AASA JOURNAL OF SCHOLARSHIP & PRACTICE

AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION
WWW.AASA.ORG

Research and Evidence-Based Practice Advancing the Profession of Education Administration

Winter/Volume 15 No. 4

Table of Contents

Editorial Review Board

AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice
2017-2018

Sponsorship and Appreciation

The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would like to thank AASA, The School Superintendents Association, and in particular the AASA Leadership Development Office, for its ongoing sponsorship of the *Journal*.

We also offer special thanks to Kenneth Mitchell, Manhattanville College, for his efforts in selecting the articles that comprise this professional education journal and lending sound editorial comments to each volume.

The unique relationship between research and practice is appreciated, recognizing the mutual benefit to those educators who conduct the research and seek out evidence-based practice and those educators whose responsibility it is to carry out the mission of school districts in the education of children.

Without the support of AASA and Kenneth Mitchell, the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would not be possible.

Hoosier Lawmaker? Vouchers, ALEC Legislative Puppets, and Indiana's Abdication of Democracy

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Abstract

"Getting poor kids out of failing schools" sounds like an altruistic cause most Americans support. However, one policy mechanism utilized to achieve that result, parental choice vouchers, has a checkered past. This descriptive analysis explores the policy-bubble created when state legislators eschewed their constitutional responsibility as noted in Article 8 of the Indiana Constitution: "to provide, by law, for a general and uniform system of Common Schools, wherein tuition shall without charge, and equally open to all" (Indiana Constitution, 1851).

This article delves into the impact of the strong working relationship between Indiana and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the impact of that partnership on choice options in education. Despite multiple early promises, Indiana's voucher program no longer emphasizes enrollment of lower income students, no longer strives for improved student achievement, and no longer reduces government and its costs. The purpose of this article is to trace the philosophical roots, political interconnections, and sleight-of-hand that undergirds the interaction of ALEC, vouchers, and state government.

Key Words

ALEC, vouchers, policy

Throughout US history, blame or credit for a variety of problems and successes are laid at the feet of the nation's traditional public schools (TPS). Some critics of public schools perceive a catastrophe. "Given the breadth of our education crisis, we have to start asking not whether a particular reform is too radical, but rather whether it is radical enough" (Bolick, 2017, p.19). Critics of TPS propose a market-based approach utilizing mechanisms such as charter schools, vouchers, and tax-credits for private school tuition (Ujifusa, 2017).

TPS advocates share evidence of academic effectiveness of traditional public schools and their positive impact for diverse groups of students (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Bracey, 2004, 2009; Covaleskie, 2007). Proponents of TPS assert that public schools teach "what will be lost to democratic life if society loses the concept of public" (Covaleskie, 2007, p. 34).

John Dewey believed that when students were actively involved in the learning process, they would learn to:

1. (B)ecome knowledge producers instead of knowledge consumers;
2. … students are not only active participants in learning—they are educated to become active participants in democratic life instead of being spectators to a shallow form of democracy (Saltmarsh, 2007, p. 67).

While these two points of view confront each other via research and opinions, they constitute only a surface understanding of present-day US public education.

To grasp the nature of US education, one must view education at the state level. This is imperative since the absence of any mention of education in the U.S. Constitution establishes education as a function of the states.

Focusing on Indiana, the state with the nation's largest voucher program (Barnum, 2017), our narrative investigates how the power to make decisions about the education of children is relinquished via a relationship between state legislators and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

Indiana's abdication of responsibility and diversion from its stated Constitutional purpose as noted in Article 8 of the Indiana Constitution: "to provide, by law, for a general and uniform system of Common Schools, wherein tuition shall without charge, and equally open to all" (Indiana Constitution, 1851) is clearly seen in the actions of the legislature at the behest of ALEC.

Foundation of Public Education

Substantial agreement exists that public education is the cornerstone of democracy and the spark plug for the engagement of citizens in its processes (Covaleskie, 2007; Mathis, 2016). State constitutions take responsibility for public education to develop the thinking and behavior required for civic dialogue and citizenship participation.

Indiana's constitution devotes Article 8 to education and lays out a Common School System for the state:

> "Knowledge and learning, … being essential to the preservation of a free government; it should be the duty of the General Assembly to encourage … and provide, by law, for a general and uniform system of Common Schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all" (Indiana Constitution, 1851).

Empowering democracy continues to be a primary objective as "the goal of education was an informed and intelligent citizenry capable of making good choices with respect to the leaders and policies of the nation and the society" (Covaleskie, 2007, p. 38).

Differentiating between schooling, and education policy
Schooling is the pursuit of rote, learned, behaviors—the Lancasterian method of rule-following and obeying instructions to meet the need for disciplined workers in the Industrial Age. Education engages students in higher order thinking, authentic learning, and citizenship education (Goldstein, 2017).

Prosaic visions of public school are an American tradition. One-room school houses, apples, chalkboards, textbooks, and other artifacts of old-fashioned public school experiences are woven into homespun knickknacks, popular songs and films, and the memories of vast numbers of US citizens.

Policymaking for public education in a democracy is rooted in the active participation of informed citizens through local boards of education.

Feedback-in-democracy "recognizes that there are common problems, problems that must be discovered and defined by a process of public reflection and then solved by common action directed to secure some common good" (Covaleskie, 2007, p. 28).

To sidestep engagement with the electorate during the turbulent political interactions that arise over education, the 25 percent of state lawmakers (Graves, 2016) who are members of ALEC subscribe to the "notion that choice in a market place is 'cleaner' than the messy, often contentious politics of a school board" (Anderson & Donchik, 2016, p. 347).

ALEC and U.S. education
ALEC is described as "a new neoliberal knowledge regime promoted by wealthy philanthropists, corporate-funded think tanks, private 'edubusinesses' and their lobbyists, and other policy entrepreneurs (Ball, 2009; Scott, 2009)" [Anderson & Donchik, 2016, p. 323].

In this sense, neoliberalism is simply the idea that "competition is the only legitimate organizing principle for human activity" (Metcalf, 2017, p. 1) and therefore, the driving philosophy of ALEC is that the market (and especially educational choice) should decide what is good education policy.

With nearly twenty-five percent of state lawmakers (Graves, 2016) as members of ALEC, much of what has become known as education reform, and the policies that establish that reform, were written first as sample laws, templates as it were, created by the members of ALEC, that transform local lawmakers "into stealth lobbyists, providing them with talking points, signaling how they should vote and collaborating on bills affecting hundreds of issues like school vouchers" (McIntire, 2012).

ALEC membership
The Charles Koch Foundation, the DeVos Foundation, the Friedman Foundation, Koch Industries, Sylvan Learning, Connections Education, and K-12 Inc., among many others, fund the work of eight (8) subject-focused ALEC task forces (Bourquein, 2017; Fischer & Peters, 2016; Underwood, 2011; Underwood & Mead, 2012). State legislators pay minimally for memberships in ALEC. Corporate and think tank memberships can cost as much as $25,000, while a seat on one of ALEC's task forces can cost up to $10,000 (Underwood & Mead, 2012).

