

**13th Annual  
Focus on Illinois Education Research Symposium**

**Compendium of Abstracts**



**ILLINOIS EDUCATION RESEARCH COUNCIL**

**October 8 - 9, 2015  
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**Illinois Education Research Council  
at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**

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## **What Does It Take to be Ready for School?: Head Start Perspectives**

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The Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS) in the City of Chicago has focused on the part of the Head Start/Early Head Start *Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework* that states, “All agencies are required to establish school readiness goals.” DFSS sought to survey Head Start and Early Head Start family members and staff about school readiness. The University of Illinois Center for Literacy (UIC-CFL) developed a survey to measure the beliefs, attitudes and practices of Head Start/Early Head Start providers and families. Survey items were developed based on the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (Office of Head Start, 2010) which is intended to guide practitioners’ curriculum implementation, instructional planning, and assessment in five essential domains of school readiness: Cognitive and General Knowledge, Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, and Language and Literacy. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics on SPSS analytical software to identify frequencies and patterns of responses for kindergarten readiness. The most prominent result was that both parents and staff members place a high value on all Essential Domains identified as contributing to kindergarten readiness, and they reported acting on those beliefs Almost Every Day or A Few Times a Week. The domain of Language & Literacy had the highest percentage of importance of all domains for both parents and staff. Both groups reported engaging in activities related to developing language and literacy Almost Every Day or at least A Few Times a Week. Specifically, 88.5% of staff reported engaging children in language and literacy activities Almost Every Day. Beliefs and practices related to technology (computers & tablets) were significantly lower than those for other more traditional areas of kindergarten readiness. Results from this study suggest HS/EHS practitioners and parents are aware of and place high value on the essential domains for kindergarten readiness. In particular, respondents believe language and literacy development are essential to kindergarten readiness, and their self-reported practices reflect these beliefs. These data have the potential to provide direction for professional development and leadership initiatives for DFSS EHS/HS programs that serve preschool children. These data also have the potential to give direction to family outreach initiatives to further promote kindergarten readiness.

# **Evaluation of the Chicago Public Schools Community School Initiative**

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Adeline Ray, Senior Manager of the Community Schools Initiative  
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Since 2002, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has looked to community schooling as a strategy to support students, their families, and the broader school community. Through the creation of partnerships between district schools and community-based organizations and providers, community schooling has resulted in additional programming and services being provided in CPS schools. CPS created the Community Schools Initiative (CSI) Implementation Framework to articulate the core features of community schooling in Chicago and the steps and processes schools need to go through and adopt in order to fully implement the strategy.

It was expected that the effects of community schooling on student outcomes would be tied to the quality with which a school had implemented practices and approaches described by the CSI Implementation Framework. To explore this relationship, an impact evaluation was conducted using 2011–12 school year data from a sample of community schools.

First, steps were taken to classify a sample of community schools providing programming and services during the 2011–12 school year into higher and lower implementing groups based on the criteria outlined in the CSI Implementation Framework. Next, analyses were conducted to assess whether youth enrolled in programming in higher implementing schools demonstrated better functioning on a variety of academic, behavioral, and learning experience outcomes relative to (1) youth enrolled in programming in lower implementing schools and (2) similar youth attending non-CSI schools.

A variety of school-level measures were used to support the process of classifying schools represented in the sample into higher and lower implementation categories. A set of measures associated with the value of leveraged partnerships, afterschool program attendance, and stakeholder perceptions of CSI implementation were used to identify 13 higher and 13 lower implementing schools.

The research team employed a statistical method called propensity score stratification to address the preexisting differences among the youth in the higher implementation, lower implementation, and non-CSI schools groups. With this approach, the researchers were able to construct a comparison group of youth from lower implementing schools or schools not enrolled in CSI that was similar to students from higher implementing schools on observable characteristics. Then the research team examined whether youth from higher implementing schools outperformed youth in the matched comparison group on the outcomes of interest.

A variety of academic, behavioral, and learning experience outcomes were examined in order to assess how enrollment in programming provided at higher implementing schools was impacting youth outcomes.

Even though a wide variety of outcomes were examined, almost all findings demonstrated no significant relationship between participating in higher implementing schools and better functioning on the youth outcomes examined relative to lower implementing schools. The only finding where the hypothesized relationship was found was in relation to youth in Grades 9–12 who demonstrated significantly fewer unexcused absences than their peers in lower implementing programs.

Analyses assessing the effect of higher implementing community schools relative to similar youth enrolled in non-CSI schools were more positive than those analyses comparing higher versus lower implementing schools. Statistically significant results consistent with the core hypothesis underpinning the study were found in relation to fewer misconducts, suspensions, and unexcused absences as well as more positive findings on a series of school climate-related scales. No significant were found in relation to measures of academic achievement.

These findings suggest the benefits of attending a higher implementing community school are more likely to be witnessed on youth behaviors and school experiences as opposed to measures of academic achievement. Future evaluation efforts are oriented at helping schools continue to implement the CSI framework with fidelity.

## **Taking the Five Essentials to Early Education: Merging Early Childhood and K-12 Research in Support of School and Program Improvement**

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Ounce of Prevention Fund

The Ounce of Prevention Fund (Ounce) and the UChicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) are in partnership to apply and adapt CCSR's five essentials (5E) framework and K-12 surveys to early childhood education (Five Essentials-Early Ed). This session will address the research team's work to adapt existing teacher surveys, develop a parent survey, pilot and refine both surveys in Chicago and across the country, and plan for a study of validation of the surveys.

The five essentials framework recognizes that a school's organization, as defined by five essential supports—effective instructional leaders, collaborative teachers, supportive environments, involved families, and ambitious instruction—drives better instructional practices in the classroom and results in higher student engagement and achievement. Research in early education settings likewise indicates that programs more successfully promote children's learning and development when they have strong leadership and organizational structures in place to support educator's continuous professional learning and effective practice. A key contribution of this framework for early childhood education is the paradigm shift that leadership and organizational conditions are key levers to continuously improving teaching, learning, and family engagement practices and outcomes.

The process of adapting the existing 5E teacher survey currently used in K-12 settings, and developing new items for a parent survey included an iterative process of development and testing. Our presentation will describe this process for both the adaptation of the K-12 teacher survey and the creation of the new parent survey. We will present an overview of our pilots of our surveys and results of initial Rasch analyses on the measures included on the surveys. Finally, we will discuss our design for a validation study, to take place during the 2015-16 school year in both community- and school-based early education settings.

This research and development partnership between CCSR and the Ounce will have significant and field-building implications for research and practice by providing a much needed conceptual framework and measurement system for quality improvement in early education. This unique partnership will ensure that research and best practice from both K-12 and early education landscapes inform the application of the framework and adaptation of the surveys for meaningful use in early education and towards advancing alignment efforts between early education and K-12. Ultimately, the purpose of the Five Essentials-Early Ed is to provide reliable and valid survey data that will guide early educators to generate continuous quality improvements in teaching and learning by strengthening the organizational conditions in which teachers work every day with children and families.

## **Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network: University Research Contributions to Accomplishing the Regional College and Career Readiness Agenda**

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Diana Robinson, Director, Center for Governmental Studies  
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Research conducted in 2014-2015 for the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network informs the efforts of a partnership that collaborates to improve college and career success. As the backbone organization for the network, Northern Illinois University (NIU) has utilized its research capacity to support working groups that engage 70 representatives from 31 partner institutions. The Network's goal is to help meet the state's goal of 60% of residents attaining a high-quality degree or professional certificate by 2025.

During this start-up year, research activities have addressed the Network's objectives to implement large-scale strategies, organize innovative pilot projects and faculty dialogues, and establish tracking systems in four areas: Adult Learners, Articulation, Alignment of Standards, and Student Support Services. Each of these groups has its own objectives and has needed foundational research to drive its work. A variety of research activities has contributed to building the knowledge base in local practices, regional patterns, and national models.

Generally, NIU's research on behalf of the Network focused on building communities of practice around college and career readiness and success issues. Although college and career readiness alliances in the community college districts have adopted definitions of their own, David Conley's work on college and career readiness provides a touchstone for the research. Conley's definition includes key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills.

In its first year, the Regional P-20 Network fielded survey instruments on ten disparate topics, researched two policy papers, completed three literature reviews, collected data on educational attainment across the region, and prepared two sets of workforce reports (current jobs and emerging/fast growing jobs). NIU researchers developed the research designs in concert with individual work groups, relying on the participants to get the research questions and instrument designs exactly right. Community college partners also collected feedback from researchers at their own institutions. The analytic approaches went through the same vetting processes as did statements of findings. Several of these projects are still underway as analysis continues.

Findings for all of these projects are being compiled for distribution in fall 2015. In general, the research documents variations in policy and practice across the region such as large differences in the numbers of students enrolled in dual credit courses among community college districts; identifies best practices such as teaching developmental math courses to seniors in high school, which at one college reduced the number of developmental enrollments from 57% to 26% in five years; confirms universal demand for systematic use of prior learning assessments for college credit; reveals that career pathways across three levels from high school to university are incomplete or entirely missing; identifies emerging careers for which academic degree programs are in short supply; and spotlights significant gaps in student support services across the region.

## **College Enrollment Patterns for Rural Indiana High School Graduates**

Elisabeth Davis, PhD, Senior Researcher  
Matt Burke, Researcher  
Jennifer Stephan, PhD, Researcher  
American Institutes for Research

Existing research has shown a gap in college enrollment and degree attainment between rural and nonrural students. In Indiana, where 31 percent of students attend rural schools, increasing postsecondary educational attainment requires understanding and addressing the needs and challenges of rural students. This descriptive study supports the state's efforts to increase college readiness by offering a better understanding of the processes that advance the educational success of rural students and by providing a foundation for future research on these processes and potential interventions.

Using data from the Indiana state longitudinal data system, this study examined rural–nonrural differences in college enrollment patterns among Indiana's 2010 public high school graduates enrolling in Indiana public colleges.

The study examined whether there were differences in the proportion of graduates of rural and nonrural high schools enrolling in Indiana state colleges of various selectivity, and if so, whether the differences were affected by economic factors, academic achievement, or the distance to colleges. It also looked for any rural–nonrural differences in whether graduates enrolled in a college that matched their academic qualifications (that is, for which they were “presumptively eligible”) or in a college less selective than their academic qualifications would predict.

The study found that 2010 graduates of rural and nonrural public high schools enrolled in Indiana colleges at similar rates. However, rural graduates enrolled more frequently in two-year colleges and less frequently in very selective colleges than nonrural graduates. Rural high school graduates had slightly lower levels of eligibility for school lunch programs (a proxy for low-income status), which differed from findings based on national data. Rural and nonrural graduates had similar academic preparation and similar levels of presumptive eligibility for various colleges based on their academic qualifications. Yet, after controlling for student and school characteristics, the study found that rural high school graduates were more likely to enroll in two-year colleges and colleges that were “undermatched” to their level of presumptive eligibility. Distance may have been a factor: the farther rural graduates' high schools were from colleges, the more likely rural graduates were to enroll in two-year colleges or to undermatch with a college.

Indiana data differed from national data in some areas, emphasizing the importance of relying on state data in making education policy decisions.

## Effective Practices for College Match

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### Research Goals and Questions

Coaching and supporting students in selecting which colleges to apply to and ultimately enroll in is critical for successful post-secondary pathways. Students must target schools which are good matches for them academically, financially, and socially. In Chicago Public Schools (CPS), academic “match” levels are calculated using GPA and ACT scores and help students and counselors understand the pool of schools the student is academically qualified to attend. Counseling teams also support students in considering college “fit”, such as distance from home, affordability, and college culture. Past research has demonstrated that “under-matching” – where students enroll in less selective schools than they are qualified to attend – can contribute to lower college persistence and completion rates.<sup>1</sup> Over the last several years, increasing numbers of CPS students are pursuing college and other post-secondary options and this expanding population of students makes identifying and documenting effective practices for college match and fit more important than ever.

### Methodology

To better understand the successes and challenges faced by school staff and students in this important area, the research and evaluation team visited six schools during the 2013-14 school year and interviewed school administrators, school counseling teams, and students. During the school visits, the research team interviewed members from school administration and school counseling departments, as well as other school staff supporting college going efforts. In addition, focus groups with students at four of the six schools were conducted. Interviews were semi-structured and asked questions focused on: data used to support college match and fit assessments, documenting and tracking the process of college going (i.e. applications, recommendation letters, scholarship applications and awards), tools and techniques useful in supporting efforts, efforts for engaging families and other stakeholders, and additional supports needed.

