



**Bloomfield Hills School District – School Board Workshop
 Revisiting Our Ten Year Strategic Plan
 Meeting #2 Agenda – West Hills Middle School
 October 24, 2013**

Agenda

6:45 p.m.	Sign-in
7:00 p.m.	Call to Order/Board Roll Call/Pledge – Ingrid Day
7:05 p.m.	Desired Outcomes - Ingrid Day/Rob Glass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential changes to the 10 Year Plan
7:15 p.m.	Icebreaker – Charlie Fleetham
7:25 p.m.	Oct 1 Meeting Recap - Charlie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Status of Strategic Plan • Results of Brainstorming Exercise
7:45 p.m.	Group Breakouts - Discussion and Recommended Changes (if any) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market • Measurements • State/Fed Gov't/Finances • Product • Delivery
8:15 p.m.	Group Presentations on Recommended Changes
8:45 p.m.	Next Steps - Rob
9:05 p.m.	Public Comment





Strategic Plan Meeting #1 Brainstorming Results

Market – ideas regarding alumni, competition, community, collaboration, etc.

Challenges	Opportunities	Big/Crazy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we not only compete globally but locally with better local district, Birmingham – Troy; what will set us apart? Free pre-school? Art academy at Lahser? This is not only good for our kids but also our property values!! Charter School cherry picking? What are we going to do about charters? Competing against the online/charter school competitors. Optimizing partnerships with Business and Education groups. “Bringing” parents and the community along with the District as it continues to “morph” and adapt to coming challenges and opportunity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to residents. Build relationships district wide. Use BHHS to beat charter schools at their own game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value the history of Lahser and Andover, keep alumni engaged! Create a partnership with universities to track our students to know how successful they are after immediately graduating from BHS (higher education, job performance, etc.)

Measurements – ideas regarding test scores, achievement gaps, teacher compensation, etc.

Challenges	Opportunities	Big/Crazy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge of the metrics game and despite some good of Prop A there are still gaps of all kinds. Current measurement (at state level) does not support risk taking and innovation. How do we assess success? Ranking? What ruler do you use? Linking teacher assessment to compensation. Achievement gaps – standardized and project-based learning – how do you bridge that? What does proficient mean? Student loss of love of learning. Broad economic disparity of students in our district. Bloomfield OPT OUT of state testing, not ACTs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards Based Grading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do away with standardized tests.



Strategic Plan Meeting #1 Brainstorming Results

State/Fed. Govt. – ideas regarding legislation, government control, finances, etc.

Challenges	Opportunities	Big/Crazy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How might we need to address legislation about charter schools – online learning; turn this to our advantage ▪ The idea that public schools are failing and that many in government control both state/national are pushing market driven reforms to obliterate public education. ▪ How do we generate revenue ideas without compromising our beliefs/standards (i.e. banners, pizza, McDonalds, etc.)? ▪ State financing plan changes 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize the PTOC Legislative Committee to stay ahead of changes and proactively respond to what's coming our way. Work with legislators more closely.



Strategic Plan Meeting #1 Brainstorming Results

Product – ideas regarding curriculum content programs, classes, alternative schools, etc.

Challenges	Opportunities	Big/Crazy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foreign Language Instruction (i.e. methodology with Chinese & Spanish) ▪ Is our curriculum too fluid/not well structured? ▪ Clarify 21st century education – modern learning – need clear examples and language ▪ Secondary – level – granting credit and providing support (reading & math). ▪ Language Immersion program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5-year high school idea with associate degree (consider grad rates, funding) ▪ GSRP (currently 16 spots filled with 13 students) ▪ 94% of our current kindergarten attended preschool. ▪ Online courses with Bloomfield Hills Schools for everyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language Immersion program ▪ Start an online school that rural areas can tap into for \$. ▪ Turn main campus into Arts/Sports public private hybrid. ▪ Champion early childhood education in the area. ▪ Turn current Lahser site into Arts/Cultural Center, through collaboration with OCA. Would also allow current athletic facilities to remain available and under stewardship of BHS. Would also include restructure and conversion of wooded acreage into Botanical Gardens.



Strategic Plan Meeting #1 Brainstorming Results

Delivery – ideas regarding staffing, instructional process and facilities

Challenges	Opportunities	Big/Crazy Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining true human relationship of teachers to students, NOT just online and with tech. ▪ Overcrowded buildings. ▪ Can we support all of our breadth of curriculum? ▪ Are we providing the resources required to our staff to move to the modern world? ▪ Cultural competency gaps in some buildings. ▪ Learning through direct experiential development. ▪ Connect parent with the positives of the day – what new is happening; inform and engage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To learn from 9th Grade Campus. What if it's brilliant? ▪ Overcrowded buildings. What is the trigger point for change? Review? 90% saturation ▪ Our teachers embrace learning so its easier to pass to the kids. ▪ High expectations for high achievers. ▪ Establish strong relationships with each child to allow true differential instruction. ▪ Value students strengths – grow those opportunities – take advantage of learning credit in a new way; hands on vocational learning. ▪ Strength finders – use it to help students identify and own their talents. ▪ Leveraging anticipated growth in technology to optimize instruction in an adaptive manner. ▪ Learning how technology impacts student achievement. ▪ iPad pilots. ▪ Design project-based learning that aligns with assessed learners – identify needs and build it around student growth – support all learners – pushing and identifying needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Late start for high schools . . . brave & bold; maybe this will put us on the map. ▪ Categorize classes by 21st century skill acquisition (i.e. Critical Thinking, Communication, etc.). ▪ Middle School mandate – nudge to stay involved. ▪ Can the union structure grow and change with the new way? ▪ Foster an entrepreneurial environment for students to develop start up concept. ▪ Create (or expand) student internships and job shadowing opportunities. ▪ Is a goal – in order to maintain class size and achievement, do we need a facility growth plan included – the opposite of doomsday? ▪ Collaborative projects within two or more subject areas of discipline.

MARKET

Competition with Charters Motivates Districts

New political circumstances, growing popularity

By Marc J. Holley, Anna J. Egalite, and Martin F. Lueken



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FALL 2013 / VOL. 13, NO. 4

Proponents of market-based education reform often argue that introducing charter schools and other school choice policies creates a competitive dynamic that will prompt low-performing districts to improve their practice. Rather than simply providing an alternative to neighborhood public schools for a handful of students, the theory says, school choice programs actually benefit students remaining in their neighborhood schools, too. Competition motivates districts to respond to the loss of students and the revenues students bring, producing a rising tide that, as the common metaphor suggests, lifts all boats.

But in order for this to happen, districts must first recognize the need to compete for students and then make efforts to attract those students, who now have the chance to go elsewhere. Since 2007, enrollment in charter schools has jumped from 1.3 million to 2 million students, an increase of 59 percent. The school choice movement is gaining momentum, but are districts responding to the competition? In this study we investigate whether district officials in a position to influence policy and practice have begun to respond to competitive pressure from school choice in new ways. Specifically, we probe whether district officials in urban settings across the country believe they need to compete for students. If they do, what is the nature of their response?