State legislators and ALEC's agenda
One of the features that distinguishes ALEC from many other lobbying or political

organizations is that it creates legislative templates. Figure 1 shows the parallels between one of ALEC's model bills and Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program.

	Sample Wording from ALEC	Indiana Program Wording
Title of Program	The Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act	Choice Scholarship Program
Intent of program	provide children from low and middle income families the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their parents' choice	provides scholarships to eligible Indiana students to offset tuition costs at participating schools. Students must satisfy both household income requirements and student eligibility criteria to qualify.
Special Ed Funding	Maximum scholarship … shall be an amount equivalent to the cost of the educational program that would have been provided for the student in the resident school district	The amount an eligible choice scholarship student is entitled to receive is equal to … any amount that a school corporation would receive … if the eligible choice student attended the school corporation
Transfer of funds	The scholarship is the entitlement of the eligible student under the supervision of the student's parents and not that of any school.	The department may distribute the choice scholarship to the eligible choice scholarship student (or the parent …) for the purpose of paying the educational costs …

Figure 1. Parallels between one of ALEC's model bills and Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program.

Members of ALEC promote legislation dedicated to the introduction of market forces into schools; the implementation of vouchers, charters, and/or tax credits; the enforcement of standardized testing and school accountability based on test results; and the reduction or elimination of the authority of local school boards and districts (Underwood & Mead, 2012). The US state legislators who maintain membership in ALEC are uniformly implementing its model bills and templates. Thirty-eight states mandate standardized achievement testing to evaluate the productivity and efficiency of schooling. These same states embrace ALEC's affinity for school choice as essential schooling and as the best pathway to improvement of test outcomes (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2008; Underwood, 2011).

ALEC and Blaine Amendments in Indiana

ALEC advises legislators how to combat three barriers to their agenda found within state constitutions: compelled support clauses,

Blaine Amendments, and uniformity clauses (Komer & Neily, 2007). Compelled Support Clauses exist in twenty-nine state constitutions prohibiting states from establishing an official religion. ALEC explains why this clause in any state constitution should not thwart school choice: "parents participating in voucher programs who select religious schools *freely and independently choose* them from a host of religious and non-religious alternatives" (Komer & Neily, 2007, p. 4).

Blaine Amendments in the constitutions of thirty-seven states are designed to stop government from directly funding religious schools. The Indiana Constitution in Article I Section 6 states, "No money shall be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of any religious or theological institution" (Indiana Constitution, 1851). ALEC asserts that these amendments should not forestall school choice because tax-credit-funded scholarships constitute "forgone tax revenue [which] does not constitute public money" (Komer & Neily, 2007, p. 5). In *Meredith* (2013), the Indiana Supreme Court agreed that, "Any benefit to religious or theological institutions in the above examples, though potentially substantial, is ancillary and indirect".

Intensive deconstruction of state constitutions to facilitate privatization is necessary to the success of ALEC's agenda across America, as over 80 percent of students in private schools attend a school operated by a religious organization. In Indiana, 98 percent of voucher schools have a religious affiliation (Cierniak, Billick, & Ruddy, 2015; Kaufman, 2017; Smith, 2017).

Indiana and ALEC: Leaders, Vouchers, and Schooling

The nexus between state legislatures and ALEC-generated legislation is exemplified in the organization's relationship with Indiana

policymakers. ALEC named Indiana the best state in the nation for education policy in 2014 (Wang, 2014). Twenty-seven ALEC members populate Indiana's General Assembly. Among this group, Representative Bob Behning has held leadership positions in ALEC. Campaign contributions during Behning's twenty-five years of legislative service originate from ALEC-related groups like Stand for Children and Students First as well as corporations including K-12, Inc. and Education Networks of America (ChalkBeat, 2017).

Cookie-cutter legislation feeds Hoosier privatization

Observers of ALEC report that the organization "has been a legislative force working silently behind the scenes in the Indiana Statehouse" (Bourquein, 2017). Under ALEC 's guidance in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio, state legislatures "introduced substantially similar bills bringing sweeping changes to each state's collective bargaining statutes and school funding provisions" (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 51). Two prominent themes in Education Task Force models shape Hoosier legislation to the ALEC legislative cookie-cutter: "(a) . . . the transfer of state taxpayer dollars from public schools to private non-profit or for-profit education corporations; (b) opposition to teacher unions, tenure, and certification" (Anderson & Donchik, 2016, p. 333).

Among ALEC-originated priorities adopted in Indiana are "means-tested vouchers; special education vouchers; tax deductions for private school tuition and home-schooling expenses; and tax credits" (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 54).

Indiana leadership and TPS decisions

Ironically, the story of Indiana's wholesale engagement with vouchers begins with a governor's promise to support traditional public schools. "Gov. Daniels was asked if he planned

to support school vouchers. He responded, 'that will not be a part of my proposal'" (Howey, 2005).

Decisions made by Indiana's elected officials about TPS belie the governor's assurances. Developments included Indiana's governor acting unilaterally to eliminate $300 million from allocated public school funding (Carden, 2009), the legislature ending funding public schools via property taxation (Cavazos, 2014), and the executive and legislative branches opening the door to school choice via vouchers which the state calls "choice scholarships" (Colombo, 2015).

Four legislative sessions delivered ALEC's agenda to education in Indiana:

Indiana's 2009 voucher legislation.
Privatization of schooling in Indiana took flight in 2009 via HB 1003 that provided "choice scholarships" to eligible children who enrolled in a participating private school (Boyland & Ellis, 2015). The legislation capped state voucher dollars at $2.5 million.

Indiana's 2011 voucher legislation.
Governor Daniels emphasized that limitations were in place capping voucher participation at 7,500 students statewide; and requiring that voucher students attend public schools for at least a year before being voucher-eligible. He stated, "'public schools will get first shot at every child. If the public school delivers and succeeds, no one will seek to exercise this choice'" (Brown & McLaren, 2016).

Indiana's General Assembly adopted this promise and increased funding to $5 million. The cap was eventually eliminated through statute in 2013 (Boyland & Ellis, 2015).

Indiana's 2013 voucher legislation.
Bob Behning, Chair of the Indiana House Education Committee, opened the legislative discussion during hearings on early childhood "scholarships," the first overt voucher bill to be enacted by the Indiana General assembly, stating that the bill was about jump-starting pre-school education.

This sudden legislative frenzy for preschool education seemed completely out of place in Indiana, where little statutory attention is paid to learning for this age, where kindergarten is not required, and where full-day kindergarten programs are not funded.

Indiana's 2015 voucher legislation.
Representative Behning introduced legislation to fund pre-school via vouchers in five selected Indiana counties during 2015 (On My Way Pre-K), and wrote legislation passed in 2017 that expanded this privatization program to fund a total of 20 counties for $20 million and an additional $1 million for online preschool (McInerny & Balonon-Rosen, 2017).

Expansion of this program promises that children who enroll in private pre-schools accepting vouchers are automatically enrolled in Indiana's choice scholarship program.