### Findings

The school visits revealed a number of effective and promising practices as well as a number of areas for improvement. Effective practices included building relationships with students to identify college “fit” as well as “match”, supporting parental engagement and knowledge of college going processes, and talking with students about college going as early as possible, particularly in regard to the importance of GPA. Both staff and students articulated the value of having dedicated time during the school day, such as a senior seminar, to work with counselors and peers on college related topics. Students in advanced courses often struggled to find time for these seminars in their schedules. Areas for improvement included providing differentiated supports for first generation college bound students, in particular increasing knowledge of college options and scholarships.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Roderick, Melissa, Jenny Nagaoka, Vanessa Coca, Eliza Moeller with Karen Roddie, Jamiliyah Gilliam, and Desmond Patton (2008). *From high school to the future: Potholes on the road to college*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> In 2013, 57% of CPS graduates enrolled in college in the fall following their graduation.



# **Restructuring Principal Preparation in Illinois: Perspectives on Implementation Successes, Challenges, and Future Outlook**

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In the past twenty years, many states have implemented rigorous standards and requirements to improve the quality of preparation and training for school principals with the end goal of improving student achievement. At least 46 states have adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards; however, not all of these states have implemented a statewide comprehensive reform of preparation programs. Illinois stands out in front with a handful of other states that has enacted legislation (Public Act 96-0903) which requires a cohesive and comprehensive approach to preparing school leaders for today's challenging school environments. The goals of the current mixed methods study are to describe how the new policy is being implemented, learning which aspects of the implementation have been successful or challenging and how programs are addressing challenges in the preparation of their candidates. This presentation presents our findings from the first phase of the study, the statewide scan of program representatives and stakeholders.

Overall, we find a widely held perception among both sets of respondents that the policy is bringing about many of the changes it was intended to produce - namely, improving the quality of principal preparation in Illinois. Our interviewees generally indicated that the principal preparation programs and candidate selection process are more rigorous; that principal preparation is more authentic and practical; that principal candidates are receiving better preparation to support all students, including ECE, ELL, and special needs; that partnerships between programs and districts are deeper and more collaborative, and that there are consistently high standards for all principal preparation programs statewide. The new policy continues to evolve and some challenges mentioned by our participants have been addressed through recent rule and legislative changes. However, some of the overarching concerns, particularly the concern of significantly decreased enrollments, will be discussed.

## **Implications for Illinois State Policy**

The statewide scan study provides policymakers and stakeholders with an understanding of the experiences and concerns of principal preparation programs and their district partners across the state as they implement these new regulations. Results from this scan study will also inform the work of the Illinois School Leadership Advisory Council (ISLAC), which is charged with developing a five-year strategic action plan to support school leader preparation efforts currently in place and documenting their effects on school performance statewide.

## **Wanted: Next-Generation School Principal Preparation in Illinois**

Diane Rutledge, PhD, Executive Director  
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Steven Tozer, PhD, Director, Center for Urban Education Leadership  
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For the past several years, Illinois has received national attention from multiple quarters for a new PreK-12 principal endorsement designed to improve school leader quality in the state. Passed in 2010 with the clear purpose of improving student learning outcomes in Illinois schools, PA96-0903 led quickly to new partnerships between higher education and school districts designed to prepare a new generation of school principals throughout the state. The most central aim of the new statute was to improve student learning outcomes in Illinois schools by preparing principals with the capacity to do so.

Leadership at the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Board of Higher Education recognized that simply establishing new programs would not be enough to achieve the ambitious school improvement purposes of PA96-0903. Anticipating that systemic supports would be needed if these programs were to meet the state's school leadership needs over time, ISBE and IBHE worked together with Advance Illinois and Illinois State University's Center for Educational Policy to create the Illinois School Leader Advisory Council (ISLAC), supported by grants from the Wallace Foundation and the McCormick Foundation. The Council first convened in September 2014 to address its charge for the continuous improvement of principal preparation in Illinois:

To develop a *five-year strategic plan* for how Illinois will systemically achieve the above vision, including strategies for program cohesion and continuous improvement; quality assurance; effective partnerships, training and support; and supporting resources for sustainability of high quality school leadership in every school in the state, regardless of location.

To achieve its goals, the ISLAC steering committee invited some 50 representatives from multiple stakeholder groups throughout the state, representing school districts, higher education, funders, legislators, professional organizations, and others. The Council met six times between September 2014 and June 2015, hosting presentations by the national Executive Director of the University Council on Educational Administration; researchers from the Illinois Education Research Council, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, and Illinois universities; and university and school district partners now operating next-generation principal preparation programs.

This presentation reports the central recommendations of the Illinois School Leader Advisor Council and why they are critical to implement if next-generation school principals are to achieve the promise of the new legislation. The report maps out a cross-sector, five-year agenda for ramping up Illinois principal preparation in the following areas, together with a cost-effective plan for achieving change:

- Program cohesion and continuous improvement
- Quality assurance
- District and regional partnerships and training
- Network supports and resources

# **Illinois Partners Advancing Rigorous Training: Delivering High-Quality Principal Preparation and Development Through Deep University/District Partnerships**

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## **Purpose**

This presentation will share information about the rich research area that has been created by the ushering of entirely new regulations for principal preparation in Illinois. IL-PART participants will share their experiences with developing deep university/district partnerships aimed at designing new principal preparation programs, including intensive internships that rely heavily on a shared system of supervision and assessment.

## **Project summary**

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University a School Leadership Program grant of \$4.6M over 5 years to support the implementation and evaluation of the Illinois Partnerships Advance Rigorous Training (IL-PART) project. IL-PART represents a collaborative effort between 3 high-need school districts and 3 universities that have come together in formal partnerships aimed at improving the way in which principals are prepared and developed. The partners are focused on two clear project goals: 1) prepare highly-qualified school principals for high-need districts that positively impact student learning, and 2) develop effective partnerships between university principal preparation programs and high-need districts.

One of the most significant changes mandated by the State of Illinois in principal preparation has been the development of an extensive, competency based, well-supervised internship experience. As part of the project, IL-PART is exploring two internship models: full time/full semester internships vs. traditional/part-time internships. An evaluation is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to explore the extent of differences in delivery and outcomes between the two models.

## **Findings and implications**

IL-PART is currently in its second year of implementation. Too few students have completed the internship phase of the new principal preparation programs to make any claims regarding early findings. However, the IL-PART partners have spent a tremendous amount of work deepening their formal partnerships, identifying barriers to this work, developing strategies and systems to address specific needs, and gaining a shared understanding of their collaborative role in creating a high quality pipeline of effective school leaders. They will share their lessons-learned regarding how universities and districts can jointly design, deliver and continuously improve principal preparation.

IL-PART partners have shared the challenges and opportunities they have experienced while implementing the new state principal preparation program requirements with the Illinois School Leader Advisory Council (ISLAC), the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education. IL-PART partners participated as members of ISLAC and were able to demonstrate how they have successfully implemented many of the more challenging elements required of the new principal preparation programs. Their input is reflected in the ISLAC recommendations to the state regarding supporting principal preparation and development in Illinois.

## **Access, Affordability, and Accelerating Pathways to Postsecondary: A Closer Look at Funding of Dual Credit Programs**

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John Lang, Doctoral Candidate, Philosophy of Education, *and* Graduate Research Assistant

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Dual credit programs have the promise of accelerating students' transitions to postsecondary and positively impact subsequent academic achievement. Over the last 5-10 years, the use of dual credit has been expanding in the State of Illinois. There is limited evidence on how dual credit is funded and there is a general absence of state policies that specify tuition rates or uniformity of how funds are exchanged between high schools, two- and/or four-year institutions (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). Part and parcel to postsecondary access is affordability. This presentation highlights findings from a recent OCCRL study on funding of dual credit and broadening community college participation.

## **Early and Often: Promoting Overall AP Success Through Early Ninth Grade AP Participation**

Jeffrey Smith, Director of Research and Evaluation  
Karen Meyer, Research & Assessment Programmer/Analyst  
Township High School District 214

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that AP participation increases postsecondary outcomes like attendance, academic success, and degree attainment. AP coursework can also raise the overall academic rigor and capacity of high school curriculum and nurture the expectation among students that postsecondary participation is attainable.

Over the past 10 years THSD214 has placed a significant emphases upon increasing the rigor of high school coursework through Advanced Placement (AP) participation and success. Total number of AP tests taken has increased 231%. In just the past six years (2009-2014 graduating classes have seen a 155 percent increase in the total number of AP exams taken, and a 31 percent increase in the percent of graduating seniors completing at least one AP course (51.4% to 67.2%).

One of the primary drivers of THSD214's success has been the introduction of many middling and high performing 9th grade students to AP Human Geography and a general retooling of the scope and a corollary sequence of Math, English Learning Arts, science and social science courses. The goal of this initiative was to increase educational and social capital by introducing academic rigor and research skills early in students' high school career and developing a culture where AP participation and success is a norm. AP Human Geography was chosen for its interdisciplinary nature incorporating science, non-fiction reading, and skill building emphases. While there was some initial skepticism about AP for 9th graders, the high pass rate on the AP exam the first years demonstrated these students had the capacity to succeed.

This presentation provides an evaluation of the initiative using descriptive and several inferential linear and logistic regression models to examine the research questions:

- (1) Does 9th grade AP participation increase overall AP participation?
- (2) Does 9th grade AP participation and/or success lead to future AP success?

The analysis will examine differences by school and incoming preparation level as measured by the composite, English, and reading EXPLORE scores.

Preliminary analysis suggests that students participating in the 9th grade AP Human Geography course were significantly more likely to take subsequent AP coursework and to be more successful in those courses than students with similar incoming academic ability. These differences vary by school (which may be indicative of other building specific cultures or when they started the initiative) with little difference in participation among higher performing students but consistently greater participation among lower performing students. These results suggest that high performing students are mostly likely to take AP coursework regardless, but end up taking slightly more AP courses and performing better. Lower performing students are far more likely to participate in subsequent AP coursework, to take more courses, and to succeed.

High Schools are frequently looking for ways to increase AP participation and success. The early ninth grade AP exposure model may be one means to meet this goal. With the recent passing of HB3428 in Illinois, AP coursework may play an even more important role in postsecondary affordability and curriculum flexibility as more and more students take these AP courses. Additionally, this AP Human Geography for ninth graders may provide some insight into the future effect of the new AP Research and Capstone course sequences as well.

## **A Statewide Examination of Attitudes Toward Science among Illinois Students in Grades 5-12**

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The present study investigated precollege students' perceptions and attitudes about science, as well as their intentions regarding the continued study of science in the future. The central research questions of this study asked "*What is the landscape of Illinois students' attitudes toward science across their school experience?*" and "*To what extent do school characteristics, including the attributes of classroom teachers, influence student attitudes toward science across the state of Illinois?*" To address these research questions part of this study involved the refinement and validation of a self-report student instrument, the US-ASSASS, that assessed attitudes based on a theoretical framework drawn from the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior.

A representative statewide sample of 1442 students in grades 5-12 were surveyed about their attitudes toward science using a cross-sectional design. Cross-sectional design was ideal because it allowed data to be collected from students of various ages, and over a larger geographical area yielding a wide variance among respondents (e.g., socioeconomic status). In an effort to allow for equal representation of students across the state, participant schools were selected by random sample from each of six geographic regions identified in Illinois. Students completed the 59-item US-ASSASS, along with background items, online. Confirmatory factor analysis of student responses revealed a five factor structure that was consistent with the underlying theoretical model and led to the final 32-item instrument that demonstrated acceptable statistical fit with a RMSEA of 0.04, a CFI of 0.95, and a TLI of 0.95.

In addition to the student data collected, information was obtained from 65, of the 78 total, class sections from participant teachers. Teachers' responses to the Science Teacher Survey, along with data compiled from the Illinois Report Card and the National Center for Educational Statistics, allowed for the consideration of several group-level variables (e.g., teacher education, school funding, and community type). These variables were systematically explored and used to create a multivariate multilevel model to characterize students' attitudes toward science and related factors. Inferential statistics, coupled with extensive descriptive statistics, revealed that students' attitudes toward science declined as they increased in grade level. However, students would persisted in science until grades 11 and 12 reported high attitudes toward science. Students' who reported high frequency of talk with family about school and/or a high self-perception of science ability had improved scores on all factors.

Illinois students' decline in attitudes toward science over the K-12 experience is consistent with prior literature, and encourages future research to ascertain whether this decline is disproportionate for science, compared to other core subjects (e.g., language arts). Additionally the present study gives some legitimacy to the constructs proposed by the theories of reasoned action and behavior, and it is prudent for future efforts to establish the consistency between students' intention to pursue science in the future and their future decisions to engage in science.

## **A New Adaptive Measure of Adolescent Reading Motivation in School**

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The goal of this four-year project was to develop the *Adaptive Reading Motivation Measure* (ARMM), a valid and reliable measure of adolescents' motivation to read for school, that is useful to educators and researchers. Valid and reliable measures are critical to understanding and improving adolescents' reading motivation, yet existing measures often focus on younger children, lack validity and reliability data, or have findings of efficacy that are inconclusive (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006; Watkins & Coffey, 2004).

