational standards for all of their students, who have to also pass state-wide competency tests at every grade level. Inclusion of students with disabilities in neighborhood schools, general education classrooms and high-stakes testing, have raised the educational performance standards for differently-abled students. As a result, many professionals have complained that these changes have added much stress to the school atmosphere (Wertz, Culatta & Tompkins, 2007; Wright, 2006).

Parents, too have more stress today from financial and social pressures. In fact, social evolution has changed the whole concept of who constitutes a family today.

“There is no longer the myth of the happy family seen on T.V. in the 70’s and 80’s, where mother and father were wise, compassionate, understanding, and children were intelligent, aware, sensitive,

active problem solvers with a sense of humor, and the most serious physical disability depicted was a child with eyeglasses” (Jaffee-Ruiz, 1994, p.65).

The millennial family components may not include a typical mother, father and two children. Many children today are being raised by surrogate parents or extended family members. These different forms of guardianships or caretakers often have different concerns, and education may not be a priority in a world where basic survival needs are not always easy to attain (Glascoe, 2001). A nurturing home environment cannot be taken for granted in today’s world of homelessness, poverty and rampant substance and child abuse.

Communication with Parents

Often guardians of today’s students have limited English literacy skills, while teachers are typically only English speaking, which makes it more difficult to build partnership bridges between the home and school systems. Good advice for teachers of these fragile partnerships is to assume nothing in advance, but to try to get to know about each child and their unique family situation (Greenberg, 2002). Also, well-prepared teachers show that they can choose valid tools that are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate (NAEYC, 2002).

Methods for communicating with parents vary. Typical forms of communication are the telephone, parent-teacher conferences, home visits, parent meetings, and written communications. Since the millennium, educators increasingly recognize the need for parents and themselves to jointly guide and enhance the learning experience of children. The advantages of effective home-school collaboration are numerous. Teachers acquire a greater understanding of the students and their unique family situations. This, in turn, allows teachers to make more meaningful selections of strategies and programs that enhance academic and social growth (Heward, 1996; Singer, et. al., 1996). Successful parent-teacher communication enables teachers and schools to better comply with legislation that mandates parental involvement in the educational process (eg. PL 94-142, PL 101-46, No Child Left Behind Acts).

Parents also receive benefits from strong communication ties with their children's teachers. Parents gain an increased understanding of the school needs of their child, teacher goals, and child talents or interests. Parents also learn about their rights and responsibilities within the school system. Parent contact with teachers facilitates consistency and valuable home-based learning activities (Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996). As they become more informed and savvy, parents are empowered with skills that enable them to advocate for or help their children. As a result of recent legislation, if students in schools do not meet their annual progress goals, parents have the right to transfer their children out of the poorly performing school, and receive tutoring services. This empowers parents to have a stronger partnership role in the education of their children.

Written communication, in the form of ongoing correspondence between the school and the home, is probably the most efficient and effective method to build a strong partnership between the teacher and parents. Sometimes people can express themselves more effectively in writing than in person or on the telephone. It may be helpful for teachers to have a checklist, rubric or form evaluating the child's performance across several activities or skills, which contains classroom information that is valuable to share with the parent. The checklist can also contain a comment section or questions to the parent. These written messages can serve as permanent products that document progress or recordkeeping in a more consistent way than periodic report cards, which often are in complicated formats that confuse or surprise the parent. If reading or writing literacy skills of the parent are a concern, the teacher can record a message on an audiotape and receive back taped responses from the parent (Williams & Cartledge, 1997).