Indiana, ALEC, and vouchers: Continuing saga

Within three years of the legislature's removal of the enrollment cap for tax credits, Indiana's voucher program enrolled almost 20,000 students and was the second largest in the nation after Wisconsin (Boyland & Ellis, 2015, p. 26-27). As enrollment increased, so did cost to the state. From an allocation for vouchers of $15.5 million within the 2011-2012 state budget, state support for vouchers in 2016-2017 totals $146.1 million (IDOE, 2017).

By 2017, Indiana became "one of the most robust taxpayer-funded voucher programs in the country" (Cavazos, 2017). Because vouchers in Indiana "shift state money from public schools to pay private school tuition" (Cavazos, 2017), ALEC's intent to eviscerate traditional public education continues to receive a significant fiscal boost from Hoosier taxpayers. Between 2011 and 2017, Indiana spent a total of $520 million on vouchers— dollars that would otherwise have supported children in traditional public schools (Schneider, 2017, p. 3a).

Promises forgotten

In the wake of Governor Daniel's abandoned promise, during the 2016-2017 school year (five years after the voucher program began), 55 percent of voucher recipients never previously attended a public school in Indiana (Colombo, 2017).

A Friedman Foundation commissioned report prior to Indiana's passage of its tax credit voucher program promised *savings* of $17.6 million for the state by year five of the program

predicting "that demand for private schooling will be high among eligible low-income families and that large savings to the state will be realized even with modest voucher amounts" (Huerta, 2009, p. 4).

The predicted cost-savings evaporated as increasing numbers of students at private and sectarian schools received vouchers. Between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016, the cost of expanded vouchers to Hoosiers rose from an actual savings of $4.2 million to an expenditure of $53.2 million (IDOE, 2017), creating a burden that Indiana's taxpayers were not paying previously (Brown & McLaren, 2016).

Adding to the broken promises list, a significant portion of voucher costs "are going to wealthier families, those earning up to $90,000 for a household of four" (Brown & McLaren, 2016). 31 percent of voucher families were not eligible for free/reduced meals and could afford private school enrollment without any state subsidy (Brown & McLaren, 2016).

Protecting ALEC's priorities

Indiana's General Assembly continues to protect and advance ALEC's priorities. House Bill 1384, authored by Bob Behning, allows private schools to avoid statutory consequences stipulating they "cannot accept new voucher students for one year after the school is graded a D or F for two straight years" (Cavazos, 2017).

Legislation allows voucher schools to appeal earned grades and consequences attached to them (Schneider, 2017.) Indiana's General Assembly further supported privatization by establishing "no financial reporting requirements for private schools that receive public funds, leaving taxpayers with less oversight and accountability than with the state's public schools" (Brown & McLaren, 2016).

Outcomes and Consequences: Schooling Overtakes Indiana

Lawmakers' abdication of quality in learning and teaching engenders "startling lousy academic results" (Bielke, 2017b).

- A 2015 study of Indiana's voucher program found students who transferred to private schools, using a voucher, experienced dramatic losses in mathematics achievement while experiencing no improvement in reading (Bielke, 2017a).

- Only a small subset of the thousands of Hoosier voucher enrollees remained in private/voucher schools for four years. Students who left voucher program schools "saw large decreases in achievement while they were using a voucher" (Barnum, 2017).

- For the 2015-2016 school year, almost 25 percent of charter schools earned an "F" grade from the state while 5 percent of TPS schools earned an "F" (Schneider & Erbacher, 2016). The virtual schools promoted by ALEC provided nothing of value for students: every online school in Indiana earned an "F" during 2016 (Cavazos, 2016).

- A 2017 study by Notre Dame and University of Kentucky researchers indicated that "'across nearly all subgroups of students in the disaggregated

results, we find persistent, statistically significant negative impacts of receiving a voucher on average annual mathematics levels and gains'" (Colombo, 2017).

Discarding individual rights

Dedicated to vouchers and choice, the Friedman Foundation enthused that vouchers were a step along the pathway to "abolishing the public school system" (Fischer & Peters, 2016). A year after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the group's founder, Milton Friedman, issued a call for "free market schools to allow people to choose 'exclusively White schools, exclusively colored schools, and mixed schools'" (Fischer & Peters, 2016).

Vouchers were created with the expressed purpose of perpetuating school segregation by providing White families with the freedom to choose a school devoid of minority students (Tabachnick, 2015). Indiana's expansive voucher program has become increasingly White and affluent (Colombo, 2017).

ALEC's templates create programs shortchanging students with disabilities. Parents and caregivers unwittingly waive a variety of rights (guaranteed in TPS) and create inequitable conditions for themselves. Participation in voucher programs can entail the waiver of:

> "the right to a free education; the right to the same level of special-education services that a child would be eligible for in a public school; the right to a state-certified or college-educated teacher; and the right to a hearing to dispute disciplinary action against a child" (Goldstein, 2017).

Virtual learning?

Mirroring a dismal national trend revealed in studies "showing that full-time virtual schools are not appropriate for most children" (Fischer & Peters, 2016), leaving their students performing significantly below students in traditional public schools (Cavazos, 2016),

Indiana's virtual schools nevertheless earned a pass from Indiana legislators. Representative Behning not only authored Indiana's original virtual schools law but opined they should not be penalized for poor performance (Cavazos, 2016).

Hoosier schooling benefits ALEC

By siphoning off tax dollars to enrich unproven school choice, virtual schools, and standardized vouchers, Indiana legislators abandon the state's constitution and "decrease local control of schools by democratically elected school boards while increasing access to all facets of education by private entities and corporations" (Underwood & Mead, 2012, p. 53).

Subservient to model legislation and ALEC's influence, "the state is not withdrawing or being hollowed out, but rather colonized by corporate interests" (Anderson & Donchik, 2016, p. 348).

Indiana students who are not financially able to attend a voucher-supported school are relegated to enrollment in under-supported TPS.

Restoring Quality: Hoosier Policymaking and Education

The outcomes of ALEC's influences on Indiana's statutory uniformity for schooling--including abandonment of feedback-in-democracy, abdication of universal public education, assertion of corporate profits, and the imposition of ideology in the guise of local policymaking (Lubienski & Brewer, 2013),

speak to a need for the restoration of quality Hoosier policymaking for education.

Indiana's legislators ignore their citizenry and legislate the segregation inherent in privatization where schools "set their own admission standards and can reject students for any reason, leading to concerns about segregation not just by race and class, but also by faith, ability and disability" (Brown & McLaren, 2016). In its allegiance to ALEC, Indiana legislators have abandoned the power of education to engage students in learning how to work well together, to understand social justice and the rights/needs of others. ALEC's agenda abandons the common good including the necessity of learning to be "tolerant of those with whom one differs." (Covaleskie, 2007, p. 39).

Back Home Again: The Common Good

The return of the common good to Indiana is inextricably linked with cessation of Indiana's overinvestment in privatization, which has increased cost, societal inequity, dismal student achievement, and the deconstruction of democracy. (Higgins & Knight Abowitz, 2011).

Common good reduces state costs

Privatization under the guise of cost savings leads to a significant Catch-22: if greater enrollment occurs using vouchers, the result is increased cost for the state and less efficiency. The average private school tuition in the Hoosier state is almost $6,500 (Huerta, 2009).