Researchers have applied multiple motivation constructs and theories to the domain of reading, including self-efficacy from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; Guthrie et al., 2004), intrinsic and extrinsic motivations from self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2009), and social motivation (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995; Wentzel, 1996). For this reason, we set out to measure 15 aspects of reading motivation found in the research literature.

To develop the ARMM, we used evidence-centered design (ECD; Mislevy, Steinberg, & Almond, 2003). ECD is a highly structured test development approach that requires collection of validity evidence throughout the assessment development process. We proceeded through the following steps: Writing items for each construct; reviewing and editing items; pilot testing items with students (n = 446) in Grades 5-12 for item reduction; conducting a field test (n = 2,258) to further reduce the number, for a total of 12 items per construct; conducting model testing to determine that a structure of 6 higher order constructs best characterized students' motivation. The last step was to conduct analyses on a final sample of students (n = 1,912) to establish validation and reliability evidence.

The project resulted in a valid and reliable online adaptive self-report measure of six constructs of reading motivation in school (self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation to read, autonomy for reading, extrinsic motivation to read, reading avoidance, and social motivation to read) consisting of 45 Likert-type items that students complete in approximately 20 minutes. The ARMM also gathers information on students' reading engagement, behaviors, preferences, demographics. After students complete the ARMM, teachers receive a reading motivation profile for each of their classes and individual students.

The ARMM is a valuable online tool for educators, allowing them to assess the reading motivation of adolescent students and encourage that motivation by tailoring instruction to each student's individual needs, strengths and preferences. Results of the ARMM will be an important addition to students' academic profiles, providing beneficial information for teachers and school leaders not obtained from test scores, grades, or teacher evaluations, and could be the missing link in understanding students' reading performance.

# **The Relationship of Institutional Financial Aid Factors to Retention and Completion in Illinois**

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Lorenzo Baber, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Education  
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As postsecondary attainment become both more necessary and costly for individuals, it is important to consider the impact of student loan debt on completion rates. Previous studies have examined the relationship between institutional characteristics related to student aid and student outcomes (Chen, 2012; Hillman, 2014; Hossler, Ziskin, Gross, Kim, & Cekick, 2009; Titus, 2004). However, many of these studies use national-level data, limiting institution-specific comparisons. Additionally, research in this area tends to focus on impact of institutional characteristics related to student aid on persistence rather than degree completion. This study advances the previous research by longitudinally following the Illinois 2009 high school graduating class cohort as they enroll in college and through to 4-year completion to determine how institutional debt and other institutional level factors relate to retention and completion for Illinois postsecondary students.



## **Does a Promise Stay a Promise? A Difference-in-Difference Analysis of Universal-Eligibility Financial Aid Programs on Postsecondary Institutions**

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Bradley Hemenway, PhD student, Higher Education Program  
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This study examines the impact of universal-eligibility financial aid, or “Promise” programs, on postsecondary institutions. The growth and popularity of Promise programs has garnered widespread attention, especially after the announcement of the Kalamazoo Promise program in Michigan in 2005, but relatively little scholarly research (Andrews, et. al., 2010). Today, Illinois is a state with many universally-eligible programs operating and more being developed such as the Galesburg Promise, the Peoria Promise, the Rockford Promise, and the Carroll Scholarship in Blue Mound, IL. Promise programs provide aid to students to attend college and offer eligibility to all students from a particular geographic location. Promise programs promote early college affordability information for students, by making an early commitment to fund postsecondary studies that is based on neither academic merit nor income. Providing the opportunity for more students to enter college also has positive benefits for the surrounding community, not limited to increased property value and job creation (LeGower & Walsh, 2014; McMahan, 2009). Beyond the incentives generated for students and economic development, postsecondary institutions may be influenced by receiving Promise dollars. Using a unique panel dataset with data from 2000-2012, this paper employs a quasi-experimental difference-in-difference methodological design to consider the following research question: *What is the impact of the implementation a Promise program on tuition levels, state and local support for postsecondary institutions, and college completion?*

This study relies on price theory from the field of economics to predict institutional behavior that results from the introduction of a Promise program. Our work presents tests of the following hypotheses. We hypothesize that institutions that enroll students with Promise funds will increase their tuition rates in order to capture a greater amount of scholarship dollars. With an alternative revenue stream available to institutions through Promise funds, we hypothesize that state and local appropriations for institutions will decrease. Aligning with prior studies, we postulate that because of access to grant aid via the introduction of a Promise program, additional students will be able to complete their degrees such that the total number of degrees, awards, and certificates awarded at each institution will increase.

Our findings provide valuable information for Promise program funders about the effectiveness and unintended consequences of these programs. We also address policy issues related to Promise programs in this work and the interaction of these scholarships with different levels of government funding for postsecondary education.

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## **Towards a Bilingual Illinois: Dual Language Program Development**

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### **Introduction**

At 4.7 million nationwide, the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in U.S. public schools has risen dramatically in the last decade and is higher than any other time in history. Schools in Illinois are experiencing rapid growth in both the Latino population and ELL enrollment (NCES, 2013a, 2013b). The educational achievement of Latinos is lower than any other population, dropout rates are the highest, and the likelihood of attaining a college degree is the lowest (Buchanan, 2005). ELLs endure the added challenge of learning English and academic content.

In recent years, research has emphasized great benefits of bilingualism (CAL, 2014). Likewise, the advantages of additive bilingual or Dual Language (DL) education models for all students are well documented (Thomas & Collier, 2012); however, there are not a sufficient number of dual language programs (CAL, 2014). For example, in Illinois, despite the growth of DL programs, 96% of English Language Learners still receive English-only immersion or pull-out instruction (ISBE, 2013).

### **Research Study**

Using a sociocultural lens, this study sought to understand why students from underserved populations in Illinois are not enrolled in programs that are the most beneficial—those that promote both academic achievement and bilingualism. To achieve this objective, we identified DL programs across the state and explored their (a) instructional models, (b) program components, and (c) program/school needs.

We identified a total of 111 public schools that offered DL programs across 21 districts in Illinois. In the fall of 2014, school leaders at the schools were sent an online survey asking them to describe their: DL program(s), students served, perceived benefits of DL, challenges in implementing DL, anticipated changes in DL in the upcoming years, and any concerns or challenges in staffing DL programs.

### **Findings**

Study findings indicate that the majority of Illinois DL programs are Spanish/English, serve K-5 students, and are limited to a strand within a school, with goals of future expansion. School leaders noted benefits of bilingualism, biliteracy, appreciation of cultural diversity, and higher academic achievement for students in the DL program than their peers in monolingual programs. The most significant challenges identified by administrators in 68% of schools were DL teacher recruitment and hiring.

### **Implications for Illinois Education Policy**

Programming for Dual Language education must dramatically increase to meet the growing number of ELL students, but also to develop bilingualism in native-English speakers. At the same time, the number of qualified bilingual DL educators must also increase. By building the number of bilingual students, the pool of bilingual college students and teacher candidates will expand. Developing teacher education programs in Dual Language is another critical step towards a bilingual Illinois.

## **Challenging Deficit Orientations and Transforming the Education of Minoritized Students in Dual Language Classrooms**

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This paper employs a critical sociocultural lens (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007) to analyze how African American and Latina/o emergent bilinguals in a two-way immersion (TWI) program influence each other's language and academic development. Thomas and Collier (2009) have documented the benefits of TWI programs; yet, others have revealed that when minority English speakers are placed in TWI classrooms, their academic needs may not be met. This case study (Yin, 2013) presents the literacy development of students in one kindergarten classroom. We capture how students performed in relation to each other as well as the quality of students' overall performance. Our findings suggest that students across both language groups represented a range of performance abilities and that both minority groups were performing on par or better than the school district's benchmarks. We seek to engage the audience in dialogue to consider the contextual factors that may account for student achievement.

# **Studying the Validity and Reliability of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in PreK-3rd Grade Classrooms**

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In the education field, there has been increasing interest as to whether the teacher evaluation processes and measures are valid and reliable indicators for use in high-stakes accountability environments, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses for formative feedback (Halpin & Kieffer, 2015; Kane & Steiger, 2012; Sartain, Stoelinga & Brown (2011). The Illinois legislature passed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) that mandated a change in the way that teachers and principals are evaluated in Illinois combining multiple measures of professional practice and student growth to evaluate educators' performance. As such, the state identified *The Framework for Teaching*, developed by Charlotte Danielson, as the recommended Illinois State Default Teaching Framework for measuring teaching practice. This mixed-methods study examines the validity and reliability of the Danielson Framework in 8 Illinois school districts in 26 early childhood (PreK through grade 3) classrooms.

The study was guided by these three research questions. (1) Is the Danielson Framework a valid teacher observation instrument in early childhood classrooms (PreK-3)? (2) Is the Danielson Framework a reliable teacher observation instrument? (3) Does the Danielson Framework align with standards of practice for early childhood classroom teachers?

Researchers recruited principals and three of their teachers at the PreK-3 grade levels and asked them to conduct two teacher observations for each teacher using the Danielson Framework in conjunction with a paired external observer. Quantitatively, the researchers examined the validity of the observation data with student assessment data, as well as the inter-rater reliability between internal and external observers. Qualitatively, the researchers examined the accuracy and quality of the observation data. Finally, the 2013 Danielson Framework underwent a content analysis comparing and contrasting the foci and language used to describe effective teaching against standards of effective teaching practice identified in the early childhood literature.

## **Results**

The results of the correlations of the observation ratings with the student assessment data are low. This is primarily because the student assessment data received from the classrooms is inconsistent because at these grade levels (particularly PreK-2), there are no state-mandated student assessments. The inter-rater reliabilities across the three domains found an overall average of 63% with a range of 38% to 85% across 17 components. Finally, the crosswalk of the Framework with standards of early childhood teaching practice found significant alignment. However, there are some teaching practices that need to be better defined to fit developmentally appropriate practice in PreK-3 classrooms.

## **Significance**

It is important that state, district, and school administrators understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Danielson Framework in these early grades. State and district policymakers need to make informed decisions about whether the professional practice data collected with the Danielson Framework will produce the most valid and reliable evidence of teacher performance. This is particularly important for use in high stakes accountability systems where decisions on career retention and promotion made, but also important when the Danielson is used for formative feedback to identify early childhood teachers' strengths and weaknesses and plan for professional development.

## **Preparing the Illinois Early Childhood Workforce: Lessons from a Study of Institutional Partnership Grants**

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Well-prepared early childhood professionals are key to supporting the overall development of children in early learning and care settings (Barnett, 2004; Institute of Medicine, 2015). Increased attention on the importance of well-educated, early childhood teachers, as well as projections for growing employment opportunities in the field underscore the significance of the work being done in early childhood educator preparation programs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

In 2012 and 2013, the State of Illinois was awarded funds through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge to strengthen the training and support of early learning personnel and create systems to align all early care and education programs with high-quality early learning and development standards. As part of this work, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and other state education agencies, awarded grants to partnerships of two- and four-year institutions. The Early Childhood Educator Preparation and Program Innovation (EPPI) partnership grants focused on the collaborative redesign of early childhood educator preparation programs with an emphasis on formalized articulation to support candidate transfer and capacity-building in areas of need such as early math learning and bilingual/ESL.

The Illinois Education Research Council was engaged to study the work of EPPI grant partners to better understand the challenges associated with cross-institutional program redesign and the opportunities leveraged by partners to overcome the same. This early implementation study was qualitative and primarily relied on structured interviews that took place via telephone. The study was conducted using an interview protocol with grantee responses analyzed using the lens of partnership development theory (McQuaid, 2009). The IERC also documented promising practices emerging from the initial work of grantees in creating more transparent, flexible paths for early childhood candidates to enter and complete degree programs.

Based on many of the responses, the EPPI grant was extremely important in moving the partnerships past many of the identified barriers, such as historical issues associated with articulation and advising. Further, the grant provided the structure from which many of the partnerships developed curricular and programmatic enhancements to the ways in which early childhood educators are prepared. A great deal of innovative work began as a result of the grant that arguably would have not been started without it. In essence, the grant and the structure associated with it provided the momentum to move the partnerships forward, without being overly rigid or prescriptive. This session will highlight the findings from the IERC study of EPPI grant partners and situate these results in the context of early childhood workforce development in Illinois.

## **Stellar Girls – Co-Curricular STEM Programming for 3rd – 8th Grade Girls**

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Matt Feldmann, PhD, Owner and Principal Investigator  
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The Stellar Girls program was created in 2012 by the iBIO Institute EDUCATE center, with funding by US Astellas Foundation, to inspire young women to enter into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers. Stellar Girls introduces 3rd – 8th grade girls to current, interesting, “Big Ideas” in STEM fields through weekly co-curricular program activities. During the 2014-15 school year the program served more than 150 girls from 19 schools or sites.

Stellar Girls activities incorporate Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS Lead States, 2013) and Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2012). Activities are woven into 20 lessons that provide authentic problem contexts and student-centered investigations. Through these learning experiences, students develop hands-on investigation and problem-solving skills, deepen core content knowledge, and realize the connections of cross-cutting concepts among various disciplines.