Many teachers have found it beneficial to use written journals or notebook systems that travel back and forth between home and school, sharing noteworthy accomplishments, behavior, or events. Parents can initial that they have read the notebook, or that their child has read it to them. If the parent and teacher do not speak the same language, this creates a naturalistic situation for the student to practice both home and school language systems, and take responsibility for coordinating the vital

link between home and school. There are numerous websites that can be used to translate notes into different languages. A quick Google search shows the following three sites: babelfish.yahoo.com, freetranslation.com, translate.google.com. For parents that are reluctant to participate, teachers can set up a meeting to explain the importance of a consistent communication system and how their children will benefit, especially when having the teacher aware of any parent concerns can positively affect programming for their child. A good time to explain the method might be in a note sent home with the child in the beginning of the year, or during the school-wide open school night. Most teachers who use this method develop a daily system of organization, such as placing notebook baskets near the classroom door, cubbies or on the teacher's desk. As soon as students enter the classroom, they are taught to put their notebooks in the basket, and collect them again at the end of the day, after the teacher has read and possibly written in them.

Sometimes large class sizes, limited school personnel, or other factors cause teachers difficulty with using daily notebooks to go home. In these cases, some modifications may include establishing alternate days, or rotating the students who receive written notes. Another possibility is to send the notebooks home periodically, such as once a week. Or the teacher can create a class message or newsletter that can be stapled into the notebook. No matter how frequently the notebooks go back and forth, there are two important features to this system. Regular, consistent communication, even if not daily, will occur with enough frequency that parents and teachers will remain in closer contact with each other, and have an established routine for this. Also, notebooks are less likely to get lost in transport than single notices on a sheet of paper, or folded up into envelopes. All teachers have had the typical excuse from a parent or child that they didn't know because they didn't get the notice!

Since the millennium, there have been a lot of technological advances regarding written communication. Most school systems today have a school website, where parents can go on-line to check school related happenings or upcoming events. Teachers and parents can send written e-mails back and forth. Teachers can set up classroom websites, where all notices, policies and class routines, in-

cluding homework, are clearly posted. Teachers and children can also scan, take pictures of work products or activities, or videotape clips from class, and send these home electronically for later viewing by the parents. A few schools for primary aged children have even set up videotaping and videostreaming in the classrooms for security reasons, and parents are allowed to link up and view their child's active engagement in the classroom (Beatty, 2006; Grant & Sleeter, 2003).

Parent and Teacher Conferences

Another beneficial strategy besides written communication that establishes a strong teacher - parent partnership is to schedule regular parent-teacher conferences. Both parents and teachers bring their own perspectives to the conference and the information gathered builds a more successful educational environment that promotes learning. Conferences can be planned for a specific purpose, such as to discuss a problem in the classroom, or conferences can be scheduled for more informal reasons, such as to brainstorm ideas or share information about the student. As the professional in the meeting, teachers will find it helpful to develop skills of "active listening", where their body language and full attention reflects interest and concentration on what the parent has to say. Then, paraphrasing back to the parent what the teacher has interpreted from the communication will enhance the accuracy of understanding between all attendees to the conference. The teacher, too, should ask the parent to summarize what they have interpreted the teacher's statements to mean. In this give and take atmosphere, parents and teachers communicate honestly with each other, and develop mutual trust and respect, the foundation for a true partnership (McLoughlin, 1987; Peri, 1995; Rosenberg et. al., 2004). The following are suggestions for the teacher to consider when meeting with parents: prepare for parent meetings, empathize with parents, provide information to parents, and talk with parents.

Preparing for Parent Meetings

Prepare in advance for the meeting. Have some key, positively-phrased comments that you can make to the parent about their child. For example, instead of complaining to the parents that their child is constantly out of his or her seat, state that their child has many interests that often distract him or

her from seatwork. Be prepared to emphasize good things and minimize bad things about the child's behavior or performance. Keeping a positive tone to the conference will increase its length and the motivation for parents to contribute. Starting the conference off in a friendly yet purposeful manner can be achieved by complimenting the parent on something about the child, or letting the parents know that you, as their child's teacher, celebrate a unique aspect about their child's individuality. It is often helpful to start out by mentioning the student's strengths, or discussing an interesting work product that you should have on hand to share with the parents. Once the parents see that you have a genuine interest in their child as an individual, they will be more comfortable with sharing their own thoughts and ideas about their child. For example, "Justin really likes talking about baseball. He told me one day that when he is grown up he would like to be like Derek Jeter. Do you watch baseball on T.V. together at home?" is a more comfortable way to start off a meeting than "Justin is really not doing well in mathematics this year. Can you tell me why this is?" which immediately puts the parents on the defensive.