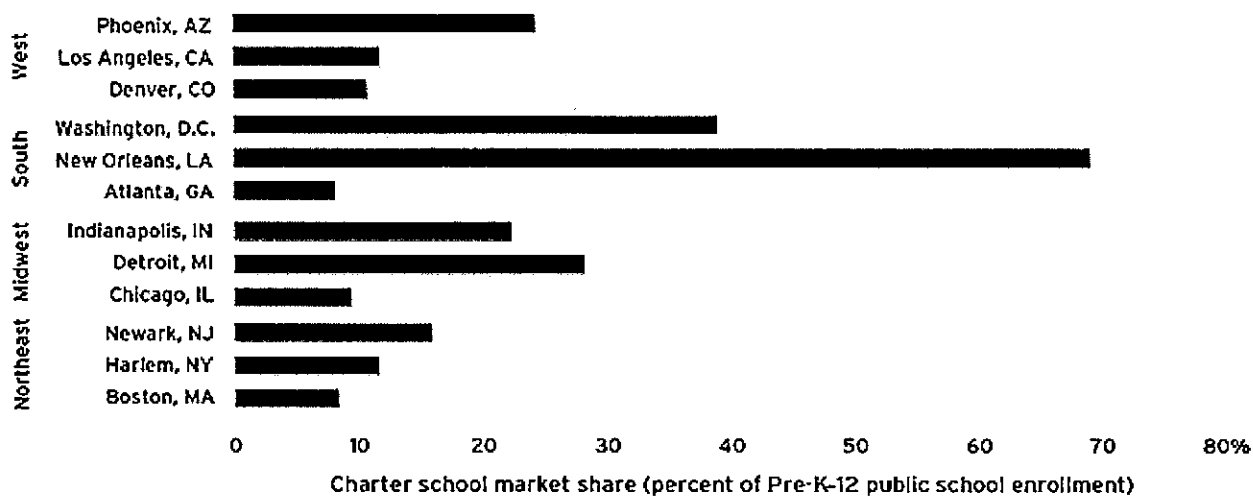
A small number of studies and numerous media reports have attempted to capture the reactions of public school officials to these new threats to their enrollments and revenues. A few reports of obstructionist behavior by districts stand out and have been chronicled in these pages by Joe Williams (“Games Charter Opponents Play,” *features*, Winter 2007) and Nelson Smith (“Whose School Buildings Are They, Anyway?” *features*, Fall 2012). Yet our evidence suggests that the dynamics described in Williams’s report of guerilla turf wars may be evolving in many locations to reflect new political circumstances and the growing popularity of a burgeoning charter sector.

To explore the influence of school choice on district policy and practice, we scoured media sources for evidence of urban public-school districts’ responses to charter competition. Our express purpose was to catalog levels of competition awareness and types of responses by public school officials and their representatives. Our search retrieved more than 8,000 print and online media reports in the past five years (since the 2007 Williams article) from 12 urban locations in the United States. We then reviewed minutes from school board meetings, district web sites, and other district artifacts to verify if, in fact, the practices and policies described in media reports have occurred.

We selected cities according to specific criteria. We chose three urban districts with high percentages of minority and low-income students (at least 60 percent on both counts) in each region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West). In addition, districts in our sample needed to have a minimum of 6 percent of students in choice schools, the level Caroline Hoxby identified as a threshold above which districts could reasonably be expected to respond to competitive pressure (see “Rising Tide,” *research*, Winter 2001). Finally, we sought to include cities across the range of choice-school market shares within each geographic region, so long as they were above the 6 percent threshold (see Figure 1).

Market Share (Figure 1)

Charter school market share in the 12 sample locations in 2011 ranged from just over 8 percent in Atlanta to nearly 70 percent in New Orleans.



SOURCES: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS); figures reported for Harlem based on authors’ calculations using data from the Common Core of Data, compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics. Calculations based on New York Geographic Districts 3, 4, 5, and 6 and charter schools within the zip codes that encompass these districts.

Competition Awareness

When the charter movement began in the early 1990s, few students were leaving the traditional system, and district officials were not particularly threatened with the loss of revenues as students and their funding went to other providers. That reality has changed. But before they can respond in meaningful ways, district officials need to recognize the new competitive market. Our first task was to find evidence that district officials recognize incentives associated with competing for students and meeting parental demand. We find at least one piece of evidence of competition awareness in all 12 cities, indicating that traditional public-school leaders generally acknowledge students’ alternative schooling option of attending a charter school.

In Denver, for example, school board members Jeanne Kaplan and Andrea Merida provided evidence of their awareness of competition among education providers in a 2011 guest commentary in the *Denver Post*. The board

members raised the following point:

Before adding more charters or other new schools, the district should wait for the data to come in to justify doing so...We challenge Superintendent Tom Boasberg and our board to commit to a level playing field so neighborhood schools receive the same resources as charter and innovation schools.

In New York City, Joel Klein, chancellor of the New York City Department of Education until January 2011, was keenly aware of competition and openly welcomed charter schools, even if it meant publicly criticizing the public schools he oversaw. In a May 2011 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Klein wrote,

A full-scale transition from a government-run monopoly to a competitive marketplace won't happen quickly, but that's no reason not to begin introducing more competition... We pursued that goal in New York City by opening more than 100 charter schools in high-poverty communities. Almost 80,000 families chose these new schools—though we had space for only 40,000; the rest are on waiting lists. Traditional schools and the unions have been screaming bloody murder, which is a good sign: It means that the monopolists are beginning to feel the effects of competition.

Los Angeles Unified School District superintendent John Deasy has expressed his awareness of competition from schools of choice. Although not all of his subsequent actions conform to his claim that he is seeking healthy competition, this quotation makes it clear that he is aware of a competitive dynamic. Speaking at the Charter School Leadership Symposium in Los Angeles in 2010, he said,

Charter schools are a viable and necessary part of education. We are now in a multiple-provider world.... We're in a moment of unhealthy competition, and I'm looking forward to healthy competition.

These are just a few examples of media reports that demonstrate cognizance of the threats posed by alternative providers, but awareness is just the first step. We next sought to figure out if knowledge actually led to action.

Characterizing Competitive Responses

Having established that districts acknowledge charter schools and are aware that they compete with them for students, we then attempted to characterize public school districts' responses to the competition. Our characterization of responses is informed by basic economic assumptions underlying competitive markets and the premise that functional markets will lead to a rising tide of achievement for all students. Competition between charter schools and traditional public schools for students may induce a constructive reaction, an obstructive reaction, or no response.

In a constructive response to competition, school faculty and administrators may implement reforms that use resources more efficiently, improve the overall quality of education within the traditional public schools, and increase responsiveness to student needs. If the efforts are successful, then the quality of traditional public schools will increase relative to what it would have been in the absence of competition from charter schools.

In an obstructive response to increased competition for scarce public resources, public school officials may attempt to block the growth of charter schools by limiting access to buildings and information, adding burdensome bureaucratic requirements, or supporting legislation that would hinder the development of such schools.

Of course, school and district officials may choose not to respond at all if, for example, the threat or the school's or district's perception of a competitive threat to their resources is negligible. Similarly, schools and districts, when faced with competition, might make public statements about how they need to change but never translate these statements into action. We consider the symbolic responses described by Frederick Hess in *Revolution at the Margins* (2002) as effectively falling into this third category of offering no response. It is for this reason that we verified that any policy or practice change referenced in a public statement by a district official and reported in the media actually did occur.

Constructive Responses

Contrary to the largely symbolic reactions to competition evident when the school choice movement was just beginning, we find evidence of significant changes in district policy and practice. The most common positive response, found in 8 of the 12 locations, is district cooperation or collaboration with charter schools. We were even able to find evidence of this constructive response in Atlanta Public Schools, a district previously relatively unwelcoming to charter schools: in late October 2012, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a collaboration grant for teachers and administrators at B.E.S.T Academy Middle School, a district-run school in Atlanta, to participate in training conducted by the KIPP Metro Atlanta. The next three most-common constructive responses, found in seven locations, are partnerships with successful nonprofit CMOs or for-profit charter school operators, education management organizations (EMOs), to operate schools; the replication of successful charter school practices; and an increase in active efforts to market district offerings to students and families (see Table 1).

Changing Practices (table 1)

Competition from charter schools is prompting responses from public school districts that may improve the quality of education provided to students who remain in traditional district schools.

Region and District	Replicate charter practices	Collaborate with charters	Support other innovations (schools, etc.)	Market to students/families	Expand/improve school offerings	Partner with CMOs or EMOs	Improve efficiency	Only applicants restrict enrollment	Create legal obstacles	Freeze or delay approvals to charters	Block access to facilities	Withhold information	Use regs. to restrict choice of competition
Midwest													
Boston		●	●		●								
Houston		●		●		●							
Newark		●	●		●		●						
Midwest													
Cleveland	●					●							
Columbus			●	●	●	●	●				×	×	×
Indianapolis	●			●	●		●						
South													
Atlanta		●						×	×	×			
New Orleans	●	●		●	●	●	●				×		
Washington, D.C.	●	●		●		●	●						
West													
Denver	●	●	●	●		●							
Los Angeles	●	●	●			●			×		×		×
Portland	●		●	●	●								

● Constructive response X Destructive response

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The decade between 1999 and 2009 saw a dramatic expansion in CMO schools, with increases of approximately 20 percent per year, a higher growth rate than seen by independent charter schools, according to a recent study by Mathematica Policy Research. The KIPP network and CMOs Uncommon Schools and Rocketship Education have demonstrated the ability to achieve success with challenging populations, so it may not be surprising that districts pursuing reform seek to partner with them or with equally successful EMOs. In March 2011, for instance, Detroit Public Schools (DPS) emergency financial manager at the time, Robert Bobb, proposed inviting charters and private schools to take over Detroit’s 41 most academically challenged schools. Dubbed the DPS Renaissance Plan 2012, the purpose was to engage proven charter-school operators in the district’s school-improvement effort. In April 2011, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers agreed to assist DPS as the district designed a competitive and rigorous RFP (Request for Proposal) process to identify schools that it would authorize as charters beginning in fall 2011. The district’s portfolio now includes two DPS schools that were converted to charter schools in partnership with CMOs (EdTech and the Detroit Association of Black Organizations) and three in partnership with EMOs (SABIS, Solid Rock, and the Leona Group).

