AASA JOURNAL OF SCHOLARSHIP & PRACTICE

AASA THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION WWW.AASA.ORG

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

Summer 2014/Volume 11, No. 2

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Board of Editors

Published by the
American Association of School Administrators
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Available at www.aasa.org/jsp.aspx
ISSN 1931-6569

Sponsorship

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

We also would like to offer special thanks to Seton Hall University, in particular the College of Education and Human Services.

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

Without the support of AASA and Seton Hall University, the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would not be possible.

Research Article

Faculty Mobility and Its Influence on New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment Scores

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Abstract

This paper presents results from an examination of the relationships between high school (HS) faculty mobility and 2009-2010 New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) Math and Language Arts Literacy test results. Variables found to have an influence on standardized test scores in the extant literature were evaluated and reported. Hierarchical regression models were used to determine the strength of the predictive influence of these variables, specifically faculty mobility, on both HS Math and Language Arts Literacy student performance. Mixed results indicated that faculty mobility does not have a significant influence on HS LAL achievement but it does significantly contribute to the explained variance in HS Math achievement. Implications for practicing administrators are discussed.

Key Words

faculty mobility, high school student performance, working conditions

Introduction

There are many reasons for the mobility of faculty. Teachers cite a lack of support and poor working conditions as the primary factors (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005) for leaving a school or the profession. In a poll of 40,000 teachers regarding their job satisfaction, the majority agreed that supportive leadership, time for collaboration, access to high quality curriculum and resources, clean and safe buildings, and relevant professional development were more important than higher salaries (Smollin, 2011).

General reasons for faculty mobility in high poverty schools include family or personal reasons, retirement, lack of administrative support, or pursuit of another job (Ingersoll, 2000). However, for mathematics (and science) teachers, the most cited reason for leaving their jobs is inadequate administrative support (Sterling, 2004; Haberman & Richards, 1990; The Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; the United States Department of Education, 2001; Ingersoll, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

In education, the attrition of teachers and other staff members, including administrators, counselors, support staff, etc., is commonly referred to as "faculty mobility." Ingersoll (2001) reports that faculty mobility impacts the school organization regardless of whether those departing are moved to a similar job at another site in the district or leave the occupation altogether. The conceptual premise for this study is based upon Ingersoll's perspective, which views all faculty mobility as equally consequential.

Problem

A report from The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2011) reported that about 33% of the country's new teachers leave teaching sometime during their first three years on the job, asserting that teaching has become "a revolving door occupation" (Terry & Kristonis, 2008, p. 3). Nationwide, 46% of teachers quit before their fifth year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2011).

According to Terry & Kristonis (2008), the annual mobility rate of beginning teachers is 14%. Although no schools are immune to faculty mobility, the turnover in high-poverty urban schools is about twice that of low-poverty schools each year (Johnson et al., 2005). As a result, many urban schools function with greater rates of new and inexperienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Guin (2004) found that, in addition to hiring under-qualified and inexperienced staff, faculty mobility renders other consequences for schools and districts such as school instability, budgetary burden, and a decrease in student achievement. Additionally, a significant negative correlation exists between student performance and faculty mobility.

Schools with higher mobility rates had fewer students meeting standards on statewide assessments in both reading and math (Guin, 2004). The New York City Board of Education (1992) investigated teacher mobility and its relationship to student performance on the state's annual Regents tests and discovered that

teacher mobility had a weak but statistically significant relationship to student outcomes.

Researchers concur that the quality of a student's teacher is an important factor in determining his or her performance (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Therefore, it is critical for America's public schools to focus their efforts on both recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

The existing literature on the influence of faculty mobility on results from statewide tests is limited (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Terry & Kritsonis, 2008). We attempted to provide an in-depth analysis of the relation and possible influence of school, staff, and student mutable variables on high school student achievement with a focus on faculty mobility for an appropriate sample of secondary schools in the State of New Jersey.

Purpose

Our purpose for this study was to explain how much variance, if any, faculty mobility contributes to the aggregate student performance of New Jersey high schools, on HSPA Mathematics and Language Arts. We used multiple regression analyses to examine the school, staff, and student variables that potentially influence school-wide performance on the NJ HSPA Language Arts and Math.

Methodology

The State of New Jersey defines faculty mobility as "the rate at which faculty come and go during the school year" (New Jersey Department of Education, 2010, para. 44). New Jersey calculates faculty mobility by using the number of faculty who entered or left employment in the school after October 15 of that academic year divided by the total number of faculty reported as of that date (New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey School Report Card, 2010). However, New Jersey's definition of faculty mobility is all inclusive and does not differentiate between teachers, administrators, counselors, or other faculty members, nor does it differentiate between reasons for faculty departure.