Empathizing with Parents

As a teacher, it is often helpful to empathize with the parents, especially if the child has a learning difficulty. Parents often get angry out of frustration and disappointment with their children, and often this anger may be directed at the teacher, who may make comments that cause the parents stress, such as "Your child is failing social studies this quarter; he needs to work harder at home". Instead, try a statement such as, "I have disappointing news about your son's social studies performance this quarter. He has failed several quizzes. Can you think of any reason why this may have occurred?" The latter statement indicates more of a joint concern about the problem, rather than placing blame on the parents at home.

Providing Information to Parents

Provide parents with information about their child's preferred learning style, or explain any difficulties their child may have, but try not to dominate the conference. Parents often want more information about their child, but do not feel comfortable voicing their concerns. Some parents may hesitate to initiate contact with the teacher, as in their cul-

ture this would be insulting and show disrespect for the teacher's expertise (Sobel & Kugler, 2007). A teacher should always ask parents if they have concerns about their child's learning or behavior. Teachers should allow parents ample opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas about their child. So that parents of children with learning issues don't become overwhelmed and upset, stress that learning difficulties are challenges, but that children can overcome learning issues with hard work and appropriate teaching strategies. In this way, the teacher can help empower the parents to help their child with skills, or understand the difficulties that their child faces. For example, if Amy has trouble focusing her attention in school, or is sensitive to noise, help her parents understand how they can reduce distractions at home to help Amy to better do her homework.

Talking with Parents

During a conference, talk with parents, not at them. Try to watch your educational language and use descriptive terms whenever you can. Use the meeting as an opportunity to learn more about the student from the parents' point of view, and soliciting the parents' suggestions will help them to feel valued in the process. If a parent says, "Marco doesn't like doing his homework", try to respond with a question rather than an authoritative statement about the value of homework. For example, "Do you know why Marco doesn't like doing his homework? Can you tell me more about what he says or does? What does he like to do after school instead of homework? Do you think that completing his homework will help him to do better at school the next day? Can you think of any way to help him do his homework in a more enjoyable way?" This type of response by the teacher will show the parent that you are concerned about their child's interests, and that you care. Remember that the parent is interacting with the child at home, in a completely different environmental system than the school.

Recognizing Family Diversity

Recognize the individuality of each family system and resist the convenience of stereotyping. This may be harder than you think, and some methods of stereotyping are hidden and unintentional. Millennial students come from many different cultures and backgrounds, and have many different abilities.

The way that children behave at home and traditions that set limits on their behavior, may impact how the child acts or performs in class. Sometimes if parents have had a bad school experience, they may instill these negative feelings in their children, with resulting negative attitudes toward school (Holloway, Ramboud, Foller & Eggars-Pierola, 1995). As teachers, we must remain accepting and open-minded to cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, economic and family differences. These influences can affect how the family perceives the value of the education that the schools offer, and our government mandates (Drew & Hardman, 2004). For example, parents may not have money for school supplies and may be embarrassed to tell the teacher that they can't purchase the literacy selection that is assigned. If you request that the child watch a television show, or a newscast, some children may not be allowed to watch television at home until their evening chores are done. Also, be conscious of family tree or family background assignments, as some children may be living in foster care, or may be adopted. Some cultures may not consider education to be the prized possession that our culture does, so regular class attendance of children may be secondary to family issues. In addition, parents may be interested in how their child does in school but may not be able to come to conferences because they cannot take time off from work or they cannot find a babysitter for the younger children at home. As teachers, we need to respect these differences yet find a way to advocate for the educational opportunities. Teachers may need to compromise or adapt their methods, assignments or strategies.