As an example of a district imitating successful charter-school practices, Denver Public Schools is, as *Education Week* has reported, “aiming to re-create within its own buildings the innovation seen in top charter schools, and keep the state funding.” The approaches used by Denver schools in the Blueprint Schools Network since 2011 are supported by high-quality research and guided by the following five “tenets”: 1) excellence in leadership and instruction; 2) increased instructional time; 3) a no-excuses school culture of high expectations; 4) frequent assessments to improve instruction; and 5) daily tutoring in critical growth years.

Across all four regions, districts have increased marketing efforts to recruit and compete for students. For example, in Harlem, Jennifer Medina of the *New York Times* reported in 2010, schools were putting out fliers

and actively seeking to change their images. She quoted then principal of Public School 125 Rafaela Espinal saying, “We have to think about selling ourselves all the time, and it takes a concerted effort that none of us have ever done before...We have to get them in the door if we are even going to try to convince them to come here.”

In addition to the responses described above, we find evidence of three other constructive competitive responses: expanding or improving district schools, programs or offerings (6 locations); improving district efficiency (5 locations); and supporting semiautonomous charter-like schools (5 locations).

Obstructive Responses

Although obstructive responses continue to exist and may occur in far greater number in districts not covered by our study, we found fewer visible instances of resistance to competitive pressures than of other types (see Table 1). This could reflect the activities that receive media coverage or districts’ acting more covertly when they are working against charter schools. The most common obstructive response we observed was districts seeking to block access to buildings. We find evidence of this response in three locations, with one district in three of four region display- ing this behavior. Two districts, Los Angeles Unified School District and the District of Columbia Public Schools, have recently demonstrated such unwillingness to share public space with charter schools.

California provides constitutional assurance of adequate charter school facilities. Under Proposition 39, public school districts are required to provide “reasonably equivalent” space to charter and district students. A protracted legal battle between the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) and L.A. Unified began in May 2007. At issue was the formula used to calculate how much space should be offered to charter schools. A settlement was reached in April 2008, but the charter association returned to court in May 2010 citing failure of the district to comply with the agreement, and again in May 2012 to enforce the trial court’s earlier order. In June 2012, L.A. superior court judge Terry Green ruled that the district should factor in rooms not being used for regular classes. The school system appealed the order, and it was reversed in December 2012. In his opinion for the court of appeals, Judge Edward Ferns ultimately found the district’s formula for assigning classroom space to charter schools was consistent with the intent of Proposition 39. This case is now headed to the California Supreme Court.

While she has increased efficiency by consolidating district schools that have lost students to charter schools, Washington, D.C., schools chancellor Kaya Henderson initially seemed intent on preventing charters from accessing the empty buildings. Fifteen D.C. public schools were marked for closure in January 2013 as a result of underenrollment or underutilization of facilities, yet Henderson did not plan on making these facilities available to charter schools. Recent developments on this front, however, suggest that the district may allow more than a dozen charter schools to enter into leases of former district school buildings. Time will tell whether the district follows through on these plans.

The five other categories of obstructive responses observed are: 1) excessively denying charter applications, 2) creating legal obstacles to charter schools, 3) freezing or delaying payments to charter schools, 4) withholding information from charter schools, and 5) using regulations to restrict choice or interfere with competition.

In Atlanta, for example, media reports indicated that local boards were denying charter applications and setting up legal obstacles to charter school formation. In response to this behavior, in 2008 a group of lawmakers created a commission to approve and fund charter schools. In May 2011, however, the Georgia Supreme Court struck down the law after seven districts, including Atlanta Public Schools, sued to have the state law that created the commission declared unconstitutional. Ultimately, despite the efforts of these districts, a referendum passed in November 2012 that will amend the state constitution to allow for an alternate charter-school authorizer.

Broadening of Responses

The ground war between charter schools and their opponents described by Joe Williams has begun to shift. As the charter sector continues to expand, some of its competitors appear to be changing strategy. Where school districts once responded with indifference, symbolic gestures, or open hostility, we are starting to see a

broadening of responses, perhaps fueled by acceptance that the charter sector will continue to thrive, or by knowledge that many charters are providing examples of ways to raise academic achievement.

Traditional public schools are aware of the threats posed by alternative education providers, but they are analyzing the moves made by competitors and demonstrating that they may have the savvy to reflect, replicate, experiment, and enter into partnerships with school choice providers. This evidence suggests that while bureaucratic change may often be slow, it may be a mistake to underestimate the capacity of these bureaucratic institutions to reform, adapt, and adjust in light of changing environments.

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Intensive intervention: strategy for closing the achievement gap

By Bruce Johansen, TC Daily Planet
October 30, 2011

Those promoting intensive intervention to close the achievement gap point out that children born into poor homes start with a disadvantage that requires early and decisive action to overcome. Richard Chase, a researcher for the Wilder Foundation, says that 15 to 20 percent of babies in Minnesota live in impoverished homes, with some populations affected more than others: 60 percent of American Indian babies live in poverty, 42 percent of African American babies, 33 percent of Hispanic/Latino, 10 percent of Asian, and 8 percent of white babies.

Besides developing and adopting new practices, proponents of intensive intervention call for changing how achievement is thought and talked about. Chase argues that instead of talking about how to "close the achievement gap," the focus should be on how to prevent it. Kent Pekel, executive director of the University of Minnesota's College Readiness Consortium, prefers to talk about a "college readiness gap." Keith Hardy, a St. Paul school board member, calls "achievement gap" a "cop-out term." According to him, what we really have is an "equity gap of expectations." We don't expect certain students to achieve, so they don't. The term "achievement gap" blames those on the lower end, instead of focusing on fixing the system that those young people are a part of—a system that only helps some achieve.

Advocates say that intensive intervention must begin in the earliest stages of every child's life, first with prenatal care and access to high-quality early childhood education programs. Once in school, all students must have high expectations placed on them, exposure to a rich and rigorous curriculum, more time on task through longer school days and an extended school year, excellent instruction and guidance, access to tutoring, and the motivation to set their sights on college.

Caryn Mohr, of the Wilder Foundation, says that Wilder's research shows the benefits of intentional intervention. For example, a long-term study of a rigorous prekindergarten program that serves mostly low-income and minority students, found that students participating in the program demonstrate an initial boost over their peers when they begin kindergarten. Other research shows how important it is to entertain "extending the school day or reconfiguring the classroom layout to create an environment conducive to learning." Still other studies, Mohr says, illustrate the value of pre-college outreach programs for improving college access for underrepresented groups.

Early Childhood Education

Former Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser, now with the Achievement Gap Committee, says that, "Children who arrive at school from a home culture supportive of education, and/or have had a quality preschool program, are more likely to succeed in school." Keith Hardy agrees, saying, "Giving children the tools and a love of learning early in life are both essential." According to Education Minnesota, "Numerous studies, including The Abecedarian Project and the Perry Preschool Project, have shown the long-range benefits of high-quality early childhood education



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and development.”

Megan Gunnar, a professor of child development at the University of Minnesota, reports that brain research explains some of the ways that poverty impacts brain development and school preparedness. “Parents worried about their child’s next meal may not have the energy to encourage a child’s learning and curiosity,” she says. A child born into a poor family is less likely to be in the hands of a caring, responsive caregiver, be raised in a language-rich environment, or have sufficient opportunities to safely explore.