### **Methodology & Findings**

The hypothesis was that additional exposure of 3rd-8th grade girls to science programming will lead to greater student understanding of science concepts and interest in pursuing a science career. The specific hypotheses concerned (1) quality professional development, (2) educator growth in content understanding and pedagogy, and (3) student career awareness, and (4) student concept understanding.

*Quality of Professional Development.* After school observations were completed by a staff member using the High Quality After School Practices Observation Protocol (King & Holstead, 2011). For the 2013-2014 school year, there were increases noted in thirteen of the fourteen program elements, which means Stellar Girls teachers created an encouraging and supportive environment for learning.

*Teacher & Student Content Understanding.* There were three content test activities, (1) Teacher Content Test, (2) 3rd-5th Grade Content Tests, and (3) 6th-8th Grade Content tests. The tests are developed around the four themes of the instruction (Feeding, Healing, Saving, and Fueling). Teachers took the tests twice; at the beginning and end of the summer professional development. Students take the content tests at the beginning (pre) and end (post) of each of the four units.

The content items all come from established reliable and valid tests that have released items including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (US Department of Education, 2015), the American Association for the Advancement of Science Project 2061 Science Assessment (see: <http://assessment.aaas.org/pages/home>), and state standardized assessment items. The states assessment items are taken from the New York Regents (2015), California Department of Education (2015), and the Vermont Agency of Education (2015).

Both groups of students (younger and older) demonstrated significant gains ( $p < 0.05$ ) on three of the four student content tests. The teachers who participated in the Summer 2014 Stellar Girls program demonstrated overall competence for the program content. Overall, teachers increased from a 63% average on the pre-test to a 72% average on the post-test.

*Teacher Pedagogy.* The teacher Curriculum Survey was adapted from Survey of Enacted Curriculum (Blank, R.K., 2002). Teachers demonstrated significant positive changes on the curriculum survey in four of the nine composite areas.

## **Intelligent Scaffolding to Improve Students' Cognitive Learning in STEM Fields**

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Janet Holt, PhD, Executive Director, Illinois Education Research Council  
Dennis Bouvier, PhD, Associate Professor and Department Chair, Department of Computer Science,  
Dylan Williams, Student, Department of Computer Science  
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Researchers and governmental agencies have been investigating factors of the high attrition rates in STEM, including demographic character, high school academic preparation (exposure and achievement in math and science), external demands (children, working full or part time), institutional characteristics, and so on. Based on these analyses, various STEM retention strategies have been developed and implemented. These include, but are not limited to: faculty mentors; academic study groups; peer support networks; undergraduate research opportunities in the freshman through senior years; adequate financial support; professional development activities; and summer STEM programs. These mentoring, tutoring, and informal faculty engagement programs are generally viewed as effective. However, based on the survey of drop out students and those who switch out of STEM majors, the primary reasons contributing to their decisions are related to the feeling of being overwhelmed by the pace and demands of a heavy curriculum and a loss of interest in science (Seymour et. al 1994). To increase the retention rate and meanwhile improve STEM graduates' technical competency, in this work a new academic supporting tool --the intelligent scaffolding for STEM core courses was developed and tested. Utilizing the mobile learning environments, networks, and database technology, students are empowered to control their educational environment like never before. Although this pilot project initiates for ME core courses at SIUE, this model would have the potential to impact the STEM education field in general and other fields.

## **Affordability and Motivation: Student Services as an Alternative to Tuition Aid**

James Rosenbaum, PhD, Education Researcher, Institute for Policy Research and Professor of Sociology  
Chenny Ng, Research Coordinator, Institute for Policy Research  
Northwestern University

Community colleges are crucial to the discussion of college affordability, given that they educate nearly half of undergraduate students and their accessibility makes them a democratizing force in education. While community colleges are relatively cheap compared to other forms of higher education, some policymakers argue that free tuition should be the next step. President Obama has proposed tuition-free community colleges nationwide, and Chicago STAR scholarships make community colleges free for qualifying high school graduates. We explore the relationship between cost and motivation in two-year colleges using 80 interviews with Chicago-area two-year college alumni who graduated 10 years ago. Respondents discuss their long-term outcomes, effects of student loans, how finances influenced their motivation, and the impact college had on their lives.

Graduates have a complex relationship with money. Ten years out of college, some graduates are still feeling the long-term burden of their student loans. At the same time, however, several graduates stated that their financial investment in their own education provided a strong incentive to work hard in school and use their degree in the labor market. This suggests that making community colleges free might actually decrease motivation and increase the already abysmal dropout rate.

If money serves as both deterrent and motivator to education, how should policymakers act? Our interviews suggest nuances about the quantity of the tuition paid and the types of jobs that students land after graduation. We suggest that a better alternative to free tuition may be using student services to assist with non-tuition financial barriers and/or labor market entry. We discuss implications for college advising, financial services, and career services. Colleges can assist with affordability in more nuanced ways that may avoid the downsides of free tuition.



## **Guaranteed Tuition and Underrepresented Student Enrollment**

Diane Dean, PhD, Associate Professor, Higher Education Administration & Policy  
Jana Albrecht, Director of Financial Aid  
Illinois State University

Higher education attainment drives economic growth and non-economic benefits that contribute to a democratic society. Unfortunately, college enrollment varies strikingly by race and income, regardless of academic ability. As states seek to raise college enrollment, the issue of cost receives great attention. In response, Illinois implemented a guaranteed tuition policy in 2004-05 to curb college costs in public four-year universities, by locking tuition prices for new students for a specific number of years. This study examined whether the policy had any impact on enrollment among underrepresented groups.

**The Illinois Longitudinal Data System: What is it? What's been accomplished?  
How can it help researchers?**

Jonathan Furr, PhD, Executive Director, Education Systems Center  
Northern Illinois University

Elliot Regenstein, JD, Governing Board Chair  
Illinois Longitudinal Data System

This session will provide a general overview of recent progress on the establishment of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System, including an update on technical architecture development, governance activities, and creation of various end-user reports. The session will also include an interactive discussion with participants on how the ILDS can best support the needs of the research community.

## **Current Early Literacy Research: Recommended Policy Actions for Illinois**

Emily Brown Hoffman, PhD student in Literacy, Language, and Culture  
William Teale, PhD, Professor, Literacy, Language & Culture Program, University Scholar,  
*and* Director, Center for Literacy

Melanie Walski, Doctoral Candidate, Literacy, Language, and Culture  
Colleen Whittingham, Doctoral Candidate, Literacy, Language, and Culture  
University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Literacy

The need for effective policies and programs in early literacy has never been more critical. Early childhood, particularly the period from preschool through third grade (P-3), is an especially significant time for learning to read and write; essentially, what happens during this period sets the literacy trajectory for the rest of one's life. To inform the advancement of early literacy practice and achievement, we conducted a comprehensive review of research, policies, and practices, seeking to identify gaps and opportunities that would enable formulation of policy recommendations for enhancing literacy education across our systems of early care and education. We analyzed the content of research focused on developmental patterns in young children's literacy learning, studies of classroom practice, home literacy research, studies of organizational capacity and early literacy achievement, and research on the intersection of policy and practice in early literacy. We then examined the findings from this review in light of educational and public policy in Illinois to identify gaps that might productively be addressed. Our findings show a lack of coordinated policy and practices in Illinois for a comprehensive strategy addressing preschool and early grades (P-3) language and literacy education.

### **Summary of Findings and Implications for Illinois Education Policy**

The findings indicated a need for the following key efforts in order to achieve the desired impact:

*Action 1:* Consistently implement comprehensive early language and literacy standards and associated evidence-based curricula, instruction, and assessment, aligned from preschool through grade 3.

*Action 2:* Provide professional learning experiences for early childhood teachers that enable them to implement high-quality early language and literacy instruction in their classrooms.

*Action 3:* Build the capacity of preschool administrators, elementary school principals, and relevant early education personnel to lead high-quality early language and literacy programs that improve student learning.

*Action 4:* Engage and support families in their children's early language and literacy learning.

*Action 5:* Collaborate in and support the development of needed research in early language and literacy.

These recommended actions have implications for all participants in early literacy education: state/city leadership; local schools/early care entities; parents, teachers/child care providers; researchers; and foundations and other funders of programs and research.

# Examining Instructional Leadership Development in Diverse Preschool Contexts

Heather Horsley, PhD, Visiting Senior Research Specialist  
Jaime Madison Vasquez, Doctoral Candidate, and Visiting Research Specialist  
William Teale, PhD, Professor, University Scholar, and Director  
Center for Urban Education Leadership  
University of Illinois at Chicago

## Study Objectives & Theoretical Perspective

High quality preschool instruction is essential to producing developmental gains for young children and can mitigate risk factors such as family poverty and low parental education (Pianta, et al., 2009). The Illinois Preschool Instructional Excellence grant, funded by Race to Top Early Learning Challenge grant program, focuses on instructional leaders as a cost-effective lever for improving PreK teachers' instructional quality. The present study reports initial findings from the first year of a three-year evaluation. The primary objective of the evaluation study is to assess the implementation, outcomes, and impacts of Lead. Learn. Excel Instructional Leadership (LLE)\*, which aims to help leaders transform their role as instructional leaders.

## Research Design & Analytic Approaches

This poster presentation utilizes a single-group, pretest-posttest design to examine the instructional leadership behavior of leaders in diverse preschool contexts at baseline. The Preschool Instructional Leadership Survey, which measures the frequency of instructional leadership behavior serves as the primary source of data. Measures of central tendency and independent t-test procedures serve as analytic approaches.

## Summary of Findings

At baseline, our preliminary findings indicate the following about the leaders' instructional leadership behavior:

- Whether these leaders work in multiple sites or in one site, they practice leadership behaviors at similar rates of enactment.
- These leaders enact instructional leadership behaviors once or twice a month on average by protecting time for teachers to collaborate on lesson planning and engaging in observation and administrative tasks related to instruction.
- They also have the opportunity to grow as instructional leaders by establishing routines for teachers to examine their practice either with the leader (debrief) or as teachers (collaborative reflection) and sharing visions for high quality instruction that builds levels of trust that enable teachers to innovate in order to meet that vision without fear of reprimand.

## Implications for IL Education Policy

Although investments in ECE leadership have been linked to positive impacts on classroom practice (Muijs et al., 2004), more is to be understood about preparing leaders to sustain a job-embedded professional development model to support the instructional proficiency of preschool teachers. Of which, has implications for funding the development of instructional leaders in diverse preschool contexts at scale.

## References

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\* The Ounce of Prevention Fund in partnership with McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership developed and implements Lead. Learn. Excel Instructional Leadership.

# **Descriptive Analyses of Illinois' Early Care and Education Workforce**

Joelilyn Whitehead, Director, Data and Research  
INCCRRA

## **Purpose and Context**

The first five years of a child's life are a time of rapid and cumulative development. Children in quality early learning and development settings are better prepared for school; healthier physically and mentally; are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college; and have greater earning potential as adults. Educators in these early learning and development programs have a great responsibility for fostering this development. The qualifications, knowledge, skills, and dispositions of these educators are critical components that impact the quality of their interactions with children; however, there is a lack of consistency when it comes to expectations for the preparation, qualifications, supports, working conditions, and compensation for the early care and education (ECE) workforce.

## **Methods**

Descriptive analyses of administrative data available in the Gateways to Opportunity Registry were conducted to better understand the demographics, qualifications, and compensation of the licensed child care sector of the ECE workforce. Results were compared to other sources of Illinois data as well as national data.

## **Results**

The licensed child care sector of the ECE workforce in Illinois is a more highly educated workforce than previously thought, yet the wages are much lower than for colleagues with similar education in other related sectors. Levels of education within similar professional roles vary by race/ethnicity and age groups served, but do not vary greatly by geography or age group of the individual professional. Results will be presented compared to national trends revealed by the National Survey of Early Care and Education as well as the National Workforce Registry Alliance national data set.

## **Implications for Illinois Policy**

Multiple initiatives will be increasing the demand for a highly qualified and educated early care and education workforce. Illinois' Quality Rating and Improvement System (ExceleRate Illinois), Preschool Expansion Grant and Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships all require teachers with higher qualifications; however, early learning and development programs report difficulty finding qualified teachers to fill these positions. In addition to these existing initiatives, the recent *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* report from the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council set forth a blueprint for action, including a recommendation for all lead educators in early learning and development programs to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree with specialized knowledge and competencies in early care and education. In order for Illinois to meet the growing demand for highly educated teachers in all sectors, it is critical to understand the existing educational qualifications of the workforce. Institutions of higher education will benefit from these insights as they consider tailored pathways for transitioning professionals already practicing in the field as well as those in other sectors who decide later in their career to focus on early care and education.

