

OF NOTE

What Do Teachers Do That Pays Off?

Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City, by Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr

A synopsis of the paper was recently published by [The Atlantic](#) and is available online:

The full report is also available online:

Working together in Harvard's EdLabs, economist Roland Fryer and doctoral candidate Will Dobbie recently reported on effective structural and educational practices implemented in New York City charter schools. Working with thirty-five charter schools, Fryer and Dobbie interviewed teachers, principals, and students; reviewed lesson plans; and studied videotaped classroom lessons. They also collected administrative data on student demographics and outcomes from the New York City Department of Education. The principle aim of their exhaustive analysis was to find "correlations between strategies and policies that describe the inner workings of schools and each school's effectiveness at increasing student test scores." What they found has serious implications for our cultural discourse of what constitutes a good school. Their research found no correlations between class size or teacher credentials and student achievement. More striking, they found no correlation between per pupil funding and student success. On the other hand, frequent teacher feedback, the use of data to inform instruction, high-dosage tutoring, increased instructional time, and cultures of strict academic focus all reinforced student achievement. The ideas offered in Fryer and Dobbie's report, which are clearly applicable to independent schools, and the meticulous demonstrations of the study's measures, provide valuable insights into how to allocate a school's time and resources effectively.

Clay Gahan, EdM. Candidate, The Klingenstein Center
Teachers College, Columbia University, NY

The Atlantic, December 9, 2011
National Bureau of Economic Research, December 2011

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ARTICLES, BLOGS, AND OTHER MEDIA



Can Kindness Cure?

Finding Kind, directed by Lauren Parsekian

Finding Kind documents the cross-country journey of Lauren Parsekian and Molly Thompson, two recent college graduates from California, as they speak with girls and women about "relational aggression" and "mean girl" behavior. The movie features group discussions of these behaviors as well as "confessionals" that let individual girls speak to their feelings about being the victim or perpetrator - sometimes both at once. This footage is interspersed with educational experts and psychologists explaining the impact of these behaviors as well as their root causes. The narrative that unfolds in *Finding Kind* is chilling and sad to those who work or live with adolescent girls as they recount their struggles with all the familiar bullying tactics and the toxicity of what the filmmakers call "girl world." Like most recent documentaries of this ilk, the filmmakers strive for a consciousness-raising movement, complete with strategies for ways to be kind and apologetic. While this might strike some educators weary of this genre as simplistic or trite, girls are likely to respond differently (this editor tried the preview out on his own daughter), because they recognize the need to publicize these behaviors in order to foster the principle of kindness as an antidote to destructive behaviors we have too long accepted as "normal."

Christopher Lauricella, The Park School of Buffalo, NY

Indiefix, 2011



The Darkest Side of Digital Culture

The Story of a Suicide, by Ian Frazier

Although this story is centered on life at the university, it reinforces the importance of a strong advisory program with an inclusive LGBT curriculum for all schools--particularly boarding schools. Frazier investigates the circumstances surrounding the now familiar death of Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers University student whose roommate, Dharun Ravi, used a webcam to spy on Clementi's sexual encounters with another man, after which Clementi committed suicide. As Frazier pieces together the events that led to Clementi's death, we are confronted with Ravi's digital history, beginning in high school. Every tweet, e-mail, text message and instant message created by Ravi is available for browsing, and we as readers witness with discomfort the mean-spirited, un-moderated comments that become public reference. What is more unnerving than the promulgation of these posts is the passive acceptance and consumption of a nonchalant cruelty by Ravi's followers. This article is useful on multiple fronts: education about technological literacy and digital permanency; awareness about reduction of privacy; and the need to address LGBT inclusion. Moreover, with a high school audience, this text can be a vital part of a discussion about the fine line between bullying and mere adolescent drama. Identifying the rhetorical codes for biased and bullying behavior is a worthwhile endeavor for any school to undertake.