Knowing how critical early childhood education is for future cognitive development — as well as social and emotional well-being — Kent Pekel says that focusing efforts in that area is a “slam-dunk.” Others note that investment in early childhood education makes economic sense, too. Education Minnesota cites findings by economist Art Rolnick, former research director at the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, who has calculated a double-digit inflation-adjusted rate of return on investments in such programs. In other words, it’s more cost-effective to teach children earlier in life, than to try to catch up or make corrections later.

Exposure to Highly Qualified Teachers

A major reason for persistent education gaps, observes Kent Pekel, is that students of color and those coming from low-income homes tend to be taught by less qualified teachers, while high-performing students from higher-income homes are given the most experienced, talented teachers. This, he says, is the opposite of Finland, where the best teachers are assigned to students with the greatest needs. Author Linda Darling-Hammond writes that the system implemented in Finland is based on equitable funding and extensive preparation for all teachers. By contrast, “the United States has been imposing more external testing...while creating more inequitable conditions in local schools.”

In Pekel’s view, another “slam dunk” for closing the achievement gap is improving the instructional effectiveness of teachers and providing more rigorous curriculum for students in all schools. As things currently stand, some children are given tools to form a serious understanding of what they are learning, while others are only taught rudimentary steps. So, for example, some students—those on the “wrong side” of the gap—are given basic instructions on how to do a math procedure, while their counterparts—those on the “right side”—are taught to understand the higher concepts involved. Pekel says that all students must be exposed to a rich curriculum, and that exposure must begin in the early grades to enhance a student’s chances of succeeding later.

Dr. David Heistad, Executive Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment for the Minneapolis Public Schools, concurs that instructional effectiveness has a “huge impact.” However, he says, it can help students catch up later if provided consistently and for a sufficient period of time. Heistad praises a Bush Foundation program that’s investing \$40 million in recruiting and coaching a diverse pool of teachers, who are learning from elementary schools in Minneapolis that have “beat the odds” through staff development.

More Classroom Time and Tutoring

Extra time on subjects is one of the key elements of intentional intervention, says Keith Hardy. This includes seeking out tutors for high school students to ensure that they’re up to speed, prepared to make it through college. Researcher Mohr says that Wilder’s studies show that, “individual tutoring that supplements the regular curriculum, either during school or outside of regular school hours, can boost student achievement.” So can targeted instruction, particularly around reading, she says.

Others argue that longer school days and years are needed. Don Fraser told the Daily Planet that: “Careful research has shown that more time on task for the children means they learn more. A very interesting study in Baltimore concluded that two-thirds of the achievement gap was attributable to the fact that (students) were out of school during the summer time....The efforts that are being made now to create schools to do better by these children almost all use longer days and have longer school years.”

Locally, Hardy cites Concordia Creative Learning Academy in St. Paul for its decision to go to longer days and school on Saturday—what amounts to 12 to 14 extra weeks of school per year. Afterschool enrichment and student and family support services can also help enhance or sustain achievement gains for students, according to Wilder’s research.

College Readiness

Even more important than graduating from high school, says Hardy, is seeing that students go



community conversations, funded by the Bush Foundation, devoted

to finding solutions to new economic challenges in our communities.

When tests tell teachers nothing: Special needs not met by standardized tests
Healthcare experts offer ideas on how to make Obamacare work in Minnesota
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on to graduate from college with degrees that will open doors to employment in a good profession. Hardy is especially impressed by programs like AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which is widely used in St. Paul Public Schools from elementary grades through high school, and reaches students in the "academic middle," helping them become higher learners.

Hardy likes that AVID works with students on note-taking, organizational skills, and respectful interactions with teachers and classmates. AVID also boosts teachers' expectations of their students. The end result, he says, is that more students end up receiving high school diplomas and putting together successful applications to top-notch universities, with four-year degree programs.

Other Parts of the Equation

Social and Cultural Shifts

Advocates of intensive intervention emphasize the need for larger social and cultural shifts. Hardy supports efforts like Network for the Development of Children of African Descent. NDCAD, he says, empowers African Americans by connecting them with their African roots, and placing an emphasis on excelling in their academic pursuits. Pekel observes those same elements—instilling cultural pride, emphasizing student success, and giving kids something to aspire to—are present in successful, "beating the odds" schools. He adds that what is needed now, for change to be more widespread, "is a social movement, like the Civil Right Movement, that really taps into the social consciousness."

Parent and Student Responsibilities

Hardy describes how his parents, who dropped out before graduating from high school, insisted that he and his sister not follow suit. He stresses the importance of all children having a similar level of support from parents or guardians, and applauds Parent Academy, a program of the St. Paul School system, for empowering adults to encourage their children to pursue formal education. Hardy explains that the Academy instructs parents on how to talk with teachers, and help their kids with homework, even when they don't know the subjects themselves. He's encouraged by the growing numbers of parents who participate each year. The program is offered in five languages, English, Hmong, Somali, Spanish, and Karen.

Personal responsibility on the part of students is also key, says Hardy. "We adults can do everything we possibly can to put the right things in place for students to achieve success, but students need to take charge." This means learning how to push back against attitudes popular among peers, especially those suggesting that learning's not cool, and that stigmatize doing well in school. It's also a problem, he says, "if, in a child's home life, they're in contact with adults who aren't encouraging their education." In those cases, Hardy says, students need to "step up and be responsible."

Coverage of issues and events that affect Central Corridor neighborhoods and communities is funded in part by a grant from Central Corridor Collaborative.

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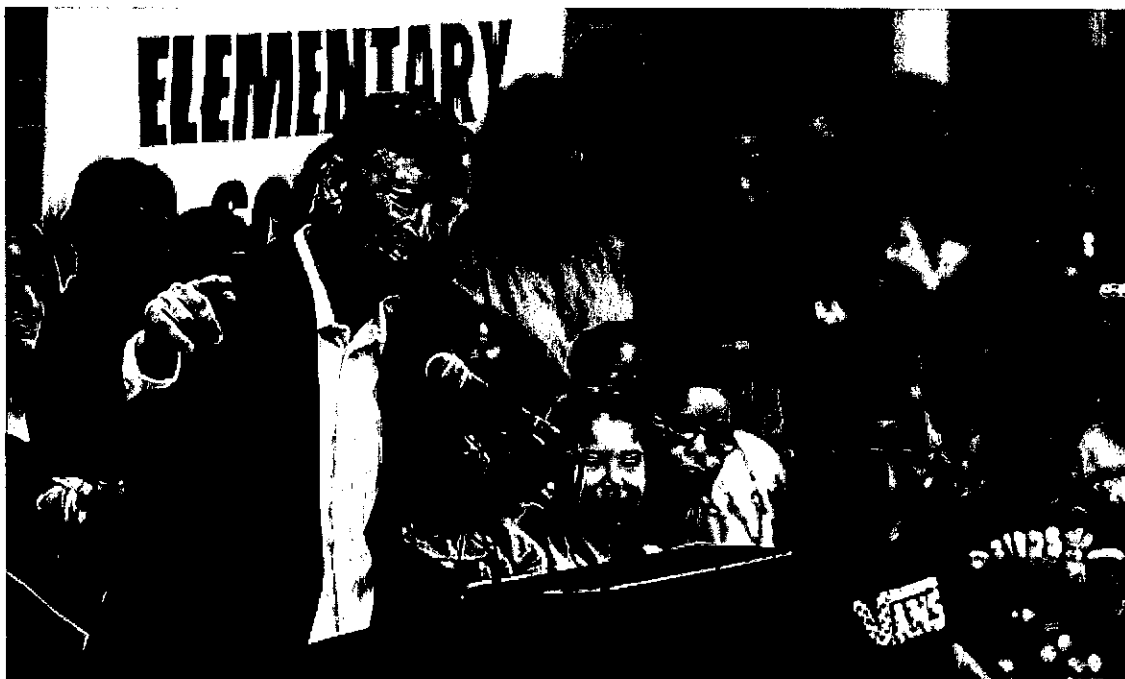
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Bruce Johansen
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State/Fed Gov't

School-Finance Reform: Inspiration and Progress in Colorado



SOURCE: AP/Brennan Linsley

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) speaks to a gathering of primary school students, teachers, and administrators at Rose Hill Elementary, in Commerce City, Colorado, Wednesday, May 15, 2013.

By Juliana Herman | June 3, 2013

Endnotes and citations are available in the PDF version of this issue brief.