## **The Club Éxito™/Success Club™ Model: A Pathway for Connecting Latino Students to College and Career Success**

Elena Garcia Ansani, EdD, Executive Director  
Latino Resources

Despite increased Latino enrollment at a Midwestern suburban high school (MSHS) in the past decade, Latino student participation in extracurricular activities, specifically programs that promote knowledge about college and career pathways has remained significantly lower than any other student group at the school. This study presents how a nonprofit organization utilized qualitative action research to learn about the factors contributing to the disparity at the MSHS while simultaneously developing a culturally responsive solution. Created as an innovative positive youth development pilot program, Club Éxito/Success Club was designed to connect students to college and career pathways for success. The program's curriculum introduced its members to business management experiences, leadership training, adult professionals and college students. Together the components served as a foundation for networks of support that delivered pertinent college and career readiness information. Drawing from the tenets of intergroup contact theory, Club Éxito's theoretical framework worked to: a) promote equal status among its participants; b) develop purposeful agreed upon goals and objectives; c) foster respect between all individuals working together; and d) empower members to develop rules by which all participants agree to abide. Analysis of Club Éxito's program data pointed to information student members required for effectively navigating college or career pathways. A presentation of student outcomes, community partnerships and the evolution of the program's curriculum are highlighted.

## **Personalized Emails in College Can Improve Students' Academic Achievement, Self-Efficacy, and Sense of Belonging**

Vinoadharen Nair Das, Doctoral Student, Social Psychology  
University of Illinois at Chicago

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the ability to understand emotions, effectively solve problems, and create positive relationships (Elias et al., 1997). Unfortunately, most SEL research only focuses on preschool through high school. This study addressed the limited SEL research in higher education by implementing a SEL-based personalized email intervention in a college setting. In addition to examining how SEL emails can impact college students' academic performance, the impact on students' academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging was also assessed. The SEL emails (treatment) were hypothesized to increase (1) academic achievement, (2) academic self-efficacy, and (3) sense of belonging for students, compared to non-SEL emails (control).

This was an 8-week study conducted during the Summer 2015 semester at a large university in an urban city. 46 participants ( $M = 21.84$  years old) were recruited from three different psychology courses. There were 24 males and 22 females in total. The smaller sample size is due to lesser enrollment during summer semesters.

In regards to academic achievement, there was no difference between the treatment group and control group at Exam 1, as predicted. This was before the intervention began. Against our prediction, we did not find a difference in the second exam but we found a significant effect on the third exam. The treatment group scored higher on Exam 3 ( $M = 91.86$ ) compared to the control group ( $M = 85.42$ ). As for self-efficacy and sense of belonging, there was no difference between the treatment and control groups.

Future steps are being taken such that this study is currently conducted again during the Fall 2015 semester to observe what type of effects would be found on a 16-week semester. This type of evidence-based research will contribute to the goals of Illinois' education policy by helping college students improve their academic performance. Together, this intervention can improve the quality of student's academic well being and increase their chances of completing their college education.

## **Developing Early Warning Tracking Dashboards**

Matt Feldmann, PhD, Owner and Principal Investigator  
Goshen Education Consulting, Inc.

Gabrielle Schwemmer, PhD, Director of School Improvement,  
St. Clair County Regional Office of Education and Evaluator  
21st Century Learning Programs for Cahokia School District #187

The poster will describe the approach taken to develop an Early Warning Dashboard directly from an Early Warning Indicator analysis for real-time feedback for truancy coaches, principals and district supervisors. Two high risk Illinois districts in southwestern Illinois received three School Improvement Grants to improve student success at two junior high schools and one high school. The lead partner team contracted with the presenter to provide regular reporting and analysis to identify issues and opportunities to improve truancy and decrease student drop-outs. This proposal represents further development of an Early Warning Indicator system that was presented at the 2014 IERC symposium.

The original Early Warning Indicator analysis provided aggregate and individual student reports for those students identified as at-risk (Feldmann, 2012). This analysis identified four key variables that were created using district data obtained from the Illinois Web Application System (IWAS) and Student Information System (SIS). These included: (1) number of English class term failures, (2) number of math class term failures, (3) number of serious disciplinary findings resulting in an out of school suspension, and (4) annual school attendance percentage. The Early Warning Indicator analysis was developed directly from a local replication/validation study of one of the Southwestern Illinois high schools that received a School Improvement Grant. This replication study directly referenced the work by Balfanz and Byrnes at the Every1Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2010; Johns Hopkins University, 2014). The study was assisted by a U.S. Department of Education technical assistance grant that allowed the researcher to work directly with Martha MacIver and Vaughn Brynes from the Every1Graduates Center that directly referenced MacIver's work with Baltimore public schools (MA MacIver, 2010; MA MacIver & DJ MacIver, 2009).

The resulting dashboard was customized to the needs of the districts, was updated weekly and used for the purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of the coaching models. The iterative process provided an opportunity to work directly with School Improvement coaches to develop and tailor variables to inform regular progress with the school improvement project. Finally, the analysis was developed to be a graphical and interactive dashboard.



# **Pervasive Technology And Paradigm Shifts: Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Educational Technology**

Stacy Gherardi, PhD Candidate, Educational Policy  
University of Illinois at Chicago

Educational technology has historically been an area of knowledge for which research into outcomes have been inconclusive. Given that measures of some areas (such as self-esteem and critical thinking) show positive correlations with technology integration while others (such as reading and math) show inconsistent or no correlations, there is significant disagreement around which outcomes are relevant measures for evaluating such initiatives. Furthermore, the importance of implementation and the wide variation in the ways in which educational technology is implemented across studies make it difficult to assess the degree to which findings are reflections of policy outcomes, implementation outcomes, or both. Knowing this, the exploration of outcomes for technology initiatives in which implementation has been deemed as a model for effectiveness gives us significant insight into what technology does, and does not, change under the best circumstances.

This presentation shares findings from a case-study of one predominantly Latino, predominantly low-income suburban school district which has gained significant accolades for its implementation of a 1:1 laptop program. This study utilized survey and interview data to assess the degree to which the 1:1 program had influenced teacher practices, the nature of those changes, and teacher perceptions around those changes. Data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods to describe key effects of technology policy in this setting and teacher perceptions of these effects. Although data indicated clear shifts in some areas of instruction- especially in regards to differentiation and the ways in which students access knowledge- other areas such as parent engagement were largely unaffected or even adversely impacted with the integration of 1:1 technology. Teacher perceptions of these changes were largely mixed with overall support for the 1:1 program generally neutral or slightly positive despite significantly conflicting accounts of the ways in which technology has or had not supported positive changes to student outcomes.

This presentation will be of significance to educators and educational leaders implementing or seeking to implement pervasive technology in their own setting. By understanding the experiences of schools that have done so successfully and by clearly examining what does, and does not change, with the infusion of technological resources, they will be better equipped to articulate goals for their programs and design implementation to meet those goals. For policy-makers and researchers, this study provides much-needed context and in-depth descriptive data to help explain what happens when technology becomes pervasive in schools and how it specifically impacts traditionally disadvantaged school communities.

## **Toward an Understanding of Students Who Enroll and Withdraw in the Same Term**

Megan Lombardi, PhD, Research Coordinator  
Sean Hogan, PhD, Executive Director  
Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning & Research  
College of Lake County

Due to the increased national focus on student outcomes, graduation and retention rates have gained a lot of attention among community colleges in recent years. In an effort to increase the number who ultimately graduate, most of the attention has focused on improving the number of students who continue from one term to another. Less attention has focused on student persistence within terms and the effect it may have on overall retention.

Several existing studies have examined the reasons for students' course withdrawal and found that that students tend to drop out of their classes due to either personal or academic reasons (Friedlander, 1981; Dunwoody & Frank, 1995; Swager and Campbell, 1995; Hall et al., 2003; and Michalski, 2011). Some studies have focused on identifying the demographics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, FTPT status) of students who are likely candidates for course withdrawal in an effort to predict and prevent course withdrawal (Friedlander, 19981; Swager, Campbell, & Orłowski, 1995). There have not been any studies to date, however, that have examined the academic standing of students at the time they withdraw from the institution, and there are none that tracked students after they dropped out to find out how many return.

In this poster session we report the characteristics and attitudes of a subset of community college students who enrolled, but were not retained within the fall 2014 term. We use our college's administrative data and surveys of students to better understand the factors influencing students' decisions to leave the institution. Furthermore, we surveyed students about their intent on returning to the institution and tracked their behavior to identify how many actually returned in a subsequent term.

Our data reveal several interesting findings about the commitment and motivation of students who withdraw from the institution. These findings are contrary to what some might assume about students who withdraw as primarily consisting of those who are disgruntled or poor performing and departing from the college permanently. For instance, we discovered that more than a quarter of those who enrolled and later withdrew were well established and committed students having accumulated more than 30 credit hours at the institution. Furthermore, the majority of students were in good standing with the institution when they left; more than half had earned GPAs of 2.0 or better and about one-in-three had earned GPAs of 3.0 or greater. Consequently, a substantial proportion of our dropped students were well on the way toward accumulating the credits needed for an associate's degree or a long-term certificate. We also found that most of the surveyed students intended to return to the college and, in fact, many of the withdrawn students did return within one academic year from the time they left.

We report those return rates and discuss the utility of studying these students for the purpose of re-engaging them and hopefully encouraging them toward degree completion.

## **Investigation of the Impact of Missing Information on Vertical Scaling**

Rong Jin, PhD, Psychometrician, Research & Measurement Services  
Stephen Murphy, Director, Research Services  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

In the field test of a large-scale assessment with purpose of producing an across grade vertical scale, each grade-level usually has multiple forms and the adjacent grade-levels are linked through embedded vertical linking (VL) items. However, occasionally not all of the forms are actually administered due to unexpected reasons, such as the lack of examinees, inaccurate items, exposed items, resource constraints, requests from a client, and so on. If VL items are in the missing forms, their contributions to the vertical linking relationship between adjacent grades and to the on-grade scale will be absent. This might bias the entire vertical scale. The study explores the influence of missing forms on the vertical scale obtained from concurrent and separate methods in Item Response Theory (IRT), in terms of the vertical linking relationship from a specific grade to the base grade and grades separation. The data used in this study were simulated from a computer delivered large-scale grade 2 to 8 Mathematics assessments and the results of this research will provide helpful information on how vertical scales might be biased due to missing forms, a practical issue faced in state assessment programs.

## **Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of High-Quality Mentorship**

Erica Kwiatkowski-Egizio, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Secondary Education  
Lewis University

The current study examines two research questions: (1) How can programs better define the roles of mentors from the perspective of teacher candidates? and (2) How can programs apply the conclusions of this work to better prepare practicing teachers?

The definition and quality of mentoring of teacher candidates is highly variable, and it is more common than not that very little preparation and continuing support are provided to cooperating/mentor teachers and program supervisors (Grossman, 2010; Hamel & Jaasko-Fisher, 2011; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). Mentor roles have been identified mainly by researchers or teacher educators, and few studies have focused on the perspectives of student teachers or mentor teachers themselves (Zanting et al., 2001). The dichotomy between theory and practice gives rise to situations in which prescriptive formulations for mentoring programs by researchers and educators that exist in the literature have little connection to what practitioners actually think or do.

Teacher candidates that are student teaching in the fall 2015 semester are the participants in this study. There will be representation of teacher candidates from the following programs: Elementary Education, Special Education, Combined Elementary and Special Education, and Secondary Education. To answer the first research question, the researcher will collect and analyze (1) entrance and exit interviews from teacher candidates, (2) surveys, (3) evaluation and observation instruments, and (4) field notes taken by mentor teachers and university supervisors of the teacher candidates.

The development of a model of mentorship, through the eyes of the teacher candidate, will be one of the successful hallmarks of the education programs at the university that serves as the setting for this research. In addition, other universities will want to adopt this new mentorship model, since it incorporates the challenges associated with providing high-quality clinical opportunities for all teacher candidates.

This study contributes to the field of clinical practice in teacher preparation by first presenting a definition of mentorship, from the lens of the teacher candidate's perspective. Much of research that has been done previously on mentorship has examined it primarily from the lens of the cooperating/mentor teacher and/or the university supervisor. Secondly, this study depicts features of a high-quality mentorship model, as identified by teacher candidates, during their student teaching experiences.

States require that districts set up a new teacher mentor program. However, what is provided in the program varies widely. The role of a mentor teacher is both supervisory and supportive in nature. Therefore, how can a mentor teacher successfully navigate the role of mentor in both dimensions of supervision and guidance? This study will provide valuable insight to address this important clinical practice research agenda item. On a broader scale, the conclusions of this study will be applied to develop a new model of mentorship that will engage teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and university supervisors to effectively prepare teacher candidates.