Family-Friendly Homework Assignments

A fun way to accommodate for individual differences among families is to design family-friendly interactive homework assignments (Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). Traditionally, when teachers assign homework, it may become a power struggle between the student and his or her parent. Parents may not know whether or not to help their child with the assignment, and students may sometimes hide the fact that they have homework, or mislead the parent as to its purpose or content. Many parents have expressed a desire to become actively involved in their child's learning at home (Bailey, 2002). In order to take advantage of homework opportunities, teachers can create a foundation for partnership with the

parent when they structure the assignment in a constructive way to include the parent. Students have also been found to prefer homework assignments that involve their parents or other family members (Salend, et. al., 2004; Swick & Graves, 1993). A questionnaire sent home at the beginning of the year would help the teachers to determine what type of assignments would best ensure successful homework experiences for the diverse families of their classes. It would also set a respectful tone for building a partnership. Figure A is an example of a family homework checksheet to elicit information about homework preferences that can be built on throughout the year. It would be helpful to have any written form translated into the primary language spoken at home (Bacca & Cervantes, 1998).

Figure A
Sample Family Homework Preference Letter
Dear Parents,

I would like to have your support this year in making your child's homework become a valued home learning experience for your family. In order to do this, I would like to learn more about your family interests and traditions. Please consider the following questions with your child in order to help me design creative assignments that would be appropriate for all of our class families. Your responses will be kept confidential.

1. What kinds of activities or hobbies does your family enjoy?
2. Are there any evenings during the week when it is difficult for your child to complete homework assignments? Why?
3. Are there any books, magazines, or particular topics of interest that you enjoy reading either by yourself or to your child?
4. Please share with me any previous homework assignment that has been problematic for you and your child.
5. Please share with me any previous homework assignment that has been particularly enjoyable for you and your child.
6. What is the best way for us to communicate (email, phone, text)? Please provide contact details.

Thank you so much for your time completing this survey!

By using the following guidelines, teachers, parents and students can work together to create more effective and enjoyable homework activities. Teachers should clearly state the parameters of their interactive homework assignments so that:

- a) the goal or purpose of the interactive homework assignment is explained,
- b) clearly stated directions and time suggestions are included,
- c) the roles for each participant in the assignment are clearly defined,
- d) a sample of suggested dialogue between the parent and child or other family member is included,
- e) questions that stretch the reasoning or thought process, or reinforce other areas of study in the class are included, and
- f) sample responses or grading expectations are given, with opportunities for students and parents to reflectively grade themselves.

Building Partnerships is a Process

Building partnerships with parents is a process, and it takes time to develop rapport, trust and productive collaboration. Parent-teacher organizations in schools (PTA's) can help with this process. Efforts to train immigrant parents as leaders or advocates in parent leadership classes, as well as encouraging parents to visit parent resource centers in schools, have been very successful in linking the home, school and community (Sobel & Kugler, 2007). Research involving parent-teacher organizations has shown that effective home-school collaboration can raise a child's achievement in school (Glascoe, 1994; Rich, 1996). Also, respecting and including the family in the school system strengthens the self-esteem of children (Rudolph & Luckner, 1991; Wildman, Kinsman, Logoe, & Dickey, 1997). Effective home-school partnerships bring greater consistency and enrichment between the two most important environments for the child, controlled by their parents and teachers and will provide the child with more positive opportunities for learning and social growth.



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Educators teaching in American school systems, have a responsibility to promote American values

Casimiro Cibelli

The American Constitution is the world standard for enumerating personal liberties which are protected and provided for by a federal system founded on promoting and fostering state sovereignty. Our Constitution legitimizes us and offers the framework by which we exist within its political culture. Created to replace the Articles of Confederation in an effort to create a true national government, the Constitution is framed in clear and deliberate language to guide matters and issues presented during the nascent days of the Republic.