Gina Siple, Buckley Country Day School, NY

The New Yorker, February 6, 2012



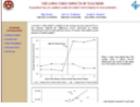
Giving Wonder Back to Science Standards

Science and Engineering: Integrating an Approach to STEM subjects
A Framework for K - 12 Science Education, by the National Academies (Board of Science Education)

Children arrive in kindergarten fascinated by the natural world and marvel at its order and systems. Watching squirrels make nests or following a bug across the floor form extraordinary learning experiences, which, in the hands of a skilled teacher, lays the groundwork for scientific thinking. By high school, however, a dizzying array of disconnected science topics and the overwhelming number of facts to be memorized combine with dreary teaching methods to crush all but the most dedicated science students. The National Research Council (NRC) has developed a framework for teaching and learning that will form the basis of the next generation of science standards. Commentary about the NRC report in Education Week (February 1, 2012) notes that the framework re-envision's "school science around science and engineering practices, such as model-building, data analysis, and evidence-based reasoning..." The framework connects three dimensions: 1) Practices 2) Crosscutting Concepts and 3) Core Ideas. It binds scientific disciplines together so that interdisciplinary learning forms a rigorous approach and suggests effective teaching strategies particular to STEM subjects. The link above leads to the NRC website where there are further links to the full or brief report.

Bruce Shaw, Essex, MA
Principal, Bruce A Shaw Consulting
Trustee, Glen Urquhart School

National Academies, February 2012



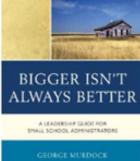
How Do We Know Good Teachers Pay Off?

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF TEACHERS: TEACHER VALUE-ADDED AND STUDENT OUTCOMES IN ADULTHOOD, a working paper, by Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff

If uniformly good teaching is what independent schools can (or should) deliver, then this study shows the investment pays off. Cited in President Obama's 2012 State of the Union Address to underscore the importance of teacher quality, the study shows that having even one good teacher can have a lasting impact on earnings, academics and social behavior. Researchers at Columbia and Harvard sought answers to two major questions: Is the impact of a teacher on student test scores a good measure of the added-value of teacher quality? Do positive outcomes due to the strong teaching improve students' outcomes in adulthood? The study uses average reading and math test-score gains after a year of instruction from 2.5 million students in grades 4-8--adjusted for student characteristics from a large urban database. While not yet scrutinized by peer review, the study has attracted a great deal of attention. On average, students assigned teachers defined as "high value" are more likely to go to college, earn higher incomes and are less likely to become teenage mothers. Researchers found that each student would have a cumulative lifetime income increase of \$50,000, more than \$1.4 million for an average size class. The implications for socioeconomic strength should put teacher quality on the forefront of the education agenda. The researchers claim that the most important lesson of the study is that policies to raise the quality of teaching, whether via the changes in salary structure, teacher training or other methods, are likely to have substantial economic and social benefits in the long run. If one good teacher can have such a profound effect, what is the cumulative impact of a school full of good teachers?

Pearl Rock Kane, Klingenstein Center, NY

National Bureau of Economic Research, December, 2011 (updated January 2012)



Small Schools: Big Successes

Bigger Isn't Always Better: A Leadership Guide for Small School Administrators, by George Murdock

Although this immensely useful handbook was written with small rural districts in mind, it will serve as a helpful field guide for any school administrator working in a small school. This text offers practical advice for new leaders entering a school and making meaningful connections within the school and surrounding community. Author George Murdock focuses on the human element of transition, placing equal importance on building sustainable relationships with a Board and being an effective supporter for faculty and staff. He offers a humble approach to leadership, reminding us that "leadership is a service occupation" and that communication should be designed to inform, not to impress. Step-by-step, he guides the reader through the process of interpreting job postings, making a good first impression at the school, speaking to parents and faculty, and navigating budgets, facilities, and human resources. Murdock also provides "in case of emergency" advice for handling missteps and difficult situations with grace and perspective in order to emerge, if not unscathed, then wiser and at least employed. New administrators or seasoned veterans might review this brief book as a reminder of the qualities of authentic leadership.