## **Understanding the Minority Language and Culture Development of Asian American Students in a Mid-western America and Their Voices**

Jaehee (Lauren) Park, Doctoral Student, Curriculum and Instruction  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

There are increasing number of bilingual students in Asian American groups each year. However, there are limited studies to understand their linguistic and cultural situations to be supported in their mainstream schools. To fill this gap, this qualitative study outline what it the meaning of language and culture in Asian minority life and how Asian bilingual students practice their language and culture in their school and community to be bilingual in the society and any educational issues needed to be supported. The participants in this preliminary study are American-born Korean students in Korean language who are attending or attended a heritage school which operates as a Saturday community school. To highlight on dynamics in minority linguistic groups in the U.S society, this ethnographic case study explores each participant's socio-cultural and socio-linguistic practices that shape their identities and development. The data was collected through class observations and interviews. Through class observations in a community school their cultural practices involving with language development were revealed. The interviews shed light on their unique efforts and personal practices in negotiating home culture with dominant culture outside of home. The study will discuss the implications of this study and what are the particular phenomena and issues in this linguistic group and the meaning of bilingualism in their development.

## **Implementing Change to Bring the Pieces Together: Preliminary Insights from the Wright College Student Experience Project**

David Potash, PhD, President  
Wilbur Wright College

Rich Chandler, Executive Director of Strategic Planning  
City Colleges of Chicago

Wilbur Wright College is one of the seven community colleges in the City Colleges of Chicago, one of the largest community college systems in the nation. City Colleges of Chicago Chancellor Cheryl Hyman started the “Reinvention” initiative in 2010 to ensure student success in the classroom and the workplace. Reinvention has encompassed a wide range of projects and changes designed to improve student outcomes, from new registration processes to structured pathways to investments in student supports. Reinvention’s most cited success is a doubling of graduation rates across the system.

At Wright College, CCC’s largest institution, we have scaled up several of these initiatives in a short period of time to reduce barriers to enrollment, improve student placement using multiple measures, and decrease time required for students to succeed in Math and English. This Student Experience Project brought together faculty, staff and administrators, from both Wright and our District Office, to create a team that was able to effect significant improvements in a short period of time. This poster offers preliminary insights and results from the large-scale project at Wilbur Wright College.

The Student Experience Project was made possible through systematic, long-term investments in people, processes, structure and priorities. Homeostasis (the desire to remain the same) is a powerful force in organizational culture and practice. This pull towards constancy is not effective in higher education as the world changes and demands more. Change in higher education most often results from charismatic leadership (which can be short-term and highly dependent upon individual characteristics and priorities) or external stimulus (an influx of resources, or more often, a decrease of funding). Ongoing change and improvement requires a different approach.

Central to understanding how Reinvention and the Wright Student Experience Project are possible is an in-house division of Strategy. This unit, located at CCC’s District Office, provides ongoing data, analyses and insight to organizational leadership. Its role is to provoke, question and challenge City Colleges employees to do more, do better, and to do it more effectively and efficiently. Insights from Strategy, coupled with insights generated at Wright and other City Colleges, led to a coordinated planning effort. This poster presents how we defined the problem, organized the structure and response, developed, implemented and managed the project, and gathered data and evaluated performance. We focused on applicant conversion, registration, placement and new pedagogies; we are now looking at student performance and retention. We are also evaluating the progress of the project, considering changes for Fall of 2016, and planning how best to extend project lessons to other City Colleges.

# Can Moment-to-moment Comprehension Measures Inform the Assessment of Community College Students' Readiness for College Reading?

Melissa Ray, PhD, Research Scientist,  
Joseph Magliano, PhD, Professor, Psychology, *and* Co-Director  
Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Language and Literacy  
Northern Illinois University

The goal of this study was to examine the extent to which measures of moment-to-moment comprehension were related to community college students' literacy placement test (Compass) scores and college GPA in order to explore whether in-the-moment measures can inform assessments of readiness.

Moment-to-moment measures focus on what happens when students are reading. We were interested in two measures that are captured by the Reading Strategy Assessment Tool (RSAT, Magliano, Millis, The RSAT Development Team, Levinstein, & Boonthum, 2011): a) students' overall understanding during reading, and b) students' use of inference strategies when reading. RSAT measures moment-to-moment comprehension by administering open-ended questions during reading (Magliano et al., 2011). In RSAT, only one sentence of a text is visible on-screen at a time, and questions appear after certain sentences (Magliano et al., 2011).

## Research Design and Analysis

Participants were students at an Illinois community college and were recruited from developmental reading, writing, and introductory English classes. Participants completed two separate RSAT assessments (overall understanding & inferences). The RSAT program produced one comprehension question score and two inference scores that were used in the analysis. Relationships between RSAT scores, Compass scores, and GPA were analyzed by examining Pearson correlation coefficients.

## Major Findings

RSAT comprehension question scores were positively correlated with Compass reading test scores ( $r = .41, p = .003$ ). Both inference scores had significant, positive correlations with RSAT comprehension question scores. However, inference scores were not significantly correlated with Compass reading scores. RSAT comprehension question scores had a small positive correlation with college GPA; however, this was not statistically significant ( $r = .22, p = .091$ ). In contrast, Compass reading scores were positively correlated with students' GPAs ( $r = .48, p = .004$ ).

## Implications

The results of the analyses suggest that moment-to-moment comprehension measures share similarities with literacy placement tests, and that in the case of inferences, these measures may capture important aspects of reading that literacy placement tests do not. However, further research is needed to explore their utility as a predictor of college success.

## **Leading for Educational Equity with English Language Learners: An Exploratory Study of Illinois Principals' Values and Leadership Practices**

Alison Reeves, PhD, Associate Professor and Program Director of Educational Administration  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

This poster session reports the results of a survey of Illinois principals that was conducted to explore their practices with regard to leading for educational equity. This study is framed conceptually and theoretically by the literature on leadership and social justice and equity and a critical theoretical framework that assumes that in order to promote educational equity, the educational system must be transformed in substantive ways and that the principal is key in this transformation. For the purposes of this project, "Educational equity" is defined by "raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest-performing students; and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (Singleton & Linton cited in Ross, & Berger, 2009, p. 463). This study was guided by the following research questions: (a) To what extent are Illinois principals focused on leading for educational equity? (b) Is there a relationship between principal demographic variables and the extent to which a principal leads for equity? (c) Is there consistency between a principal's values/beliefs and practices? To answer these questions, all principals who work in schools with an ELL population of 40 or more students were surveyed using the Leadership Practices Survey (Larson, 2008). This survey measures six values and four leadership constructs: Critiquing of current leadership paradigms (Leadership Paradigms); Addressing educational inequities in structural and systematic policy and practice (Policy and Practice Inequities); Deconstructing Power relations (Power Relations); and Connecting theory to practice (Theory to Practice) (Larson, 2008). All of the values had a relatively high mean, with all six at 3.0 (Important) on a 4 point scale. Within the "Values" measured by this survey, the highest mean were the values "Adaptive" leadership and "Transformational" leadership. For the Leadership Practices part of the survey, the overall mean was 60.07 (on a 100 point scale representing the percentage of time the leader engaged in the practice). Principals reported the highest engagement in "Theory to practice" ( $\mu=65.40\%$ ), and "Leadership Paradigms" ( $\mu=62.38\%$ ) while engaging less in "Power Relations" ( $\mu=58.39\%$ ) and "Policy and Practice Inequities" ( $\mu=58.06\%$ ) slightly less of the time. Principals who spoke a language other than English, reported their ethnicity as Hispanic and those who had formal training in working with ELL scored significantly higher on the Leadership Practices survey. This study ( $N=93$ ) was small scale (survey return rate of 11.5%) and therefore is considered exploratory. Results from this study will be used to explore the relationship between leadership practices and other variables that are related to student achievement such as 5 Essentials data. Results from this study may also indicate needed changes in policy related to principal preparation in Illinois.



## **Investigating the Relationship Between Teacher Preparation and Math Test Performance of English Language Learners**

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Kristin Lems, EdD, Professor, Language Minority Education  
Paul Gross, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Natural Sciences  
ESL STEM Success Grant  
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This study investigated the relationship between teacher preparation and math test performance of elementary grade English language learners (ELLs). Participants included five teachers with STEM-focused ESL teacher education, four with general ESL teacher education, and seven with no ESL teacher education. In fall 2012 and spring 2013, scores on a standardized mathematics exam were collected in 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th grades to assess improvement of mathematics performance of ELLs, non-ELLs, and students previously classified as ELLs in three elementary schools in a diverse suburban district. There was a statistically significant main effect of ELL category ( $P=0.03$ ). Students previously classified as ELLs increased their math scores by a far greater margin than either the current ELLs or the native English speakers. Analysis also revealed that the math score improvement in the students previously classified as ELL's was greater when teachers had STEM-focused ESL teacher education. Our findings indicate value in exploring policies to promote ESL teacher education that highlights discipline-specific language practices. Additionally, our data suggest the importance of focusing on both ELLs and students previously classified as ELLs in increasingly prevalent school-wide approaches to educating ELLs.

# Tracking the Growth of Higher Educators during an Online Teaching and Course Development Training Program

Todd Reeves, PhD, Assistant Professor, Educational Technology, Research and Assessment  
David Walker, PhD, Professor, Educational Technology, Research and Assessment  
Thomas Smith, PhD, Educational Technology, Research and Assessment  
Isti Sanga, PhD, Instructor, Educational Technology, Research and Assessment  
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## Study Goals

Online learning continues to be employed as a solution to higher education problems, yet insufficient instructional faculty skills or buy-in may constrain the implementation and effectiveness of such endeavors. This study, in response, investigated changes in university faculty and staff's online teaching and course design self-efficacy during the course of a two-week intervention. Socio-cultural learning, socio-technical system, and learner-centered instructional design theories grounded the training program.

## Intervention Description

Participants attended seven hands-on, face-to-face workshops over two weeks during which they received direct instruction in and were provided opportunities to engage in online course design. Two instructional technology experts facilitated the workshops, which covered topics such as: face-to-face-to-online course conversion; online instructional strategies; and software tools such Adobe Presenter and MS PowerPoint.

## Methods

Participants were educators and other professional staff at an institution of higher education in Saudi Arabia ( $n = 39$ ). This research employed a one-group repeated measures (pretest with multiple posttests) design. Data were collected via eight electronic surveys, administered immediately prior to the first and then after each of seven workshop sessions. This study's dependent variable—online teaching and course design self-efficacy—was operationalized on the basis of 9 behaviorally-stated items that asked participants to report their perceptions about their current status relative to key skills targeted by the intervention (e.g., "I can effectively use Adobe Presenter for my courses"). The data were analyzed via a mixed-model growth analysis.

## Results

An estimate of internal consistency, Cronbach's Alpha, was computed ( $\alpha = .850$ ), which indicated that the scale's items were highly inter-correlated. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis afforded empirical support for a unidimensional internal score structure. To assess participant growth in self-efficacy, a multilevel growth model was fitted to the data. Results showed significant ( $p < .001$ ) quadratic growth in self-efficacy, with scores increasing over the course of the workshops. Slopes did not vary significantly among participants.

## Discussion and Implications

Given the cultural-generalizability of its content, this intervention is theoretically implementable within the U.S., including Illinois—especially for populations with similar current levels of online course design and teaching self-efficacy. However, findings based on this study's non-experimental design and relatively small sample warrant replication studies with randomized design and larger (and U.S.) samples.

## **Nontraditional Community College Students in Nursing: Perceptions Personified**

Helene Seibert, RN, MSN, PhD, Assistant Professor, Division of Nursing  
McKendree University

Nontraditional students in nursing have been the topic of multiple research studies to gain insight into their perceptions regarding retention. This mixed methods study, using Jeffrey's Student Perception Appraisal-Revised (SPA-R, 2007a) takes the quantitative findings a step further by using a qualitative approach to generate findings that extend the value of that instrument by exploring the details pertaining to each of the environmental items using focus groups and individual interviews with community college nursing students, just prior to graduation. One hundred seven associate degree nursing students in their last semester at three Midwestern community colleges were surveyed with the SPA-R tool to determine that the tool is applicable to this population. The results confirmed the original findings, yet differences based on location of each of these institutions, one rural, one suburban, and one urban location are presented. The second qualitative phase was conducted with two focus groups and two individual interviews with students over the age of 25, just before graduation. The students articulated their perceptions regarding the relationship of the environmental factors that promoted their success and shared their recommendations for solutions to the challenge of retention. Using grounded theory strategies of data analysis, these findings emerged into two categories, Internal and External Factors, that evolved into the Bridge of Support model of factors required for successful navigation of the nontraditional student nurse to the registered nurse. Implications for practice and suggestions for further research are included.