Come this fall, all eyes in Colorado, particularly those in schools, will be on voters in the Centennial State as they head to the polls to decide the future of Colorado's newly redesigned school-funding system. Voters there are being asked to approve a \$1.1 billion tax increase to finance Colorado's schools, an approval required for the funding reforms to kick in. The proposed system is a significant step forward in the push for more equitable school funding and targeted investments in essential areas such as preschool, full-day kindergarten, and teachers and leaders.

Coloradans, however, are not the only ones who should pay attention to the legislature's efforts to improve school funding. The rest of the country should also take note. Many if not most of the other 49 states, and certainly the District of Columbia,

need substantial school-funding reform, and Colorado's efforts provide the substantive guidance, and more importantly, the political inspiration, to undertake similar funding reforms elsewhere.

What inspired the reform efforts?

While it's seemingly cliché to say that school funding in the United States is a mess, it is no less true. The education-finance system is a mishmash of sources, laws, and regulations that are imposed by all levels of government. The ultimate consequence of this crazy mix is the restriction of innovation and flexibility and too often the inequitable allocation of resources determined by district wealth rather than student need. This complexity—the sheer number of players and factors involved—can make tackling school-funding reform seem impossible, and any attempt to remedy the situation dead on arrival.

Colorado shows that labeling school-funding reform futile simply isn't true. The Colorado bill—the Public School Finance Act, signed by Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) on May 21, 2013—was the result of two years of hard work by a group of determined advocates and policymakers. They spoke with experts in the field and held hundreds of stakeholder meetings to get widespread community input. Ultimately, they designed a bill that met the needs of Colorado, took into account the political landscape, and aimed to create greater equity. It may not have been easy, but it was not impossible.

To be sure, the reform efforts likely benefited from the fact that one party—the Democrats—controls the legislature and the governor's mansion. Those efforts, however, are not yet complete, as voters must approve the tax increase for the funding-reform legislation to be implemented. Still, a signed piece of legislation that proposes significant and systematic changes to the way schools would be funded shows what can be done. What has taken place in Colorado should inspire governors and state legislatures across the country to follow suit and address their own school-funding systems with the aim of adopting fairer and more equitable approaches to education.

All children should be provided the resources they need to succeed in school. If Colorado can do it, why can't other states?

What was done in Colorado, and how does it work?

The goal of Colorado's new school-funding system is to provide sufficient resources that are equitably distributed to school districts across the state. The intricacies of this new system are complex, and the bill spans almost 200 pages. The legislation's primary author and sponsor, education reformer and State Sen. Mike Johnston (D-Denver), put together a detailed summary of the bill, and the legislation itself also contains a thorough summary. There are certain elements of the bill, however, that we at CAP think are particularly noteworthy for policymakers and advocates across the country. The bill's key elements include the following:

Counting students

At the most basic level, a Colorado school district's funding is determined by the number of students it serves. The new legislation determines a district's funding using the average daily membership, or ADM, or a district's average enrollment, which will be reported quarterly instead of an enrollment count that is taken on a single day of the year, usually October 1. This new approach to counting students more accurately captures the district's student enrollment and accounts for fluctuations in that enrollment throughout the year. Both of these factors better ensure that a district receives more accurate funding for the students it is serving, rather than for the students who happen to show up on the first day of October.

Base-pupil calculation

Similar to many state-funding formulas, the Colorado system begins with a uniform, statewide base per-student amount and makes adjustments to that amount based on factor(s) to calculate each district's specific per-student amount. Under the new act, this base amount is only adjusted for district size, providing additional resources for smaller districts with fewer than 4,300 students. The act eliminates adjustments for cost of living, personnel costs, and nonpersonnel costs. These adjustments often benefited wealthier communities by, among other things, allowing them to pay their teachers more. Rather than the state shouldering the added responsibility for these higher costs, the act transfers responsibility to the more affluent communities that have the ability to raise the additional funding locally.

Weights for at-risk students

Colorado's new legislation provides at least 20 percent and up to 40 percent of a district's base amount in additional funding for each student eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program or who is an English-language learner, or ELL, the latter for up to five years. A greater percentage of additional funding is provided for districts whose concentrations of either group of students exceed the statewide average. Concentrations of at-risk students create greater educational challenges and require additional resources to meet the needs of all students. For the first time, an ELL student eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program will receive additional funding for being in both groups. Also for the first time, students eligible for the reduced-price lunch will be included in the additional funding weight. Under the current act, only students eligible for the free lunch were weighted.

State- and local-funding calculation

In Colorado, as in most states, schools are funded by a combination of local, state, and federal dollars. Local communities have differing abilities to raise school funding from local taxes, more often than not property taxes. Even when applying the same tax rates, communities with higher property values can raise more resources than those with lower property values. The Colorado funding formula takes this *ability to raise*—in

essence, the wealth of a community—into account when determining the amount of funding that is to be raised locally versus the amount of funding that the state is to provide.

According to the bill's provisions, about 60 percent of education funding should in theory come from the state, and 40 percent should come from local sources. The actual percentages for any given district, however, will depend on the wealth of that district, with wealthier communities raising a greater share of their funding locally than less-wealthy communities.

Under the new legislation, the state department of education will determine each district's total—state and local—funding allocation and then calculate the amount of each district's funding that is *expected* to be raised locally, the district's local share. In making this determination, the department will take into account the district's property valuation per pupil, median income, and the percent of children who qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. This calculation—the dollar amount to be raised from local sources—is then translated into the property-tax rate the district is *expected* to levy locally, with a few limitations and exceptions. This *expected* levy dollar amount, plus additional revenue from Colorado's specific ownership of tax, comprises the district's *expected* local-funding share. The state subtracts this *expected* local amount from the district's total funding allocation and provides the remaining funding amount from state sources.

"Expected" is in italics because a district is not required to levy a specific property-tax rate, nor are voters required to approve an increase in the property levy amount to the amount Colorado's department of education calculates to be a district's *expected* property-tax rate. It is up to each district to decide how much funding to raise locally. The state, however, will not make up the difference in funding if the district decides to levy less than its *expected* amount. This is a new state policy regarding funding fairness: If districts have the ability to raise more from local taxes, the state will not make up the difference if the locality chooses to raise less.

By contrast, under the current provision, the amount of funding Colorado provides is determined by how much the local district *actually* raises, and not by how much the district *could* raise if it levied a given tax rate. In addition to raising questions of fairness by allowing communities to levy low local taxes and have the rest of the state make up the funding difference, it also created a significant, unpredictable, and unsustainable burden on the state budget.

The new funding legislation also changes the circumstances under which districts can raise more than the local property-tax levy amount calculated by the department of education, though the specifics are too involved to explore in this issue brief. It is worth noting that when a district reaches a certain threshold in additional revenue raised locally, that additional revenue would be used to replace categorical program funding that the district would have otherwise received from the state. The goal of the system is to provide districts with sufficient and equitable resources, and the legislation seems

to take the position that at some point, when a district has raised so much beyond what other districts receive, additional state funding is no longer equitable. Moreover, in some cases, the state will provide additional funding to a district so as to ensure that the total revenue amount raised by a district's mill-levy rate is equal to the statewide average revenue per pupil for that mill rate, 2.5 mills.

Improved charter-school funding

Colorado has two types of charter schools: district-authorized charter schools and state-authorized charter schools.

District-authorized charter schools

District-authorized charter schools receive the base per-student amount of the district in which they are located and additional funding for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or ELL students. This per-student amount includes both the portion of the funding raised locally and the money being provided by the state. In other words, in Colorado the *money follows the child* into his or her charter school.

Colorado districts, as mentioned above, are permitted to raise additional money above and beyond its state-determined funding-allocation amount. Under the new law, districts will be required to report to the state department of education any additional revenue raised, and the department will issue a public report that includes that information. The goal is to increase transparency on the issue of school funding. Districts are not required to share this additional revenue with charter schools, but they are required to engage in negotiations with charter schools regarding the amount of additional funding that will be shared with them before they seek voter approval for a revenue increase. If these negotiations break down, the district charter school is permitted to apply to become a state-authorized charter school, in which case the state would match the amount of additional revenue raised by the district (see below).