Common good requires education

Lawmakers must foster educational renewal by remembering John Dewey's observation about the common good within education that "what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is

narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy" (p. 5) [Covaleskie, 2007, p. 33; Mathis, 2016]. To this end, traditional public schools are in position to ensure that "no child's future is predetermined by the social and economic capital of their parents; and that children from different backgrounds should learn together so that future citizens might escape the parochialism of class, clan, and creed" (Higgins & Knight Abowitz, 2011, p. 367).

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Data-Driven Decisions: Using Equity Theory to Highlight Implications for Underserved Students

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Abstract

By using equity theory through a social justice lens, the authors intend to highlight how data are currently being used to solve the *what* and not the *why* as it relates to achievement gaps for marginalized students in urban settings. School practitioners have been utilizing quantitative data, such as district and state achievement test scores, math and reading levels, and class assignments to determine the academic levels of students. While this information is useful, the authors will argue it does not tell the whole story. Specifically, the authors explain why these measures may not accurately reflect the knowledge level of underserved students and the areas that may be needed to create a holistic picture of the social and academic needs of individual children.

Key Words

Decision-making, equity, achievement gaps, school/teacher effectiveness

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Since the rise of assessment and accountability measures, many school leaders have been actively engaged in heavy data collection and analysis in an effort to utilize it for improving academic achievement for all students. There was a clear shift in how educators were to go about the reform movement. This push was to address the need to close the achievement gap[1] and ensure that all students have access to educators committed to ensuring academic growth and sustainability for future success.

Utilizing data effectively has been a hallmark in the reform movement as educators access the wealth of data in order to make informed decisions about how to best educate and support students. Testing scores, attendance rates, demographic data, and surveys have been used to pinpoint areas where schools and teachers need support.

However, the larger question as to why certain racial, gender, and/or ethnic groups are not excelling may be due to issues that are not easily tested or confined to facts and figures. Thus, educators need to be equipped to take a deeper dive into the essential question of why numbers look as they do. Unfortunately, educators' belief systems can sometimes "contribute to dysfunctional perceptions of students' intellectual abilities—particularly those students who are culturally and linguistically diverse—due to limiting predictors of school achievement" (Ahram et al., 2016, para.7; Noguera, 2003).

Equity theory is one framework that may conceptualize some of the underlying causes of the achievement gap. That is, these issues may not be clearly addressed when educators focus on data indicators that address academic performance solely. Rather, academic performance is the outcome of the student's ability to achieve equity restoration as a result of the perceived injustice of inputs and outcomes.

While data analysis is an important tool for educators to diagnose how inequity has manifested itself, it is just the beginning in determining causes and appropriate training to address the underlying problems.

For the purposes of this paper, the authors will analyze equity theory as it relates to perceived inequities regarding student achievement. In addition, the authors will discuss how data can be used (and should be used) to reinforce and mitigate the perceptions of inequity for underserved students as it relates to the achievement gap.

Theoretical Framework

Equity theory was first introduced by J. Stacy Adams in an article written in 1963 in relation to cognitive dissonance theory. In his original business article, Adams explained "The fairness of an exchange between employee and employer is not usually perceived...simply as an economic matter. There is an element of relative justice involved that supervenes economics and underlies perceptions of equity or inequity" (as quoted in Mahoney, 2013, p. 158).

As originally intended by Adams (1963), the theory postulated about business and salaries. However, it has had several

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[1] The achievement gap refers to the gap in performance (i.e., test scores) between one group of students compared to another. Essentially, it is what occurs when one group of students (such as students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender, and the like) outperforms another group of students, and the difference in average scores is statistically significant (NAEP, 2015).

criticisms and iterations since the original publishing, including one by Adams himself as he more clearly defined *equity/inequity* in a follow-up book chapter. He stated, "Inequity exists for Person whenever he perceives that the ratio of his outcomes to inputs and the ratio of Other's outcomes to Other's inputs are unequal" (as quoted in Mahoney, 2013, p. 159).

Equity theory consists of four different propositions that draw from "exchange, dissonance, and social comparison theories" (Huseman et al., 1987, p. 222).

First of all, Adams theorized that:

(a) people perceive and evaluate their relationships with others based on a comparison of their input into the relationship and outcomes from the relationship as compared to another's inputs and outcomes;

(b) if the ratio from the input/outcomes and comparison relationships is not equal according the perception of the individual, they will determine it to be an inequitable relationship;

(c) the more inequity one feels, the more distress one feels as well; and

(d) the more distress, the more they will work to restore equity.

Throughout the course of this paper, the term *input* will be used to refer to the pedagogical practices, attitudes, and belief systems that affect the social, emotional, cognitive functioning of students. *Outcomes* will be used to refer to the academic levels, the social and emotional capital of the students as it relates to the successful development of the whole child.

"Equity restoration techniques include altering or cognitively distorting inputs or

outcomes, acting on or changing the comparison other or terminating the relationship" (as quoted in Huseman et al., 1987, p. 222). Equity restoration, specifically, has some implications regarding the behavior and attitudes of students as they relate to the perception of injustice of the school system and/or relationships between educators and students. Therefore, the argument can be made that these basic components can be related to the relationship between administrators and teachers, as well as, educators and students.

This article will focus on the latter relationship, specifically the perceived underachievement of marginalized students as it relates to data interpretation and the achievement gap. McKown (2013) discussed "how the social processes" related to social equity theory (SET) "contribute to racial-ethnic achievement gap" (2013, p. 1121). As part of McKown's delineation of equity theory, SET includes certain propositions about the origins of racial-ethnic achievement gaps. In detail, they are:

- Two classes of social process influence racial-ethnic achievement gaps: (1) *Direct influences* are social processes that support achievement. Direct influences contribute to the racial-ethnic achievement gap when they are distributed differently to people from different racial-ethnic groups; and (2) *Signal influences* are cues that communicate negative expectations about a child's racial-ethnic group. When children from negatively stereotyped groups detect such cues, this can erode achievement.

- Signal influences depend on children's ability to detect cues signaling a stereotyped expectation.

- Together, relevant direct and signal influences across developmental contexts account for the achievement gap (McKown, 2013, p.1121).

As researchers continue to study education using a social justice framework, equity theory may highlight why some of the injustices continue and suggest ways in which educational leaders can utilize equity theory as they develop policy, and train teachers and aspiring administrators.

The analysis of student achievement data is vital to closing the achievement gap. However, as previously reported, it does not tell the whole story. Therefore, educators need to analyze quantitative data, such as test results (the *what*), in conjunction with qualitative data, such as interviews and conversations (the *why*), to address some of the inequities that are evident in schools with marginalized and/or underserved populations.

Nonetheless, the following will be a discussion of the various challenges associated with using academic and assessment data as the sole indicator for interventions with students. In addition, this paper will highlight systems and processes that can mitigate the effects of academic decisions based on a single data source. Finally, the authors will lay out a case to use multiple modes of data to determine the underlying causes of academic underachievement.

Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap

In the United States, the role of the principal and assistant principal in the PreK-12 educational setting continues to evolve (Hallinger, 1992). Just one of the many evolutions includes the expectation that school administrators have the ability to effectively analyze student achievement data and use it to lead instructional practice. "Principals and other school leaders have been given a difficult charge: take an abundance of student data, mostly in the form of assessments, and turn this data into information to be used in improving instructional practice" (Midgley, Stringfield, & Wayman, 2006).

As the role of principals and assistant principals continues to change, one thing is for certain; school administrators must be data-driven instructional leaders and exercise data-based decision-making (Blink, 2007; Midgley et al., 2006). Blink (2007) wrote, "The increased attention and focus of legislators at all levels on public education provides the impetus for building and implementing a data-driven instructional system that will ensure improvements in student achievement while closing identified achievement gaps" (p. xv).

School leaders across America continue to seek ways to effectively plan for improved student achievement based on an array of assessments administered to students in the PreK-12 educational setting nationwide. "Although the research and literature provide numerous case studies on individual schools or educators that have successfully used data to improve student achievement, Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer (2001) found the use of data at the school level to be an incredibly difficult task because school personnel often lack proper systematic supports for data use" (Midgley et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, even with this push to use student achievement data to close the achievement gap, we continue to see a gap in achievement among diverse groups of students. Beecher and Sweeny (2008) reported that "achievement gaps among culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and economically diverse groups pose great concerns for educators and policymakers" (p. 502).

The concept of analyzing student achievement data to effectively drive instruction throughout a given school building is not a new concept. This is no easy task, and, more specifically, challenges certainly exist when using data to drive instruction. "The educational literature is replete with recommendations for improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap; however, research suggests that the gap remains" (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008, p. 502). Even though this movement to close the achievement gap dates back to the 1990s, some researchers argue that the gap has worsened (Harris & Herrington, 2006).

Schools that have more diversity and serve students of low socioeconomic status (SES) continue to perform low with regard to student achievement (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Harris and Herrington, 2006; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2004). Additionally, the gap between the haves and have nots (i.e., students from high versus low socioeconomic backgrounds) as well as White students versus their African-American and Hispanic peers, still exists (Chatterji, 2006; Cronin, Kingsbury, McCall, & Bowe, 2005; Lutkus et al., 2007).

One could argue that both school leaders and teachers must get innovative and attempt to identify what the data are *not* telling them about their students and identify other issues affecting student achievement, especially in those schools that serve high populations of underserved students who continue to represent a large portion of the achievement gap.

Perhaps, most importantly, school leaders and teachers must have the same expectations for all students regardless of race, SES, or past school performance, as this mindset is essentially the foundation of equity in education. "Equity in education addresses fairness and inclusion" (Mu et al., 2013, p.

374). That is, it would not be fair to expect less of underserved students and likewise, maximum inclusion in all aspects of schooling is key. Utilizing data effectively will help in addressing equity issues in terms of resource allocation.

Complexities of Using Data

With all of the ways assessment data and accountability structures can tangibly increase student scores, educators are still struggling in intangible ways to address what will also aid in disintegrating the achievement gap. Ahram et al. (2016) identified three predominant cultural beliefs that contribute to low performance patterns in the academic achievement of vulnerable student groups. "Taken together, these elements of cultural dissonance constitute a prevailing pattern that includes (but is not limited to):

- perceptions of race and class as limiting predictors of school achievement;
- perceptions of different learning styles versus intellectual deficiencies; and
- lack of cultural responsiveness in current policies and practices (para. 17).

As a result, students feel and perceive the difference teachers struggle with because of internal cultural beliefs, "teacher(s) on average expect more of White students than Black students with similar records of achievement" (McKown, 2013, p. 1124; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). In addition, students internalize the devaluation or negative stereotypes associated with their race and/or ethnicity.

This input upon the students consistently can lead to the equity restoration in the form of less effort and motivation to persist toward an academic goal, which will manifest

itself to lower achievement (output). As such, the educators' internal beliefs about the students they serve have a direct influence on achievement, and yet it cannot be easily measured.

There have been some quantitative studies to address the issues described. However, Bécares and Priest (2015) found that much of this research is dedicated to single and separate social identities, such as race or gender. What is noticeably lacking, though, is a "need … for quantitative research to consider how multiple forms of social stratification are interrelated, and how they combine interactively, not just additively, to influence outcomes."

This suggestion for further research would then be able to highlight how influential the educator's lens is in regard to multiple forms of internal bias reflected in student outcomes. Conversations around these internal belief systems will allow educators to confront the conscious and unconscious bias that hurts the academic success of students. In addition, they will enable educators to realize that many students are associated with multiple marginalized groups, which can multiply the cultural dissonance and signal influences projected by the educator.

These overt or covert signal influences "activates a concern in the mind of a stereotyped individual—consciously or not— that he or she may be judged on the basis of the stereotype" (McKown, 2013, p. 1125).

Consequently, the student picks up on cues of differential treatment based on marginalized group membership and adjusts behaviors to restore equity related to the perceived injustice. Children can also read in these cues that their abilities are not valued in the school's social setting which will negatively

affect the relationship between the school and the student. Bécares & Priest (2015) noted that:

> The contrasting outcomes between racial/ethnic and gender minorities in self-assessment and socio-emotional outcomes, as compared to standardized assessments, provide support for the detrimental effect that intersecting racial/ethnic and gender discrimination have in patterning academic outcomes that predict success in adult life" (p. 13).

Comparing the information that comes from standardized testing to the student's own feelings of self-worth, efficacy, and achievement can paint a clearer picture of the perceived inputs and outcomes on the teacher's and student's behalf. Otherwise, according to McKown and Weinstein (2002), low teacher expectations are associated more strongly with negative academic outcomes for students other than White.

If children perceive that educators are not uniformly addressing the needs of all students effectively, "this belief may activate cultural narratives about racial injustice, signaling that they are devalued because of their ethnicity. This may in turn have a negative impact on the academic achievement of children from stereotyped racial ethnic groups." (McKown, 2013, p. 1125).

Educational leaders in partnership with researchers need to create pathways for conversations that address what the data say about students and why the data may read as they do. Then, our data-driven decisions can be supported by changing mindsets that see the academic benefit of embracing diversity in the educational setting.

If one purpose for data driven decisions is to address the achievement gap for all students, then more robust data will have to be

collected by institutions. Data from cultural and climate surveys for teachers and students, teacher efficacy regarding diverse students, and students' perceptions of educational attainment will support achievement numbers to create a bigger picture.

Quality decisions that will have lasting impact on student success will include policy, programming, and pedagogical changes based on data to achieve perceived and actual equity on both parties. Otherwise, "interventions to eliminate achievement gaps cannot fully succeed as long as social stratification caused by gender and racial discrimination is not addressed" (Bécares & Priest, 2015, p. 13).

Discussion

Many of the issues addressed thus far represent a fundamental shift in the way we would look at data in relation to our teaching practices. The authors submit that data should truly be used to measure all dimensions of adult and student learning as a tool for growth as opposed to how it may be used to indict teachers and students for not exhibiting knowledge as demanded on a test.

Therefore, data should be the beginning of conversations and reflections that lead to greater understanding of how adults can adapt behavior to match student needs and expectations.