# Understanding the Perceptions of Local School Council Members and Other Community Stakeholders of Their Schools

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Nearly three decades ago, Illinois passed the Chicago Reform Act of 1988 in response to its failing schools. Since the passage of the Chicago Reform Act, there has been little effort to assess the training that Local School Council (LSC) members receive and perhaps, more importantly, the perception of parents and stakeholders of the state of their local school. This mixed-methods study focused on an analysis of *community-based* stakeholders' perceptions of the well-being (health) of their schools. Parents, local school council members and other interested community leaders are considered to be community-based stakeholders in this project. There were two important objectives: (1) to diagnose the organizational health and well-being of Woodlawn schools and their larger school communities and (2) to assess areas of strength and areas for improvement regarding LSC's in Woodlawn schools. Through a combination of Stakeholder Theory, Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement (1995, 1996, 2001, 2002), and Experientialism (Dewey, 1938), this research analyzed the experiences and perceptions of the community-based stakeholders. Central to the success of the project was the implementation of key measurement instruments administered to both community stakeholders and LSC members. The instruments were a Perceptions Survey of the health of schools and a Needs Assessment Survey of current LSC training. In addition, interviews were also conducted with community stakeholders. Completion rate for the surveys was 71% (n=214), and 15 participants (30%) agreed to be interviewed. Descriptive statistics were calculated with the survey data, and all interview transcripts were coded, identifying common themes and trends.

Responses to the overall survey suggest that the majority of community stakeholders perceive that the organizational characteristics that make up a healthy school are often seen within their schools. Interviews with these stakeholders confirmed general trends from the survey responses. The majority of LSC members who responded to questions regarding their training for their roles as LSC members felt that the current LSC training was not adequately meeting their needs. Questions were raised by LSC members about the relevance and necessity of current mandatory and optional training modules. Overall, there is a thirst for knowledge that will help these parents/guardians not only understand the school/learning environment, but also be able to effectively communicate with their children's teacher and administration. Parents/Guardians want to understand the roles of assessments and evaluations, and they want to know how to identify and promote effective teaching. They want to learn skills to help engage the outside community with the school so that there is collaboration and cooperation.

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## Accelerating Leadership Development through the Triad

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The University of Illinois at Chicago EdD program is a 4-5 year degree program with a principal endorsement granted typically after the first 18 months. In this 18 month pre-service period, we aim to support the fundamentals of research and practice in high-impact leadership, anchored by an intensive 12-month, full-time leadership internship in an urban school. One of the core components of the internship is the *triad conference*. Triads are regular conferences between the resident principal, the university-based leadership coach, and the mentor principal focused on reviewing the leader development of the student resident. The purpose of this paper is to better understand how to accelerate leadership development through the triad.

Two theoretical frameworks shape our thinking around the *triad conference*. Within the domain of adult learning, one area that heavily influences our collective thinking is transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000). Transformational learning occurs when “there is a transformation in one of our beliefs or attitudes, or a transformation of our entire perspective (habit of mind)” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 133). Drawing from the work of Lord and Hall (2005), another assumption guiding our thinking is that leadership identity development is inextricably linked with competency development. In other words, it is not enough for our principal preparation program to simply provide the knowledge, skills, and tools for leaders to disrupt the status quo. One of the primary objectives of the first 18 months of the UIC program is to help our principal candidates accomplish fundamental shifts in leader identity and leadership mindsets – for example – shifting beyond the primary self-identification as a teacher or teacher-leader, and expanding perspectives to the schoolwide strategic level required of the principal.

Over the course of the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic school years, we conducted 52 interviews with resident principals, mentor principals, and leadership coaches in Chicago to understand the triad experience better.

In general, our principal candidates appreciate the triangulation of data held among residents, coaches, and mentor principals in the triad and there is some evidence the meetings are correlated with leadership acceleration. There were several broad characteristics of successful triad meetings: (a) Highly organized, resident principal driven agenda focusing on students’ strengths and areas for improvement, (b) Each stakeholder taking an authentic, growth orientation for the principal candidate, (c) Regular meetings to scaffold transformative experiences at the edge of resident principal’s competencies. We also identified several characteristics of dysfunctional triads including: (a) Inconsistent and inadequate use of protocols, (b) Poor communication between the mentor principal and leadership coach, (c) Disconnects in knowledge or ideology between the mentor principal and leadership coach.

# **Characteristics of Candidates for Principal Preparation at the Selection Point: A Principal Pipeline Perspective**

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## **Objectives**

Admission to principal preparation programs has recently become a selective process in Illinois. This change occurred three years ago as part of an overhaul of program certification requirements with the goal of ensuring that programs produce principals able to effectively lead schools across Illinois. Requiring that individuals meet admissions criteria to enter a certified training program raises questions of what criteria to use and how to assess candidates.

The University of Illinois at Chicago EdD Principal Preparation Program has had a selective process in place for thirteen years. Indicators of the effectiveness of UIC's selection process include a low rate of attrition from the program due to academic and/or leadership performance problems (approximately 10% in recent years) and a high rate of placement in administrative roles upon successful completion of the pre-service portion of the program (98%).

This poster session will focus on UIC's recent use of its selection data to pursue questions about selection criteria and measurement of applicant characteristics.

## **Research Design**

This research takes place within the context of a research-practice partnership. The practitioners are academic faculty members and full-time leadership coaches of the UIC program, and the researchers are staff of the affiliated Center for Urban Education Leadership (CUEL). Consistent with a continuous improvement approach to educational improvement, the data for this research are derived from program work practice ratings generated during the selection process and observations of the process.

## **Theory**

In order to develop constructs for measurement, we are informed by theory in the field of leader development. We synthesize this general foundational knowledge with theories of organizational and instructional leadership. We are further guided by research-based standards for principal preparation programs.

## **Analytic Approach**

We applied a multi-faceted Rasch measurement (MFRM) approach to analyze our admissions ratings to assess the performance of 30 applicants, 11 raters, and 16 items independently. This approach allowed us to examine both main level and individual-level diagnostic information about how each element within our ratings assessment process is functioning. There were sixteen selection process items used to measure and rank applicants in the domains of Change Agent, Professional Excellence, and Self-Awareness and Demeanor.

## **Summary of Findings**

The results of the MFRM analysis provided us with insights about areas of strength and weaknesses of applicants admitted into the program. Findings also showed there are significant areas for improvement in the rating process. The poster will also present implications for the improvement of the UIC selection process, indicators of measure validity, and how the measures are now being used to inform the development of candidates.

Implications for Illinois education policy: Illinois has put into place high standards for the certification of principal preparation programs. A continuous improvement approach to selection holds promise for ensuring the intent of these standards are met. Selection criteria have broader implications for principal pipeline objectives; they can guide teacher leader development efforts and inform developmental experiences once a teacher leader is in principal training. Finally, relating criteria to outcomes of principal leadership is crucial to further policy development.

## **Preparing Teachers for a Diverse Global Society: Study Abroad for Preservice Teachers in Illinois**

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Mauricio Pino Yancovic, PhD, Coordinator, Office of International Programs, College of Education  
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Illinois teacher certification programs are facing enormous challenges. The significant majority of preservice teachers in most programs continues to be very homogenous (white, middle class, female) despite the rapidly increasing proportion of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students in classrooms. At the same time, there is increased pressure on colleges and universities to internationalize their curricula and on education programs to adequately prepare their preservice teachers to engage within a more globalized society, both within their local classrooms and abroad.

In this paper we investigate the ways that study abroad can help address these challenges in preservice teacher education. Study abroad provides a unique opportunity for preservice teachers to learn about and reflect on teaching in this globalized world, transforms the way that they perceive their students and themselves, and allows them to utilize what they have learned to improve educational attainment for their diverse local students. Though creating a preservice study abroad program obviously will not solve the immediate issues mentioned, it will complement and deepen preservice teachers' current program responsibilities. Moreover, in connecting educators to a broader network, the profession may attract new diverse students, as well as afford powerful and unexpected opportunities for preservice teachers to learn creative strategies and apply new approaches to educating diverse students.

We interrogate these points by drawing upon the current literature on study abroad for preservice teacher education and focusing on lessons learned from some well-researched, longstanding programs. We have identified research to show study abroad as an opportunity for teachers to learn about the experiences and challenges that diverse students face. From these experiences, preservice teachers learn (1) practical knowledge derived from teaching abroad that finds its way into preservice teachers' future classrooms; (2) social dispositions that signal a greater sensitivity toward cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication; and (3) a critical global awareness that enables students to create a broader knowledge context that helps them to comprehend global inequalities and find practical ways to address them in their local context.

Despite these positive desired impacts, we still face challenges in the design of teacher preparation programs to better cohere with student schedules and responsibilities, and in the preparation of students to understand and respond to federal and state educational policies that may hamper their abilities to implement creative practices they have learned abroad. To overcome these challenges, we recommend developing flexible and meaningful preservice teacher study abroad programs that are relevant and attractive to students, as well as sustainable in challenging budget cycles. To be meaningful, programs must form a continuum with other student courses and responsibilities and be academically-focused and credit-bearing. Also, education programming should emphasize the attractiveness of study abroad and globally-focused teacher education in the job market. New teachers with teaching abroad experience are more competitive within the state and country, as well as internationally. Finally, universities should encourage students and practicing teachers to become advocates of their study abroad experience.

An overarching goal of this paper is to seek new ways of articulation and collaboration among institutional stakeholders. Given the current challenges facing preservice teacher education in Illinois, the effort of developing mutually beneficial partnerships based on shared goals, rather than pursuing isolated, short-lived strategies, seems to be an appropriate path for preservice teacher education programs.

# **ET2020, Globally Competitive Schools, and Minority Success: Experiences from France, Luxembourg, and Belgium**

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## **Research Brief**

This project, beginning January, 2016, is a 6 month qualitative, comparative case study of current education policy in Europe and an assessment of how secondary European schools are supporting their minority populations given new, more rigorous curriculum. My research is meant to uncover successful methods of improving educational outcomes for minorities in the changing educational environment resulting from PISA testing, in hopes to contribute solutions for closing the achievement gap. As a Visiting Scholar at key European university research centers specializing in minority education, I will have access to top international education scholars, and conduct intensive fieldwork at the EU, state and local levels. This work will highlight solutions for enhancing minority student education and success in a “globalized knowledge economy”.

Common EU and US struggles of declining high school test scores and inequalities for minority students threaten global competitiveness, sparking new policy initiatives that require research of shared problems and potential solutions. PISA test scores have sent a clear and strong message to the EU and US about the inadequacies of their educational systems, and their much debated, still largely unresolved, education gap between the majority and struggling minority populations. With the EU’s ET2020 and the Common Core in the United States establishing new educational benchmarks, it would be both significant and essential at this moment in education history to explore the current national policy, as well as best practices and teacher programs being used to meet new standards and transform social, political and economic conditions.

This study will assess how France, Luxembourg and Belgium institute and implement ET2020 framework to modernize their secondary schools, and how national and local best practices and programs further the success of their Roma, Northern and Southern African, and other minority populations. Specifically, disadvantaged youth often have limited access to highly qualified educators. This research will assess how countries, regions, and schools are working to attract and retain qualified teachers in disadvantaged schools. Additionally, social tensions existing between minority and majority groups work to foster the achievement gap. By also evaluating Culturally Responsive Practices and Pedagogy specifically as a way to improve the relationship between the majority and minority populations, and addressing the cultural biases that exists in the school, student body, or in the teachers and staff themselves concerning the minority student, work can be done to reduce the obstacles minority students face. The hope is that such observations could lead to an assessment of how these influence the achievement gap and eventual participation in society.

This work will fill significant gaps in the research, and coincide with important policy and program changes resulting from preparation for PISA 2015. Within the US, Common Core and President Obama’s own goals for 2020, are setting new standards and objectives for the country. This research will further a transatlantic dialogue that is now more timely and important than ever before, as we work on resolving our own achievement gap. Truly a problem without borders, this exchange of knowledge will yield benefits for all involved in the discussion.

## ***The Fulbright-Schuman Award***

The Fulbright-Schuman Program, administered by the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States, Belgium and Luxembourg, is jointly financed by the U.S. State Department and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, and awards Scholar Grants based on EU-US initiated research projects and University lecturing.



# **Exploring the Relationship between Teacher Academic Capital and the Educational Outcomes of Black & Latino Students in Illinois Public High Schools**

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## **Purpose**

School resources matter in the educational trajectory and mobility of students. Students that attend public schools with more abundant and better resources are more likely to have higher standardized test scores, post-secondary enrollment patterns, and post-secondary matriculation patterns. One school resource is the quality of teachers in the school. Prior research has shown that, in Illinois, Black and Latino students are more likely to attend schools that are under-resourced in two ways, school funding (Lichtenberger & Dietrich, 2011) and teacher quality (White et al., 2008). Utilizing the index of teacher academic capital (ITAC) (White et al., 2008), a measure of the average teacher quality in each school, this study explores the relationship between enrollment in schools with above-average ITAC scores and educational outcomes relative to enrollment in schools with below-average ITAC scores, specifically for Black and Latino students in Illinois public schools.