State-authorized charter schools

State-authorized charter schools, or institute charter schools as they are called in Colorado, receive their entire funding from the state, as they do not have a local tax base upon which to draw local revenue. The base per-pupil amount is the same as the district in which the institute charter school is located. They also receive funding for enrolled students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or who are ELL students. If the district in which an institute charter school resides chooses to raise additional money above and beyond the state-determined funding-allocation amount, then the state, under the new legislation, will provide that same per-student amount to the institute charter school in order to equalize the level of funding among schools located in that same physical district. This approach works to ensure that students who choose to enroll in the charter school in their district, which just happens to be state authorized, receive the same per-student funding as if they enrolled in the school in their local district.

Online learning

Under the funding-reform bill, single-district online schools receive the same per-student amount as the traditional district brick-and-mortar schools in the online school's home district. Multidistrict online schools receive a per-student amount that is equal to the statewide base per-pupil funding each year. Both types of schools can also receive additional funding for their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or who are ELL students. Currently, single-district online schools receive the same per-pupil amount as their home schools, but multidistrict online schools receive a flat amount of funding. The new bill moves closer to ensuring that multidistrict online schools receive their fair share of funding.

Productivity and data transparency

Colorado's Public School Finance Act recognizes the importance of transparency and productivity in school funding. It requires school-level data reporting, a key element in revealing the distribution—although too often inequitable distribution—of resources within a district. It also helps to determine whether the additional funding provided for ELL students or students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is actually being spent on those students. The act requires that this information be made available to parents, educators, and the public in an easy-to-understand form and on an accessible website so that such stakeholders can track and compare spending within and across districts with the hope that shared best practices will lead to increased efficiency in spending.

On top of this, every four years the state will produce a report analyzing, for each district, the impact of any new dollars received under the legislation on academic growth and student achievement. This will allow stakeholders to evaluate the productivity of increased funding, and hopefully to identify more effective approaches to improving student achievement.

Within-district funding allocations

CAP has long advocated that school-funding dollars be distributed within a district equitably and based on student needs, much like they are distributed to districts based on district needs. Colorado's legislation takes a positive step in that direction, requiring that the state dollars provided to students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or ELL students follow those students to their schools. In a move toward allowing greater flexibility and innovation, principals are given autonomy over how to spend these state dollars, though local boards have review authority.

CAP applauds Colorado for making this step in the right direction toward achieving equitable school funding, but more remains to be done. Under the new reform, districts are still not required to allocate their portion of additional resources or their base funding to schools based on student need. True, a majority of districts in Colorado have only one school site, but the remaining districts—often the largest districts—do have to allocate dollars among schools and should do so equitably. It is well

documented that within the same district, some schools can receive more dollars than others because resources are often allocated by teacher slots and/or special programs instead of by per-pupil dollar amounts. The reality is that some teachers are paid more than others, and when higher-paid teachers cluster in a given school, they pull more resources to that school, even though on paper the schools receive the same number of teacher slots. All dollars, both state and local, should be allocated to schools based on student need.

Preschool and kindergarten expansion

High-quality early childhood education can significantly impact a child's life and put them on the path to future academic success. Colorado's new funding system recognizes the importance of early childhood education and makes a significant commitment to expand preschool and full-day kindergarten. Currently, enrollment in the Colorado Preschool Program is capped because the program is not fully funded. Under the new act, however, districts will be able to enroll all eligible 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds for half-day preschool. Likewise, kindergarten has traditionally been funded for only half a day, leaving children without full-day kindergarten or placing the burden entirely on districts to fund full-day kindergarten if they choose. The new act changes this and funds kindergarten students as full-day pupils.

New investments

Colorado's Public School Finance Act provides more money for students eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program and for ELL students, along with special education and gifted and talented students. The reform act also creates a new teaching and leadership investment. This investment provides \$441 per student—entirely state funded—to help districts and schools implement Colorado's other recently enacted education reforms, including the new state standards. Finally, the legislation creates an innovation fund to encourage creative approaches to education, with a focus on expanded learning time, in the lowest-performing districts. Although the legislation does not detail the specifics of the innovation fund, CAP hopes it will be modeled after the U.S. Department of Education's successful i3 program. (The i3 program awards competitive grants for the development and expansion of innovative approaches to improving student achievement, with a focus on effective practices and a record of achievement.) And of course Colorado is making a significant increased investment in early childhood education.

Hold-harmless provisions

The Public School Finance Act includes a hold-harmless provision that ensures that districts that would otherwise see a decrease in state funding under the new funding formula will receive at least the same amount in state funding as they will receive in the 2014-15 school year. Moreover, these districts will also receive an additional 2 percent increase in funding, determined by the new formula, not by the prior funding level. Hold-harmless provisions are important for phasing in formula changes, but over

time they can become inequitable as funding continues to flow to districts based on past needs, not current ones.

Conclusion

Colorado is leading the nation in school-finance reform and is making significant steps toward greater school-funding equity while at the same time making targeted investments in essential education areas such as preschool, full-day kindergarten, and teachers and leaders. Colorado is showing that systematic reform can be done, and is a model for how to accomplish this much-needed change. While there is arguably more to do, this is significant progress and it should spur other states to take on the issue. In fact, voters across the country should learn from Colorado and demand that their state legislatures follow in its footsteps.

Indeed, other legislatures and governors are moving to improve school funding and are pushing for greater equity in their states. Most notably, California's Gov. Jerry Brown (D) has proposed redesigning the state's funding formula with the goal of allocating resources based on student need through a weighted student-funding formula. Much like Colorado's reform efforts, Gov. Brown's proposal would make great strides toward improving the equity of school funding in California.

This is certainly an exciting and promising time in the world of school funding, and in no place is the promise for greater funding equity and investment brighter than in Colorado. For the first time in almost 20 years, Colorado voters have an opportunity to significantly revamp the state's school-finance system by means that will go a long way in addressing the ills of public education. Colorado's lawmakers have done their part; now it's up to voters to do right by this generation and future generations of Colorado students.

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April 5, 2011

More Pupils Are Learning Online, Fueling Debate on Quality

By TRIP GABRIEL

MEMPHIS — Jack London was the subject in Daterrius Hamilton's online English 3 course. In a high school classroom packed with computers, he read a brief biography of London with single-paragraph excerpts from the author's works. But the curriculum did not require him, as it had generations of English students, to wade through a tattered copy of "Call of the Wild" or "To Build a Fire."

Mr. Hamilton, who had failed English 3 in a conventional classroom and was hoping to earn credit online to graduate, was asked a question about the meaning of social Darwinism. He pasted the question into Google and read a summary of a Wikipedia entry. He copied the language, spell-checked it and e-mailed it to his teacher.

Mr. Hamilton, 18, is among the expanding ranks of students in kindergarten through Grade 12 — more than one million in the United States, by one estimate — taking online courses.

Advocates of such courses say they allow schools to offer not only makeup courses, the fastest-growing area, but also a richer menu of electives and Advanced Placement classes when there are not enough students to fill a classroom.

But critics say online education is really driven by a desire to spend less on teachers and buildings, especially as state and local budget crises force deep cuts to education. They note that there is no sound research showing that online courses at the K-12 level are comparable to face-to-face learning.

Here in Memphis, in one of the most ambitious online programs of its kind, every student must take an online course to graduate, beginning with current sophomores. Some study online versions of courses taught in classrooms in the same building. Officials for Memphis City Schools say they want to give students skills they will need in college, where online courses are increasingly common, and in the 21st-century workplace.

But it is also true that Memphis is spending only \$164 for each student in an online course.

PRODUCT

Administrators say they have never calculated an apples-to-apples comparison for the cost of online vs. in-person education, but around the country skeptics say online courses are a stealthy way to cut corners.

“It’s a cheap education, not because it benefits the students,” said Karen Aronowitz, president of the teachers’ union in Miami, where 7,000 high school students were assigned to study online in computer labs this year because there were not enough teachers to comply with state class-size caps.

“This is being proposed for even your youngest students,” Ms. Aronowitz said. “Because it’s good for the kids? No. This is all about cheap.”

In Idaho, the state superintendent of education plans to push a requirement that high school students take four or more online courses, following a bill that passed the Legislature last week to provide every student with a laptop, paid for from a state fund for educators’ salaries.

Chicago and New York City have introduced pilot online learning programs. In New York, Innovation Zone, or iZone, includes online makeup and Advanced Placement courses at 30 high schools, as well as personalized after-school computer drills in math and English for elementary students.