In order to change the paradigm of how teachers view data, educational leaders need to create a safe space for teachers to reconnect to the learning process just as students would. The authors will discuss two important components of adult learning theory that would support the transformational process of utilizing data in a way to inform outcomes that are more equitable.

Principals need to address the needs of teaching faculty and staff in a way that "builds on and challenges their teaching practice and persistently focuses on student learning" (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014, p.3; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

The purpose of collecting, disaggregating, and consuming data is to better improve teaching and learning practices for students. This cannot be done in a way that does not take into account the learning needs of students, which is why data should begin to inform the conversations around equitable outcomes for students based on the students' relationship to the teacher, the educational system, and their own learning processes.

Thus, this answers the *why* question referenced earlier in the article. "In order to learn more and improve our practice, we have to dig deeper into what we do, what our kids need, and what we already know" (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014, p.3; Breidenstein et al., 2012, p. 29).

Instrumental Learning Practice

Two themes of adult learning that were born out of constructive developmental theory (Kegan, 1998) are instrumental learning practice and socializing learning practice. Instrumental learning practice in short is "built on precise solutions, specific processes, and unambiguous answers" (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014, p.32).

School leaders who are in the process of leading equity-focused conversations with instrumental learners should know that there needs to be a specific framework to make the process clear. These conversations can become very fluid with lots of mitigating factors in order to keep it student focused.

A reflective protocol will assist these adult learners to guide discussions to specific processes that will support data discussion based on equitable student-centered outcomes.

Socializing Learning Practice
The second theme is socializing learning practice. The definition of socializing learning practices according to Fahey and Ippolito, (2014) is one that "is not dependent on straightforward, concrete answers" (p. 34). When guiding discussions with socializing learners, teachers need to know these learners are better able to think abstractly and are able to reflect about practice.

Therefore, they may feel constrained thinking there is one way of doing things and should be encouraged to learn from their experiences. "These adults are most concerned with understanding other people's feelings and judgments about them and their work" (Drago-Severson, 2008, p. 61). They are able to reflect on the core understanding that data should inform teaching practices to create an environment where the student feels that both parties are equally concerned with growth and success.

In reality, just like the classroom, the principal will have a mix of both learners and will have to accommodate a variety of different development strategies to help the teacher understand all facets of data.

In addition, the teachers can help inform leadership about data sets still needed to obtain a complete picture of student growth and needs.

Principals should guide teachers in equity-based discussions pertaining to data early in the learning process. In addition, the leader should encourage teacher teaming and

mentors to support the learning process while each teacher may progress at different rates.

Conclusion
"Any attempt to improve educational quality, without educational equity to address disadvantaged groups, will never achieve the overall academic improvement for learners. Instead, it would lead to an expanding gap of educational equity to address disadvantaged groups…" (Mu et al., 2013, p. 379).

When framing educators' work against the backdrop of equity theory, it becomes more likely that students will receive additional effort from teachers and respond with additional effort of their own.

It is important that the expectations teachers have for students are matched with the efficacious work on the part of the teacher.

Furthermore, we contend that educational leaders should support adult learning to deepen their knowledge base on the underlying causes that may answer the *why* in order to address equity issues. In many educational settings, reflection on how behaviors and beliefs lead to inequitable student and educator relationships and possibly the student underperforming to achieve stasis is a fundamental issue that should be addressed in learning communities.

In sum, addressing achievement gaps in education by simply looking at output data is not enough. The authors contend that using equity theory to address the before question of *why* will then support the input for students. Using information regarding the input and output of data will inform how educational leaders can support an equitable system for our students to thrive.

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A Research Partnership: Experience in Washington County PA

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Abstract

Schools are valuable venues for research institutions. Research can also be beneficial to public schools. School administrators should be proactive in identifying research topics and establishing standards and expectations for the university researchers. This article describes the partnership between a university researcher and a K-12 director of curriculum and instruction over a six year period.

Key Words

School based research, university partnerships, research partnerships

Introduction

There is substantial literature with research and the community; however, the literature for school based research is small, seeming to be oriented to universities and investigators and not school administrators at the primary and secondary level (Turley and Stephens, 2015).

A framework for conducting research in collaboration with schools is essential for success. The pioneering work of Israel in defining community based participatory research (CBPR), where investigators work with the community to establish research goals and conduct the investigation, is well known. (Israel, 2001).

Successful school research must use a CBPR approach. Vukotich has previously developed a significant framework for conducting research with schools, but this is intended primarily to guide university investigators. (Vukotich et al, 2014).

The authors are a researcher who has spent more than 10 years doing research in schools, and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction, who has provided a venue for some of this research. This paper explores the development of the research partnership between these people and their institutions, beginning with their introduction and going through successful completion of a research project.

It is intended to speak to school administrators, providing practical advice for proactively approaching research, developing of research relationships, and conducting research in their school districts.

This paper provides school administrators with a framework for school based research, parameters of good research, and advice on what they should expect from investigators coming into their schools.

Forming the Partnerships

In 2008, the University of Pittsburgh created the School Based Research and Practice Network (SBRPN). The purpose of this network was to create research partnerships between K-12 schools and the University, and to better understand the research environment in K-12 schools.

One major factor in creating any partnership is to find common interests. SBRPN set out to determine if school administrators were interested in research, the extent to which they were interested, and what they wanted to know or better understand. The research community had rarely taken the time to ask school administrators these questions.

While some school districts had participated in research projects with universities and their own staff, none considered themselves research institutions but rather instructional institutions. SBRPN asked district administrators what questions they might want answered by investigators. Additionally, SBRPN set out to create a regional research agenda, seeking the input of school officials within the five-county region that forms the greater Pittsburgh area.

The goal was to meet with school districts in and surrounding Allegheny County. This area consists of approximately 250,000

school-aged children. SBRPN met with 57 public school districts and the schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh along with 10 private/ charter schools. These districts are highly variable in size, from less than 1,000 to more than 25,000 students, and represent urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Superintendents received letters, e-mails, and phone calls to set up initial meetings. Some superintendents were quick to respond; others required much persistence. As the Project Director of SBRPN, Charles Vukotich scheduled introductory meetings with area superintendents.

Second meetings were often scheduled to talk with larger district leadership teams regarding their research interests and concerns. These were conducted as focus groups to maintain scientific integrity to the experience. These meetings led to the publication of reports and scholarly works including this one. (More information can be found at www.cphp.pitt.edu/sbrpn.html.)

Vukotich met Lani in the meeting with the Canon-McMillan leadership team. As discussion developed, it became clear to Lani that there were commonalities between Canon-McMillan and the University, and that a partnership with the University on some topic of mutual interest might be worthwhile.

In 2011, the University of Pittsburgh submitted a grant to study how children spread influenza in schools. This study focused on developing policy and program guidance for schools on pandemic influenza, and could also have implications for seasonal flu.

Many studies have been conducted on *how* influenza spreads, but these have never been quantified in ways that could be used to make accurate models, that could be used to make predictions and drive policy and practice for schools. This grant application was accepted and became the Social Mixing and Respiratory Transmission (SMART) in Schools Project.