From the Constitution, Americans derive personal freedom through language guaranteeing personal tenets broadcasted through a very public and dangerous announcement, the Declaration of Independence, authored, printed and read aloud in 1776, Philadelphia. What was viewed as treason by King George 3rd essentially secured Americans life, liberty and [a] pursuit of happiness. Such a philosophy penned by John Locke, inspired Jefferson to champion his vision and make individual rights uniquely American.

Embodied in the Constitution, therefore, are original governing principles, which through the years continue to provide the best democracy to date. There are two opposing schools of thought, however, on how constitutional language ought to be interpreted and applied in present day America. In *Original Meaning*, Rakove, 1996, writes, “The critics of originalism hold that it is no easy task to discover the original meaning of a clause, and that even if it were, a rigid adherence to the ideas of the framers and ratifiers would convert the Constitution into a brittle shell incapable of adaption to all the changes that distinguish the present from the past.

” The framers clearly set forth in the Tenth Amendment, (1795) “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” Therefore, a clear conclusion is that providing for the education of Americans is a power reserved for the states as there is no constitutional provision for federal control.

State sovereignty creates a varying quality of life from one state to another. Investing in schools requires state legislatures to tax its citizens and to leverage funding equitably so that every citizen has access to the “free and liberal” education Thomas Jefferson affirmed is our right. A well-rounded education, particularly launched early in life, as early as preschool, unfolds the pathway to self-efficacy and through the formative years, children begin to study communities, their respective cultures, religions and mores. A foundation is laid for children to develop insight and to begin determining how they relate to the world around them. Particularly in the social studies, self-awareness comes alive.

In New York City, teachers have a scope and sequence guiding their instruction recently amended and revamped to align with the Common Core Learning Standards. New York State educators ought to feel a sense of pride that the New York State Learning standards predominately make up the new national standards. Nevertheless, a case may be made for the unconstitutionality of the CCLS. The purpose of this essay is to propose that a recent decision by New York State Regents to end social studies assessments in the fourth and eighth grades may have unleashed a new wave of revisionism.

Could this set the stage for federal control over curriculum? There is a danger that without assessing the social studies, schools may forego a clear curriculum because of the premium placed on literacy and math state data. Children may be exposed to instruction that is teacher-centric; meaning the background knowledge needed to form ideas and understand new information may be at risk. Inspirational teachers lead their children to project based learning, engaging them to debate the issues inherent in the American scripture. They believe in developing student appreciation for culture and model respect and admiration for people’s diversity.

Throughout the world, we identify with those nations who hold common core values such as our own, and draw necessary bonds of friendship for

the general welfare of our citizens. Espousing deep ideology in governing one's adult life, through intellectual resolution on a matter of fact or history, a well-educated citizen may desire such to be a central quality of a life well lived. Teachers who fail to temper such tendencies indoctrinate their students to an end that they, as individuals, must be taught how to resolve for a better understanding of circumstances responsible for one event or another.

Children must be led to believe that they are free to develop their own conclusions based on personal background knowledge instilled by their parents, family and school community. While it is true, especially in the more troubled urban areas that schools become a parenting agent, this is never a reason for a teacher to indoctrinate students. Social issues, controversies, and matters arising from the natural course of events in the world order, must be managed through historical investigation, and where an investigation exposes conflicting ideologies, the teacher must lead through Freirean pedagogy.

This approach is quoted by teacher, David Nurenberg, writing in the *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 81, Spring 2011, pg. 58, "to teach is not to transfer the comprehension of the object to a student but to instigate the student, who is a knowing subject, to become capable of comprehending and of communicating what has been comprehended." Mr. Nurenberg, a suburban high school teacher, writes about how he struggles to have his predominantly white students from privileged backgrounds identify with social justice issues such as those surmounted by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr..