Reza Namin, superintendent of schools in Westbrook, Me., which faces a \$6.5 million budget deficit, said he could not justify continuing to pay a Chinese-language teacher for only 10 interested students. But he was able to offer Chinese online through the Virtual High School Global Consortium, a nonprofit school based in Massachusetts.

The virtual high school says its list of client schools has grown to 770, up 34 percent in two years, because of local budget cuts.

Nationwide, an estimated 1.03 million students at the K-12 level took an online course in 2007-8, up 47 percent from two years earlier, according to the Sloan Consortium, an advocacy group for online education. About 200,000 students attend online schools full time, often charter schools that appeal to home-schooling families, according to another report.

The growth has come despite a cautionary review of research by the United States Department of Education in 2009. It found benefits in online courses for college students, but it concluded that few rigorous studies had been done at the K-12 level, and policy makers “lack scientific evidence of the effectiveness” of online classes.

The fastest growth has been in makeup courses for students who failed a regular class. Advocates say the courses let students who were bored or left behind learn at their own pace.

But even some proponents of online classes are dubious about makeup courses, also known as credit recovery — or, derisively, click-click credits — which high schools, especially those in high-poverty districts, use to increase graduation rates and avoid federal sanctions.

“I think many people see online courses as being a way of being able to remove a pain point, and that is, how are they going to increase their graduation rate?” said Liz Pape, president of the Virtual High School Global Consortium. If credit recovery were working, she said, the need for remedial classes in college would be declining — but the opposite is true.

In Memphis, Mr. Hamilton’s school, Sheffield High, once qualified as a “dropout factory” with a graduation rate below 60 percent.

Now the class of 2011 is on target to graduate 86 percent of its students, said Elvin Bell, the school’s “graduation coach,” an increase attributable in part to a longer school day and online credit recovery.

Sixty-one students are in the courses this semester, including Mr. Hamilton, whose average in English 3 is below passing. Melony Smith, his online teacher, said she had not immediately recognized that his answer on the Jack London assignment was copied from the Web, but she said plagiarism was a problem for many students.

Students’ strong desire to pass, she added, meant most were diligent about the work. “A lot of my students send me messages and say, ‘I really need this class to graduate, and I will do anything; please call me because I don’t understand something,’ ” Ms. Smith said.

The district has bought software for 54 online courses, including Algebra 1, biology and United States history, from the Florida Virtual School, a large state-run online school.

Memphis supplies its own teachers, mostly classroom teachers who supplement their incomes by contracting to work 10 hours a week with 150 students online. That is one-fourth of the time they would devote to teaching the same students face to face.

But administrators insisted that their chief motive was to enhance student learning, not save money in a year when the 108,000-student district is braced for cuts of \$100 million and hundreds of jobs.

“What the online environment does is continue to provide rich offerings and delivery

systems to our students with these resource challenges,” said Irving Hamer, the deputy superintendent.

Like other education debates, this one divides along ideological lines. K-12 online learning is championed by conservative-leaning policy groups that favor broadening school choice, including Jeb Bush’s Foundation for Excellence in Education, which has called on states to provide all students with “Internet access devices” and remove bans on for-profit virtual schools.

Teachers’ unions and others say much of the push for online courses, like vouchers and charter schools, is intended to channel taxpayers’ money into the private sector.

“What they want is to substitute technology for teachers,” said Alex Molnar, professor of education policy at Arizona State University.

In Idaho, Gov. C. L. Otter and the elected superintendent of public instruction, Tom Luna, both Republicans, promoted giving students laptops and requiring online courses.

The State Legislature, pressed by critics who said the online mandate would cost teachers jobs, rejected it, but Mr. Luna said in an interview that he would propose it this summer through the State Board of Education, which supports him.

“I have no doubt we’ll get a robust rule through them,” he said. Four online courses is “going to be the starting number.”

Online courses are part of a package of sweeping changes, including merit pay and ending tenure, which Idaho lawmakers approved, that Mr. Luna said would improve education.

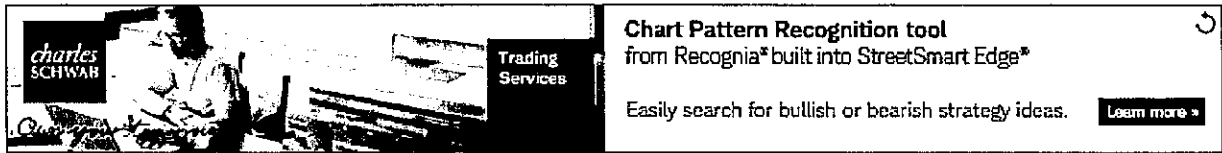
“We can educate more students at a higher level with limited resources, and online technology and courses play a big part in that,” he said.

Sherri Wood, president of the Idaho Education Association, the teachers’ union, strongly disagreed. She said Mr. Luna’s 2010 re-election campaign had received more than \$50,000 in contributions from online education companies like K-12 Inc., a Virginia-based operator of online charter schools that received \$12.8 million from Idaho last year.

“It’s about getting a piece of the money that goes to public schools,” Ms. Wood said. “The big corporations want to make money off the backs of our children.”

Mr. Luna replied that political contributors had never had an inside track in winning education contracts.

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THE SATURDAY ESSAY | September 27, 2013, 7:17 p.m. ET

Why Tough Teachers Get Good Results

By JOANNE LIPMAN

I had a teacher once who called his students "idiots" when they screwed up. He was our orchestra conductor, a fierce Ukrainian immigrant named Jerry Kupchynsky, and when someone played out of tune, he would stop the entire group to yell, "Who eez deaf in first violins!?" He made us rehearse until our fingers almost bled. He corrected our wayward hands and arms by poking at us with a pencil.

Today, he'd be fired. But when he died a few years ago, he was celebrated: Forty years' worth of former students and colleagues flew back to my New Jersey hometown from every corner of the country, old instruments in tow, to play a concert in his memory. I was among them, toting my long-neglected viola. When the curtain rose on our concert that day, we had formed a symphony orchestra the size of the New York Philharmonic.



Kupchynsky Family

Mr. K began teaching at East Brunswick High School when it opened in 1958.

I was stunned by the outpouring for the gruff old teacher we knew as Mr. K. But I was equally struck by the success of his former students. Some were musicians, but most had distinguished themselves in other fields, like law, academia and medicine. Research tells us that there is a positive correlation between music education and academic achievement. But that alone didn't explain the belated surge of gratitude for a teacher who basically tortured us through adolescence.

We're in the midst of a national wave of self-recrimination over the U.S. education system. Every day there is hand-wringing over our students falling behind the rest of the world. Fifteen-year-olds in the U.S. trail students in 12 other nations in science and 17 in math, bested by their counterparts not just in Asia but in Finland, Estonia and the Netherlands, too. An entire industry of books and consultants has grown up that capitalizes on our collective fear that American education is inadequate and asks what American educators are doing wrong.

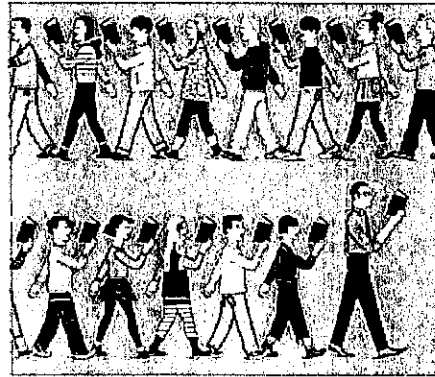
I would ask a different question. What did Mr. K do right? What can we learn from a teacher whose methods

DELIVERY

The Saturday Essay

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Take Back Your Pregnancy (8/10/13)

fly in the face of everything we think we know about education today, but who was undeniably effective?



Luci Gutiérrez

As it turns out, quite a lot. Comparing Mr. K's methods with the latest findings in fields from music to math to medicine leads to a single, startling conclusion:

It's time to revive old-fashioned education. Not just traditional but old-fashioned in the sense that so many of us knew as kids, with strict discipline and unyielding demands. Because here's the thing: It works.

Now I'm not calling for abuse; I'd be the first to complain if a teacher called my kids names. But the latest evidence backs up my modest proposal. Studies have now shown, among other things, the benefits of moderate childhood stress; how praise kills kids' self-esteem; and why grit is a better predictor of success than SAT scores.