Canon-McMillan School District seemed like a natural partner, based on their interests, and open-minded attitude, so Vukotich contacted Lani. She was initially intrigued by the concept of participating in research associated with public health, but she was also skeptical that a project could fit within the confines of her schools. The district had participated in numerous research projects for educators' doctorate programs, along with a few other researchers outside of schools of education; however, each were directly related to student learning.

All new initiatives within the district were also supported by educational research. Therefore, research was not new to the district, but it would be a new experience participating in research beyond direct instruction.

Lani was interested in participating because attendance and student health were priorities of the district. Lani had been an elementary principal and noticed that it seemed that illness spread from student to student in isolated environments, but her conclusions relied only on her observations.

She had never used a specific protocol to determine when or if she should restrict movement in the building to localize further spread of illnesses. She indicated that having a protocol to follow would be helpful for school districts to determine when practices should be altered to minimize the spread of infectious diseases. It seemed clear that the SMART team would be able to answer the school district's questions.

The first year of research involved asking students to keep detailed contact diaries identifying who they had contact with on the previous day and quantifying that contact (e.g., boy or girl, adult or child, grade level, type of contact, any shared items, length of interaction). On "mote days," students wore electronic tags (motes) that measured when they were in close contact with other students during the school day. Year 2 required increased student participation, with additional diary days and students taking the electronic tags home overnight. The latter made the news media, as this was the first time that this had ever been done.

University staff conducted surveillance of student absences for signs of influenza and tested students for flu; they also held daily, random student interviews to see who they had been in contact with, especially focusing on students with flu-like illness.

With this research protocol, Lani immediately identified two main challenges. First, confidentiality is mandated for schools and needed to be maintained. The SMART team and Canon-McMillan worked together to draft a letter and disclosure statement for parents that met University institutional review board considerations, as well as the needs of the district.

Care was taken to ensure students were only identified by number and not by name; any identifiable data were maintained on secure servers. Analysis was done using de-identified data.

The second challenge required that research have a minimal impact on the school day. The team goal from the onset was to ensure that SMART would protect the academic time for both students and teachers. Multiple schools were involved, and it was understood that each school was different.

The SMART team listened to Canon-McMillan administrators' needs and was able to provide a research project that worked for each school's unique situation. Surveys were kept brief to account for minimal student interview time.

These interviews, along with swabbing the nose for influenza, were conducted in the morning before school began, during recess, or when teachers identified specific times during their day when students were not academically engaged. This often changed daily, and the SMART team adhered to teachers' suggestions to accommodate their needs. Flexibility was a key component for SMART's success.

Throughout the project, a few "mote days" were identified in which students wore electronic tags to track their movement throughout the building. Because this only required students to wear the device, it did not impact any academic time. The SMART team distributed and collected the electronic tags at the beginning and end of each day. Problems were averted because of the open dialogue and regular communication between the SMART team and the administrators and teachers. SMART staff was receptive and quickly adapted protocol to alleviate any concerns.

One great example of the communications process involved incentives to students for participation. Vukotich had originally considered using small items as incentives, like pens, bags, etc. Lani suggested that a drawing for one larger prize, like an iPad, would be more exciting to students. Vukotich altered the program rewards through her suggestion. SMART provided iPads as incentives for students, which were universally well received.

This incentive has been successfully used in other projects by Vukotich and supports the idea of a true partnership. Good and continuous communications is essential for any district and research team who might be interested in working together.

Results/Discussion

In this research, SBRPN found that schools have a broad range of research interests. School staff members are curious about how research can help their students. As Vukotich visited districts to gather data on their research interests, fifteen of 57 public school districts (26%) reported that they participated in recent or current research projects. This indicates that there are few partnerships between research institutions and public school districts.

SBRPN found that districts can be very open to consideration if projects are appropriate and designed around students and their wellness. Focusing on providing districts with effective solutions to the problems they confront daily is essential. The top 10 issues of interest were:

1) mental health
2) wellness, illness, and fitness
3) obesity
4) parental involvement
5) technology effectiveness
6) school readiness and kindergarten
7) anxiety
8) daily and yearly school structure
9) absenteeism
10) testing

For districts to welcome research, administrators should have set expectations for the investigator, ensure that the research to be conducted has benefit to the school district and community.

School administrators should require investigators to be sensitive to the learning community of the school by: (1) minimizing disruption of students, (2) minimizing use of class academic time, (3) creating little or no work for the school staff, (4) creating detailed and appropriate consent processes, (5) maintaining strict confidentiality, and (6) communicating effectively with teachers, staff, students, and parents. (Vukotich and Stebbins, 2011)

The SMART project was a success at Canon-McMillan. Student participation was high (90%). Communication was key. Parents, students, staff and faculty were all well informed through print materials and speakers at parent meetings. There was a productive team atmosphere. Meetings, both impromptu and scheduled, were advantageous and fostered an environment in which everyone listened to one another to make adjustments to better the project.

Communication didn't end with the cessation of research activities. SMART provided reports to Canon-McMillan School District, describing its findings, including recommendations for policy and practice changes. Summary reports were provided to parents, and research findings have been published. These reports and other program materials for SMART can be found at www.smart.pitt.edu.

Conclusions

School administrators should expect investigators to be willing to extend the partnership beyond using students as research subjects. Research universities should be able to extend the opportunity to share resources with the districts. SMART was able to provide health professionals to answer questions and provide

professional development for district nurses, physical education and health teachers, in addition to offering instructional opportunities. SMART also provided detailed and meaningful reports on the results of the research.

The SMART experience was very innovative for the Canon-McMillan School District. When school administrators can't see a direct correlation to what is going to happen and how it will help them, it's very challenging for them to agree to participate in a project. SMART bridged the gap and made that connection.

Schools must be visionary and believe in the product, even if the product may not be of direct benefit to the school, but may benefit the community and advance knowledge. SMART research may affect future policies for districts and schools, not only across the region, but across the nation.

School administrators should be proactive in determining what they would be interested in learning, their concerns for research, and the conditions they would impose on researchers. They should create a research agenda, which would also be shared with investigators who approach the school administration seeking to do research.

Schools should not be timid in approaching local research universities to explore the questions they want answered.

In response, universities may identify existing research that could answer these questions. They should be willing to incorporate these questions into existing research, use them in as part of grant proposals, or even seek funding opportunities, which would address these questions.

When school districts and a university talk to one another, it may encourage universities to look at new research fields and prompt school administrators to ask questions they had not previously considered.

Author Biographies

Charles Vukotich, Jr. has over 40 years in public health with 30 years at Allegheny County Health Department (retired) and 11 years at the University of Pittsburgh. He has studied school children and influenza and in doing so, the complexities of doing school based research. E-mail: charlesv@pitt.edu

Grace Lani has been an administrator for the Canon-McMillan School District, Canonsburg, PA for eleven years, now serving as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. She serves on the Business and Education Advisory Council for The Challenge Program and is an Adjunct Professor for Waynesburg University's Graduate School of Education. E-mail: lanig@cmsd.k12.pa.us

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Creativity and Education in China: Paradox and Possibilities for an Era of Accountability

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Creativity and Education in China: Paradox and Possibilities for an Era of Accountability looks at how the People's Republic of China is addressing issues of educational creativity. Carol Mullen gives in-depth attention to creativity's challenges and possibilities within an authoritarian regime that prizes control and conformity. She demystifies some complexities of schooling in China through her first-hand accounts of classrooms and schools, teaching and learning.