Annie Newall, Ed.M Candidate, The Klingenstein Center
Teachers College, Columbia University, NY

Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2012



Reminder: There is Still a Price

The Prep School Negro, by Andre Robert Lee

The Prep School Negro was directed, produced, and stars André Robert Lee. It is a very personal narrative that reflects upon his upbringing in a low-income neighborhood in Philadelphia and his high school career at Germantown Friends School, which he attended on a full academic scholarship. The film touches on the common experiences of students who feel caught between the expectations of their families and neighborhood community and the expectations of their prep school and its community, a theme that recalls in a more contemporary vein older explorations of this subject, such as *Best Intentions*. As the title implies, Lee explores issues of race as well as issues of class and status. While this exploration could be more substantial and rigorously examined, *The Prep School Negro* creates an opportunity for dialogue about the psychological toll that is extracted from students who feel that they must juggle multiple personas in order to fit into the disparate settings in which they find themselves. At this time, the film is offered only as a workshop conducted by Lee, who greatly enriches the movie with his discussion of the artistic process, his own journey through life, and what he has learned in countless discussions with students and independent school alumni who have had experiences similar to his own.

Christopher Lauricella, The Park School of Baltimore, NY

Loki Films, 2010



Finnish Envy

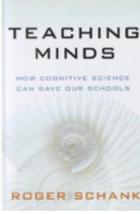
Schools We Can Envy, by Diane Ravitch

Why read another article or book about Finnish schools, the darling model of the international educational runaway? Because Ravitch has written an uncommonly clear review of *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* by Pasi Sahlberg, a former teacher and government official in Finland. And because in doing so she has captured the multiple ironies of a successful system that took America's progressive, Deweyan theory at its word and applied it, while we, the culture that bred Dewey, have embraced a test-driven race to the top. Should we envy a school system that has eschewed competition, abhors standardized tests, hires the best and brightest to teach and offers tutorial support from the start for kids who fall behind? The question is only rhetorical if one believes that the paradigm of this much smaller, more homogeneous culture is scalable. Ravitch's purpose is not to worship Finland's system, but to offer visions of alternate models in a two-part article, the second part of which will assess the impact of Teach for America.

Peter Herzberg, The Brearley School, NY

New York Review of Books, March, 2012

BOOKS



Teaching Cognition

Teaching Minds: How Cognitive Science Can Save Our Schools, by Roger Schank

The tag line for the author's blog reads, with barely disguised irony, "There are only two things wrong with education: 1) What we teach 2) How we teach it." Schank might say that the temptation to dismiss this as hyperbolic or incendiary is precisely why education is in the mess it is in. The take away message of this work is of deep fundamental value -- it is cognitive processes, and not discrete subject and content areas, that should form the foundation of how we go about preparing our students for life. While Schank avoids invoking the concept of "21st Century Skills," he reworks a longstanding progressive critique by illustrating the twelve cognitive processes that fit into our emerging sense of what is going to be important in the lives of our students. Schank describes three groups of cognitive processes: conceptual (prediction, modeling, experimentation and evaluating); analytic (diagnosis, planning, causation and judgment); and social (influence, teamwork, negotiation, describing). Several of the most accessible and meaningful categories that independent school teachers can use today (even within our current structures) are the concepts of prediction, planning, and negotiation. Involving and engaging students in the curricular questions of what and how they will learn is essential for nurturing the life-long learners so repeatedly described in our mission statements. This text can also nudge independent school leaders to ask good questions and challenge decisions about programs merely based on the way we have always done things.

Emily McCarren, Punahou School, HI

Teachers College Press, October 28, 2011



Attention Digital Disorder

Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn, by Cathy Davidson

Cathy Davidson, Professor at Duke University, has polarized public opinion on more than one occasion and her most recent book is likely to do the same. *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn* focuses on her new expertise and strong opinions on cognition and the science of attention in the digital age. She made news in 2003 when, as Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies at Duke University, she gave every freshman student an iPod. She invited and expected innovative learning and collaboration strategies to follow. Although some derided this untested digital largesse, public opinion began to shift toward her bold experiment as the results became evident. Her newest book outlines why she is optimistic about the digital age in education but also why she believes we are in peril if we do not become aware of how our attention actually functions and how multi-tasking in the internet age works for learners. Davidson is co-founder of the virtual organization HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory), an international organization open to everyone and dedicated to rethinking the future of digital learning. To read her work may help us to stop being afraid that digital life erodes attention and begin to effectively reconcile the potential of digital learning with changing educational paradigms.

Elizabeth Morley, Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Viking Press, 2011

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