While the struggles of African Americans, and other groups throughout America's existence, found relative resolve and remedy through the architecture of the Constitution, powers invested in the document need to be evoked to serve justice. The brilliance in the American constitution is its ability to accept amendments as the nation matures. Political action and involvement to that end promotes awareness, exposes systemic bigotry and provides access to social justice through legislative action and judicial precedent.

Nurenberg admits that his schooling was prime as he attended prestigious schools; but not being of a

privileged economic class, he developed a "righteous rage" against what he "perceived to be the insensitivity of the sheltered elite class.", pg.53 As a teacher of the humanities, he believes his students must comprehend the body of work dedicated to the quest for social justice. This is not unusual, but to what extent should Mr. Nurenberg interfere when his best student presented a paper positioned on the relevance and identification of Dr. King's speeches and movements to African Americans. The high school student comprehended the impact on America by Dr. King and states that Dr. King "changed the world we live in. He continues by drawing his own conclusion, "However, when his speeches are viewed by high schoolers in rich white towns, rather than poor people struggling against oppression, they are not effective.", pg. 51.

Teachers have long complained in this era of testing and data driven instruction that creativity suffers and item teaching restricts exploring deeper concepts that are inherent in the social studies. Now that assessing teaching and learning is no longer required in the fourth and eighth grade through a unilateral state assessment, will teachers approach content like Mr. Nurenberg, from a personal perspective such as "righteous rage" developed long before he became a teacher? To what extent will students be exposed or not to the fundamental content knowledge of American history, its issues and struggles by competing constituencies, and what roles should teachers play in providing an authentic approach to learning and mastering the myriad of concepts, ideas and opportunities American history offers?

The social studies evolve through various spectrums, exploring for example the politics of Conservatism and Liberalism, two opposing political approaches to managing society. Such political conception is difficult for fourth graders to grasp; yet, in the fourth grade curriculum, students need to understand the geography of New York, its environment, the Algonquin and Iroquois as the first New Yorkers; the impact of the Dutch and English and its colonization. Fourth graders are exposed to the American Revolution and the concept of revolution. They embark on discovering how its constitution established statehood, and how law enabled and controlled stagecoaches and steamboats, creating a

citizenry with the acumen to build canals and railroads and paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. Students encounter literature from Washington Irving, such as Rip Van Winkle, describing how he fell asleep in colonial New York and woke up twenty years later in a state, ratified by a Constitution made possible by the federal system created to promote life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Fourth graders read James Fenimore Cooper who writes about life on the frontier, and they read the Last of the Mohicans exploring the concepts of war and conflicting cultural norms.

This course of study progresses through studying New York's growth and change, its government and how living in New York partners you with the world. By the time children begin to study the social reformers, the robber barons and how great wealth and generational poverty exponentially created social classes whose disparity would tighten through enacting laws to protect children from barbaric labor conditions and extend the right to vote to women, they would have needed to develop the ability to analyze facts and nuances so to formulate their personal historical connections not to identify and categorize themselves; but rather to establish a holistic approach to thinking about history.

Teachers are responsible and have a moral imperative to develop their lessons and discussions to this end. The younger the student, the greater is the call to temper personal biases and political philosophies. A case in point is the work of two East Harlem teachers who planned a symbolic field trip to Zuccotti Park on Columbus Day in support of the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon. Hundreds of towns and countries, streets and organizations, took Columbus' name for theirs long before the revisionists attempted to demonize him and convict him of genocide by writing abridged texts for children in the early 90s. The anti-Columbus movement is a pure form of large scale indoctrination. Through the deliberate and politically charged trip, elementary school children, accompanied by their parents and teachers were brought to Zuccotti Park in celebration of "Un-Columbus Day, to align it with the school's curriculum." CSA Borough Briefs, January 2012.