## **Data & Methods**

I examine secondary data from the Illinois public high school cohort of 2003. Student level data, obtained under data sharing agreements with ACT, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), was merged with school-level data (N=642) used to examine public school funding was obtained from the Illinois High School Report Card. For the purposes of this study, only data from students that attended public schools (n=628) and identified as African-American (n=8,906) or Latino (n=7,460) are used.

Inverse-probability-of-treatment-weighting (IPTW) is used to separately re-weight the group of African American and the group of Latino students based on each student's predicted probability of attending an above average or higher ITAC school. The probability is calculated using logistic regression with attending a high-ITAC school being the dependent variable and a vector of observed variables, which are assumed to be independent of the final educational outcomes. Upon re-weighting the samples, standard OLS and logistic regression techniques are used to assess the relationship between the dependent variables (ACT mathematics score and four-year college enrollment) and above average or higher ITAC school attendance along with other covariates.

## **Findings**

The findings suggest that, for a within-group matched sample of Black and Latino students in Illinois, the relationships between attending a high school with above average ITAC scores and the dependent outcomes are statistically significant and positive. The findings are consistent with previous literature that note the educational benefits of attending schools with better resources, in particular more experienced and better prepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Wenglinsky, 2000). Additionally, the findings, in conjunction with the disproportionate and inequitable distribution of African American and Latino students in below-average ITAC schools, reaffirms the benefits of and, thus, the need for equitable access to educational opportunities for these two populations.

## **ISBE's Proration Method for Managing Cuts: The Cause of a Disparate School Funding Impact on Minority Districts**

Michelle Turner Mangan, PhD, Associate Professor of Research  
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This study analyzed the effect of how the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) allocated cuts among districts statewide following the under appropriation of General State Aid (GSA) in fiscal years 2013, 2014, and 2015. ISBE's selected methodology to manage under appropriated GSA – proration – resulted in a statistically significant disparity between districts with a majority of black and Hispanics and districts with less than a majority of black and Hispanic students as measured by (A) the district's loss per pupil following GSA proration and (B) district's loss per pupil following GSA proration as a percentage of the district's operating expenditure per pupil. The statistically significant disparity in absolute loss per pupil relative to operating expenditure per pupil grew when comparing subgroup districts with higher and lower concentrations of black and Hispanic students.

## **Engaging Educators in the Student Assessment Inventory Process**

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Angela Chamness, Division Administrator  
Assessment and Accountability  
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Assessment is a critical component of effective instruction but many educators, parents and students have expressed concerns about the amount of assessment occurring in school districts. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has collaborated with three school districts to pilot the *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*. The *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* supports educators as they take stock of the assessments students are currently taking and determine the minimum amount of assessment needed for essential diagnostic, instructional and accountability purposes. The inventory tool is an opportunity for teachers and administrators to respond to concerns of over testing by engaging in a collaborative and transparent conversation addressing the amount and quality of assessment occurring at the district level. The objective of this presentation is to share lessons learned from the pilot and engage the Illinois Education Research Council (IERA) community in a dialogue concerning actions educators and stakeholders can take to improve the quality of local assessment systems.

## **Mapping the MAP for English Language Learners**

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By 2030, almost half the population in the United States will speak a language other than English, therefore the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools nationwide will also increase. Critics of the No Child Left Behind law say that the federal requirements of ELLs hurt school districts because they often are heavily tested before they gain the English language levels needed to do well on these standardized assessments, which are often normed on monolingual students. Under Title III of NCLB, states must give all ELLs a yearly English proficiency test, such as the ACCESS test developed by the WIDA consortium, and must meet annual achievement objectives to improve the scores of ELLs in five areas: speaking, reading, writing, listening and comprehension. The goal is to meet the same challenging state academic content and student achievement standards as other, non-ELL students. In addition, all students, including the vast majority of ELLs who are in the United States longer than a year, must also take yearly achievement tests in math and reading such as the NWEA MAP tests.

However, critics of NCLB take issue with lumping all ELLs into one subgroup. They point out that ELLs are an extremely diverse group comprised of students from dozens of languages and educational backgrounds. They also note that such groups are constantly changing because new students are moving into the United States and entering the group and, at the same time, the most proficient ELLs are taken out of the subgroup and mainstreamed. A national study of NCLB requirements for ELLs by Jamal Abedi and Ron Dietel of CRESST found that the “instability” of the subgroup results in “downward pressure in ELL test scores worsened by the addition of ELL students who are typically low-achieving.” Illinois, which has 65,000 ELLs, uses WIDA’s ACCESS for ELL’s test of English language proficiency and a few different tests for its yearly achievement tests. But despite accommodations such as extra time, using a bilingual dictionary, and having directions translated into Spanish, large numbers of ELLs fail the achievement tests.

In this study, we surveyed Bilingual and ESL Directors in school districts across Illinois and asked questions related to the types of assessments used with their ELL population in terms of measuring language proficiency as well as achievement levels. Many of the school districts stated that they are “over testing” the ELL student population before ELLs have increased their English language proficiency level. There is a small number of school districts that are challenging the over testing of ELL students by making a correlation between the ELL student’s ACCESS test score and the need to take the MAP test. In one school district, ELL students who scored a 3.6 and above on the ACCESS test are then asked to take the MAP test. Their argument is that children need to develop a certain level of English language mastery before taking an achievement test, even if it is an adaptive test.

# **Bridging the Gaps between ISAT, MAP, PSAE and PARCC**

Paul Zavitkovsky, Leadership Coach and Assessment Specialist  
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University of Illinois at Chicago

## **Goals And Purpose Of Research**

The prevailing narrative about Common Core State Standards and PARCC assessments is that they are harder and more rigorous than their predecessors. The goal of this study is to illustrate that core problems in the NCLB era had less to do with lax standards and easy tests than with an alternate universe of grading and reporting strategies . . . strategies that were crafted by state education agencies and their partners in the testing industry, and later endorsed by the US Department of Education. These strategies distorted what tests actually assessed, undermined public trust, and denied useful information to a whole generation of Illinois parents, educators and policy makers. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that . . . despite big differences between new and old standards, and new and old tests . . . upcoming PARCC results will likely match up closely with normalized results from earlier ISAT, MAP, PSAE and ACT tests.

## **Research Design And Data Analysis Methods**

Research for this study occurred in three parts:

Part 1 used equipercentile matching to compare **ISAT** and **MAP** scoring patterns across four years of same-student, reading and math assessments for students in grades 3 through 8 in Evanston-Skokie District 65. State and national percentile ranks for ISAT and MAP distributions were compared at each decile of district-wide distributions

Part 2 used another form of equipercentile matching to compare State of Illinois and City of Chicago scoring patterns on the 4th and 8th grade **NAEP** with **ISAT** scoring patterns at 4th and 8th grade from 2003 through 2013.

Part 3 used normalized 8th grade **ISAT** distributions from all 55 LUDA districts to assess how well they predicted 11th grade **ACT** scores for the five most recent high school graduating classes of those districts.

## **Summary Of Findings**

Long-term scoring patterns on the ISAT, MAP, NAEP and ACT are highly congruent despite big differences in the design histories of each test. The clear implication is that all four tests assessed similar underlying academic abilities and valued those abilities in more or less the same way.

## **Implications For Illinois Education**

Results of this study suggest that the shift to PARCC and Common Core State Standards will not, in and of itself, have much of an impact on summative test results. Students who scored at the 50th percentile on the ISAT, MAP, NAEP and ACT in recent years are highly likely to score at or around the 50th percentile on the PARCC. Anticipated “declines“ in PARCC achievement will mostly result from big changes in cut scores and reporting strategies, not from more difficult standards and assessments. Matching new PARCC results with normalized ISAT, MAP, PSAE and ACT results can help prevent the PARCC from being further stigmatized as an elitist test instrument. Comparisons of this kind will also make it possible for schools and districts to use existing achievement baselines rather than having to start over completely from scratch based on false assumptions and overstated differences about old and new testing systems.

## PERA Early Implementer: A District's Capacity for Change

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Recent education reform efforts such as Race to the Top propose the *effectiveness* of teacher evaluations as the new solution to improving America's schools. In Illinois, the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) has required districts to revamp their teacher evaluation models. In 2014, the Randolph School District,<sup>1</sup> a mandated "early implementer," requested assistance from the Consortium for Educational Change to assess their readiness and knowledge as they begin the process of designing and implementing a new teacher evaluation plan that meets PERA mandates by September 2015. Phase 1 of the research was guided by questions that explored administrator and teacher beliefs and attitudes about the evaluation, their knowledge of PERA, and identification of and the potential strengths and roadblocks to its implementation. Participants ( $N = 22$ ; 7 teachers, 15 administrators) were recruited from a pool of approximately 100 teachers and administrators from the District's Implementation Committee to participate in 45-minute focus groups. Six focus groups were conducted (2 with teachers, 4 with administrators) during March 2015. Focus group audio-recordings were transcribed and coded using NVivo to determine the essence, meaning, and themes as they relate to the research questions.

Findings indicate that teachers were concerned about implementation, resources, and training, particularly as it pertained to student growth. Teachers desired more time for implementation and were unclear on how student growth would be measured. Furthermore, those teachers who were off cycle for the current evaluation year were worried since they will have limited experience with new expectations, yet will be held accountable for student growth. Teachers indicated that they would welcome professional conversations with administrators. However, they questioned if administrators had the requisite skills needed, reflecting a greater concern—teachers' lack of trust in the larger system to provide a consistently fair evaluation of their performance. Administrators, like teachers, expressed the need for more time to conduct meaningful observation and conversations, additional resources, and tools to incorporate student growth measures before implementation. Principals differed on their opinion of the effectiveness of the mandated changes depending upon the length of their administrative experience. Findings from this case study underscore the importance of districts having the appropriate collaborative structures beyond PERA Joint Committees to overcome the challenges of implementing an evaluation system that is viewed with distrust and fear. It also points out the need for extensive training, cultural change, and useful and realistic tools by districts that are struggling to respond to PERA.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the study participants and district.

## **Human Resource Management in Illinois Charter Schools**

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In exchange for increased accountability for results, charter schools are granted extra flexibility, particularly with regard to teacher personnel policy. The premise is that this will encourage educational innovations and efficiencies that improve student outcomes and could potentially inform and reform the operation of all schools. Thus, charter schools were originally conceived as “laboratories of reform” where new educational philosophies, technologies, policies, and practices could be tested and fine-tuned before being brought to scale beyond the charter sector. However, Noguero (2014) argues that charter schools are “stunningly opaque, more black boxes than transparent laboratories for education.” While many studies focused on the differences in student achievement between charter schools and traditional public schools, relatively few have sought to open the “black box” of charter schools to explore the organizational factors underlying these differences. This study aims to shed light into these “black boxes” by investigating the human resource (HR) management policies and practices in Illinois charter schools. We begin by examining existing research on charter school teachers and human resource management in education. Next, we use descriptive statistics and examples to present findings from surveys and interviews with Illinois charter school leaders regarding the strategies they use to attract, develop, and retain high quality teachers. Finally, we discuss overarching themes from these responses and examine the relationship between charter schools’ HR management practices and their student achievement outcomes. It is our hope that these analyses yield findings that can help guide personnel policies in both the charter and traditional public school sectors, where appropriate, as well as demonstrate the degree to which Illinois charter schools are leveraging the flexibility allowed by the state’s charter law to drive more strategic management of their human capital.

## Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Factors that Matter

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The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, working in cooperation with Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union, has been conducting a study of Chicago's new teacher evaluation system, REACH, since its inception in the fall of 2012. Our first two reports focused on teacher and administrator perceptions of REACH. This presentation utilizes 2013-14 REACH data addresses the following research questions:

- What the distribution of ratings across schools?
- To what extent are REACH scores related to the characteristics of students in schools?
- Are teacher characteristics related to REACH scores?

Key findings include:

- **Schools serving disadvantaged students have a disproportionate share of the lowest-rated teachers.** Observation scores of teachers teaching in high poverty schools are substantially lower than the observation scores of teachers in lower poverty schools. There are smaller between-school differences in their teachers' value-added scores.
- **Teachers in schools with stronger organizational climates have higher evaluation scores.** Controlling for school-level characteristics such as poverty and achievement, teachers in schools with better professional climate tend to have higher value-added and observation scores.
- **There are some differences in teachers' evaluation scores depending on experience and credentials.** Teachers with more experience have higher scores on both value-added and observation measures than new teachers. Differences between teachers with National Board Certification and/or advanced degrees compared to those without those credentials were found only on observation scores.
- **Minority teachers have lower observation scores than white teachers but their value-added scores are not significantly different; male teachers have lower observation and value-added scores than female teachers.** Male teachers scored 12 points lower on observations and about four points lower on value-added than their female counterparts with similar levels of experience teaching in similar schools. On average, African American teachers scored about 10 points lower, and Hispanic and other minority teachers scored about seven points lower than white teachers with similar levels of experience teaching in similar schools. However, there were no significant differences by race/ethnicity in either reading or math value-added scores.