All of which flies in the face of the kinder, gentler philosophy that has dominated American education over the past few decades. The conventional wisdom holds that teachers are supposed to tease knowledge out of students, rather than pound it into their heads. Projects and collaborative learning are applauded; traditional methods like lecturing and memorization—derided as "drill and kill"—are frowned upon, dismissed as a surefire way to suck young minds dry of creativity and motivation.

But the conventional wisdom is wrong. And the following eight principles—a manifesto if you will, a battle cry inspired by my old teacher and buttressed by new research—explain why.

1. A little pain is good for you.

Psychologist K. Anders Ericsson gained fame for his research showing that true expertise requires about 10,000 hours of practice, a notion popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in his book "Outliers." But an often-overlooked finding from the same study is equally important: True expertise requires teachers who give "constructive, even painful, feedback," as Dr. Ericsson put it in a 2007 Harvard Business Review article. He assessed research on top performers in fields ranging from violin performance to surgery to computer programming to chess. And he found that all of them "deliberately picked unsentimental coaches who would challenge them and drive them to higher levels of performance."

2. Drill, baby, drill.

Rote learning, long discredited, is now recognized as one reason that children whose families come from India



Arthur Montzka

Mr. Kupchynsky helps his daughter with her bow stroke in 1966.

(where memorization is still prized) are creaming their peers in the National Spelling Bee Championship. This cultural difference also helps to explain why students in China (and Chinese families in the U.S.) are better at math. Meanwhile, American students struggle with complex math problems because, as research makes abundantly clear, they lack fluency in basic addition and subtraction—and few of them were made to memorize their times tables.

William Klemm of Texas A&M University argues that the U.S. needs to reverse the bias against memorization. Even the U.S. Department of Education raised alarm bells, chastising American schools in a 2008 report that bemoaned the lack of math fluency (a notion it mentioned no fewer than 17 times). It concluded that schools need to embrace the dreaded "drill and practice."

3. Failure is an option.

Kids who understand that failure is a necessary aspect of learning actually perform better. In a 2012 study, 111 French sixth-graders were given anagram problems that were too difficult for them to solve. One group was then

told that failure and trying again are part of the learning process. On subsequent tests, those children consistently outperformed their peers.

The fear, of course is that failure will traumatize our kids, sapping them of self-esteem. Wrong again. In a 2006 study, a Bowling Green State University graduate student followed 31 Ohio band students who were required to audition for placement and found that even students who placed lowest "did not decrease in their motivation and self-esteem in the long term." The study concluded that educators need "not be as concerned about the negative effects" of picking winners and losers.

4. Strict is better than nice.

What makes a teacher successful? To find out, starting in 2005 a team of researchers led by Claremont Graduate University education professor Mary Poplin spent five years observing 31 of the most highly effective teachers (measured by student test scores) in the worst schools of Los Angeles, in neighborhoods like South Central and Watts. Their No. 1 finding: "They were strict," she says. "None of us expected that."

The researchers had assumed that the most effective teachers would lead students to knowledge through collaborative learning and discussion. Instead, they found disciplinarians who relied on traditional methods of explicit instruction, like lectures. "The core belief of these teachers was, 'Every student in my room is underperforming based on their potential, and it's my job to do something about it—and I can do something about it,'" says Prof. Poplin.

She reported her findings in a lengthy academic paper. But she says that a fourth-grader summarized her conclusions much more succinctly this way: "When I was in first grade and second grade and third grade, when I cried my teachers coddled me. When I got to Mrs. T's room, she told me to suck it up and get to work. I think she's right. I need to work harder."

5. Creativity can be learned.

The rap on traditional education is that it kills children's' creativity. But Temple University psychology professor Robert W. Weisberg's research suggests just the opposite. Prof. Weisberg has studied creative geniuses including Thomas Edison, Frank Lloyd Wright and Picasso—and has concluded that there is no such thing as a born genius. Most creative giants work ferociously hard and, through a series of incremental steps, achieve things that appear (to the outside world) like epiphanies and breakthroughs.

Prof. Weisberg analyzed Picasso's 1937 masterpiece *Guernica*, for instance, which was painted after the Spanish city was bombed by the Germans. The painting is considered a fresh and original concept, but Prof. Weisberg found instead that it was closely related to several of Picasso's earlier works and drew upon his study of paintings by Goya and then-prevalent Communist Party imagery. The bottom line, Prof. Weisberg told me, is that creativity goes back in many ways to the basics. "You have to immerse yourself in a discipline before you create in that discipline. It is built on a foundation of learning the discipline, which is what your music teacher was requiring of you."

6. Grit trumps talent.

In recent years, University of Pennsylvania psychology professor Angela Duckworth has studied spelling bee champs, Ivy League undergrads and cadets at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.—all together, over 2,800 subjects. In all of them, she found that grit—defined as passion and perseverance for long-term goals—is the best predictor of success. In fact, grit is usually unrelated or even negatively correlated with talent.



Arthur Montzka

Tough on the podium, Mr. K was always appreciative when he sat in the audience. Above, applauding his students in the mid-1970s.

Prof. Duckworth, who started her career as a public school math teacher and just won a 2013 MacArthur "genius grant," developed a "Grit Scale" that asks people to rate themselves on a dozen statements, like "I finish whatever I begin" and "I become interested in new pursuits every few months." When she applied the scale to incoming West Point cadets, she found that those who scored higher were less likely to drop out of the school's notoriously brutal summer boot camp known as "Beast Barracks." West Point's own measure—an index that includes SAT scores, class rank, leadership and physical aptitude—wasn't able to predict retention.

Prof. Duckworth believes that grit can be taught. One surprisingly simple factor, she says, is optimism—the belief among both teachers and students that they have the ability to change and thus to improve. In a 2009 study of newly minted teachers, she rated each for optimism (as measured by a questionnaire) before the school year began. At the end of the year, the students whose teachers were optimists had made greater academic gains.

7. Praise makes you weak...

My old teacher Mr. K seldom praised us. His highest compliment was "not bad." It turns out he was onto something. Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck has found that 10-year-olds praised for being "smart" became less confident. But kids told that they were "hard workers" became more confident and better performers.

"The whole point of intelligence praise is to boost confidence and motivation, but both were gone in a flash," wrote Prof. Dweck in a 2007 article in the journal *Educational Leadership*. "If success meant they were smart, then struggling meant they were not."

8...while stress makes you strong.

A 2011 University at Buffalo study found that a moderate amount of stress in childhood promotes resilience. Psychology professor Mark D. Seery gave healthy undergraduates a stress assessment based on their exposure to 37 different kinds of significant negative events, such as death or illness of a family member. Then he plunged their hands into ice water. The students who had experienced a moderate number of stressful events actually felt less pain than those who had experienced no stress at all.

"Having this history of dealing with these negative things leads people to be more likely to have a propensity for general resilience," Prof. Seery told me. "They are better equipped to deal with even mundane, everyday stressors."

Prof. Seery's findings build on research by University of Nebraska psychologist Richard Dienstbier, who pioneered the concept of "toughness"—the idea that dealing with even routine stresses makes you stronger. How would you define routine stresses? "Mundane things, like having a hardass kind of teacher," Prof. Seery says.

My tough old teacher Mr. K could have written the book on any one of these principles. Admittedly, individually, these are forbidding precepts: cold, unyielding, and kind of scary.

But collectively, they convey something very different: confidence. At their core is the belief, the faith really, in students' ability to do better. There is something to be said about a teacher who is demanding and tough not because he thinks students will never learn but because he is so absolutely certain that they will.

Decades later, Mr. K's former students finally figured it out, too. "He taught us discipline," explained a violinist who went on to become an Ivy League-trained doctor. "Self-motivation," added a tech executive who once played the cello. "Resilience," said a professional cellist. "He taught us how to fail—and how to pick ourselves up again."

Clearly, Mr. K's methods aren't for everyone. But you can't argue with his results. And that's a lesson we can all learn from.

Ms. Lipman is co-author, with Melanie Kupchynsky, of "Strings Attached: One Tough Teacher and the Gift of Great Expectations," to be published by Hyperion on Oct. 1. She is a former deputy managing editor of The Wall Street Journal and former editor-in-chief of Condé Nast Portfolio.

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