Clearly the message of OWS is reduced to its attempt to expose the great wealth one may amass as an American as un-American. Did the principal and

teachers really believe that their elementary school children developed the historical perspective and acumen to comprehend how and why an individual becomes a member of the 1%? Could they truly debate the question of whether great wealth ought to be redistributed to the poor? While I have not observed their lesson or read their plan, I can say with certainty, their intention was not to teach that wealth creation in America has many pathways. How on earth does an elementary aged child grasp such a concept? Perhaps many people were attracted to OWS because of their past counter culture activities in the sixties, and I presume, with no evidence at all, that the twenty something year olds who pitched tents were the children of those who protested in the 60s, and clearly have been indoctrinated to begrudge the privileged class.

Opportunities to create extravagant wealth like Bill Gates or Michael Bloomberg, and so many others, are made possible through the very tenets which makes America the greatest republic to occupy planet earth. These tenets created a Great Society when Americans needed their government to help them through the Great Depression; when working men and women needed to gain respect in the work place, unions were born. Unions created the middle class, and today, unions are beguiled and targeted. Unions offer security so families could send their children to great schools in hopes for a better life; not so much to join the 1%; or to occupy wall street; but to exercise the founding principles they inherited from generations of Americans before them, namely to pursue life, liberty and happiness.

The Declaration of Independence acknowledges God and our rights which are inalienable and derived directly from Him. Yet, the divide between conservative and liberal values threatens the Judeo-Christian tradition this great country was founded on. Pivotaly positioned are schools, namely staffed by teachers and administrators who have a duty to protect their students from indoctrination. Agenda driven teachers and administrators rob their students of the joy that comes from learning. Ours is not the right to teach children what to think; but rather we have the responsibility to promote and foster the lessons that teach students how to think.

When a conservative candidate for president suggests that minority students ought to get jobs as custodians in their schools to foster employment skills and a liberal incumbent president appoints an

ultra-conservative secretary of education, a perfect storm begins to brew. There is no doubt America is changing. America has been changing since its founding and will continue to do so long after we live to try to make a difference. Our responsibility is to sustain the American promise and guarantee known the world over and protect that guarantee for generations to come. If an American child wants to dream to grow into being a wealthy adult; moreover than her family before them, we must never discourage such a dream because of personal political expediency. Happiness for another child may lead her to a moderate living where she may live in peace and have the comforts she desires as a result of her freedom to choose her destiny. That skill set is developed by conscientious teachers who understand their calling to teach their charges how to think for themselves toward a life of personal fulfillment.

The promise of America is threatened today more than ever. Nevertheless, if we study history, we see that America is as good as the citizens housing her land. American teachers, particularly those who teach history, need to demonstrate how America depends on Americans. Knowing that the world

depends on her, too, America will again and again turn to her people, those rich or not; and each one needs to promote original American values.

In this 21st century, personal liberties declared uniquely American in the late 1700s made the election of President Barack Obama, the first African American president, a truth in American scripture. We may conclude that anyone, no matter their circumstances, may pursue their happiness, be it to join the 1%; take a union job or be president of the United States. Teachers of the social studies, by virtue of the content's discipline, must open the minds of the young to understand how history unfolds so that the urgency of its lessons spark heartfelt allegiance to God, country and family.

Liberating our students' minds preserves the spirit of self-reliance and perseverance. Children must grow into reliable citizens, that when called upon, their toil is meaningful and purposeful, borne out of a spirit that is uniquely American, tempered by teachers who taught them well as demonstrated through sound thoughts for effective actions.



Casimiro Cibelli continues to serve the children of New York City as an educator now for 25 years. Serving in pedagogical and administrative capacities, Mr. Cibelli serves on many Boards and Associations for the betterment of education. He recently was appointed by the Westchester county executive to the Westchester Youth Board, and is currently Executive Director-Elect of the New York Academy of Public Education. In addition to being an educator, Mr. Cibelli is actively involved in his school community receiving numerous awards for service and has been a candidate for public office for municipal and countywide seats.

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