The personal experiences step readers through key aspects of Chinese education policy and practice while answering some questions that have previously gone unanswered. *Creativity and Education in China* is a truly compelling cultural narrative that directly speaks to educational issues of creativity and accountability in the United States and other countries that have a high-stakes testing culture.

Many of us as educators recognize that efficiency and control have taken on monstrous proportions. It's all too easy to get caught up in the blaming game and treat the global press as our "go to" for what is happening in countries that we may never actually see for ourselves.

The arch storyline of this book takes geopolitical dynamics into account, but of a richer, more complex nature. Described in Chapter 2 and throughout are trends influencing the United States and Asia–Pacific regions that situate this study of China and its relevance to world topics that affect education and lives. The narrative focuses on what we have far too little

of in this world—vivid insight into creative curriculum and pedagogy. Creative meaning making and problem solving in China is conveyed in ways that are unexpected, surprising, and even startling at times.

Readers will discover their own special moments as they encounter powerful examples from Chinese education of culture, community, history, and mythology, all of which are interpreted for the modern times within these pages.

Creativity and Education in China is not a diary entry from a tour of China based on a show staged for a visitor from the West. Unlike Westerners who have visited China's schools and taught in an educational setting, Mullen has gone beyond—walking headfirst into the unknown.

With the privileges granted a U.S. Fulbright awardee, Mullen was granted access to places typically insulated and people otherwise inaccessible. One could say that she's penetrated the surfaces of the Chinese culture or, instead perhaps, the surfaces projected onto that culture.

The text, an intriguing spectrum of integrated data-rich schooling experiences and empirical findings, is truly remarkable. And, despite her privileged access, beforehand and along the way, she had to negotiate some rather tough obstacles and thorny matters, including cultural differences and shifting agreements.

Quite literally, Mullen was placing herself (and her Fulbright-funded research) in a vulnerable position by centering the entire experience around the question. Is there is any creativity in China's accountability strapped, government-sponsored schools and universities?

From the outset, Mullen took an unconventional academic risk, but she produced a fascinating text that sheds light on what creativity looks like in Chinese education while not sealing off the mysteries of China or pretending to have the whole story. Having myself studied the personal and professional texts of those who live within and between various cultural worlds, my appreciation for this text runs deep.

Readers will encounter what Mullen describes as "creative expression" in rural and urban pre-K–12 schools, presented as cases in Chapter 3. Another discovery is of "innovation cases" featuring creativity and accountability in college-level schooling (Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8). All of the cases are supported with literature, data, and experts' corroboration.

The eclecticism of the data sources, frameworks, and approaches speak to the unique, creative gifts of this author. Indeed captivating, this book can be widely applied in such disciplines as teacher education, educational psychology, and educational leadership, especially by AASA members, who represent the upper echelon of school leaders.

Creativity and Education in China is also an excellent resource for those AASA members who teach masters and doctoral students and who take courses in teacher education, educational leadership, and other areas.

I intend to expose my own graduate students to Mullen's unique story telling prowess, international localized context, and creativity frames in action out of which emerged her original creative synthesis framework (See: A Synthesis of Psychology Models of Creativity for Education, p. 6, Figure 1.1).

Applicable to many university instructors' undergraduate and graduate courses, this book is also for practitioners in schools and policy liaisons. It can be adapted for social science inquiries and international work, as well as adopted for professional development workshops and by self-study groups.

I enjoyed being taken on the journey of creativity in the lives of Chinese students, teachers, and leaders at different grade levels and within a teacher training institute. It was powerful to learn how people in different places handle pressures for achieving high-test scores and being resourceful within impoverished and marginalized conditions of schooling while being reassured of the central place of creative education in their habitats. The reader enters a rich tapestry of lives that unfold within overburdened, freedom-fearing bureaucracies that feel far more familiar than perhaps they should.

Creativity and Education in China is about the exciting possibilities of creative education within a "test-centric regime," as Mullen refers to it. It's also about human rights and particularly self-expression and freedom as aspirations yet to be achieved, and about personhood that teeters between empowerment and vulnerability. Here, indeed, is a text about creativeness for and by school people—written by a curriculum—leadership expert for educators interested in developing creative capacities of expressiveness, innovation, and critical-mindedness.

Mullen reminds us that education should always be about uplifting the human spirit and forging creative mindsets, and about developing the capacity for fueling curiosity by posing open-ended questions. We all need to be hearing these messages, especially at this time when the spirit is fatigued from battle with oppressive governmental and societal forces. Having myself written about creativity, I recognize the compelling way in which she not only expertly but also exquisitely draws back the curtain, showing creativity as manifested within schooling environments and people of all ages.

Reviewer Biography

Christopher Tienken is an associate professor of education administration at Seton Hall University. He has public school administration experience as a PK-12 assistant superintendent, middle school principal, director of curriculum and instruction, and elementary school assistant principal. Tienken is the former editor of the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* and the current editor of the Kappa Delta Pi *Record.* His research interests include school reform issues such as standardization, the influence of curriculum quality on student outcomes, and the construct validity of high-stakes standardized tests as decision-making tools. E-mail: christopher.tienken@shu.edu

Creativity and Education in China: Paradox and Possibilities for an Age of Accountability was written by Carol Mullen and published by Routledge, New York, in 2017; 202 pages, softback price is $41.95.

Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines, Submissions, Publication Rates & Publication Timeline

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Length of manuscripts should be as follows: Research and evidence-based practice articles between 2,800 and 4,800 words; commentaries between 1,600 and 3,800 words; book and media reviews between 400 and 800 words. Articles, commentaries, book and media reviews, citations and references are to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, latest edition. Permission to use previously copyrighted materials is the responsibility of the author, not the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*.

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2. contributor name(s);
3. terminal degree;
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6. college or university;
7. city, state
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10. 120-word abstract that conforms to APA style;
11. six to eight key words that reflect the essence of the submission; and
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Please do not submit with headers or footers with page numbers. Rather than use footnotes, it is preferred authors embed footnote content in the body of the article. Articles are to be submitted to the editor by e-mail as an electronic attachment in Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, 12 Font.

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- Full title of book
- Author
- Publisher, city, state, year, # of pages, price
- Name and affiliation of reviewer
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- Reviewer biography
- Date of submission

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Spring	October 1	January 1	February 15	April 1
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AASA, with the Oklahoma Association of School Administrators, 2nd Annual Women in School Leadership Forum, Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 2018, Artesian Hotel and Spa, Sulphur, Okla.

AASA, with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, The Future is Female, Mar. 14-15, 2018, Polaris Hilton, Columbus, Ohio

AASA, with the NJASA, NJPSA and FEA, Women's Leadership Conference, March 15-16, 2018, Forsgate Country Club, Monroe Township, NJ.

AASA 2019 National Conference on Education, Feb. 14-16, 2019, Los Angeles, Calif.