The sample for the study was selected purposefully to represent only New Jersey's public, comprehensive, and academic secondary schools that reported all required information related to school, staff, and student variables to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

Of the 441 public secondary schools in New Jersey, 336 were included in the sample. Vocational schools, special services school districts/special education schools, jointures, and charter schools were excluded from the study to ensure all results obtained from the analysis could be attributed to a typical district or regional New Jersey public high school.

The association between New Jersey School Report Card variables, in particular faculty mobility, and 2009-2010 New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) Math and Language Arts Literacy test scores were evaluated and reported in this study.

The HSPA is used to determine student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics as specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in Grade 11. The NJ HSPA scores are scaled to fit into the 100-300 range of possible points available, where >200 is Passing/Proficient. The NJDOE makes results of the state assessments available

to the public via online School Report Cards (NJDOE, 2010), which allows for immediate comparisons of schools and districts.

The primary statistical method of analysis was multiple regression analyses. All regression analyses first utilized a "simultaneous" entry method model followed by a series of hierarchical regression models informed by the "simultaneous" outcomes (Witte & Witte, 2007). The block hierarchical model construction allowed the determination of the amount of change between models as predictor variables (i.e., staff, school, student mutable) were entered into the regression analysis. Their specific contribution to HSPA LAL and Math performance was examined thereafter. The results reported focus on those results obtained from the hierarchical models developed and run in SPSS (see Table 1).

Table 1

Models Analyzed in the Study

Hierarchical Regression Models		
LAL MODELS	Step 1	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate
	Step 2	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate Percentage of Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SPE) Socioeconomic Status (SES) School Size
	Step 3	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate Percentage of Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SPE) Socioeconomic Status (SES) School Size Faculty Mobility
MATH MODELS	Step 1	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate
	Step 2	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SPE) Percentage of Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) School Size Socioeconomic Status (SES)
	Step 3	Student Mobility Rate Student Attendance Rate Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SPE) Percentage of Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) School Size Socioeconomic Status (SES) MA+ Faculty Mobility

Results

The sample consisted of 336 public secondary schools in New Jersey that reported all required information relating to school, staff, and student variables to the New Jersey Department of Education. The average school size in the sample was approximately 1,150 students. The average percentage of students on free and reduced lunch was 31%. The average percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students was 3.7%, while the average of Special Education (SPE) students was 16%.

The average student attendance rate was 93%, and student mobility approached 9%. The average faculty attendance rate was 95%, and faculty mobility exceeded 4%. Approximately half of all faculty (50%) earned a master's degree or higher, and 99% were deemed highly qualified by New Jersey standards. The mean percentage of students who scored Proficient in HSPA LAL across New Jersey was 86%, with a standard deviation of 16%. In Math, the mean percentage of students who scored Proficient across New Jersey was 72%, with a standard deviation of 21%. The mean percentage of General Education students who scored Proficient in HSPA LAL across New Jersey was 92%, with a standard deviation of 15%. In Math, the mean of General Education students who scored Proficient across New Jersey was 79%, with a standard deviation of 21%.

As previously mentioned, Table 1 displays the variable entry method for each hierarchical regression model where HS performance on both the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL and Math assessments served as the dependent/outcome variables. The method of variable entry was determined by the initial simultaneous regression models run that were part of the larger study. It should be mentioned here that multi-collinearity was checked for all simultaneous entry model variables. In only two cases was there determined to be an issue at which time those variables were dropped from the models. Table 2 displays the results for the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for New Jersey high school performance results on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Language Arts Literacy (LAL) assessment.

Table 2

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for NJ HS Performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL

Variable	*B*	*SEB*	β	R^2	Adj. R^2
Step 1				**.67**	**.67**
Student Attendance	**2.86**	**.15**	**.65*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.66**	**.07**	**-.31*** **		
Step 2				**.74**	**.73**
Student Attendance	**2.61**	**.14**	**.59*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.53**	**.07**	**-.25*** **		
LEP	**-.25**	**.06**	**-.12*** **		
SPE	**-.25**	**.04**	**-.19*** **		
SES	**-.02**	**.01**	**-.09** **		
School Size	**.01**	**.01**	**.09** **		
Step 3				**.74**	**.73**
Student Attendance	**2.56**	**.14**	**.59*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.53**	**.07**	**-.25*** **		
LEP	**-.24**	**.06**	**-.11*** **		
SPE	**-.26**	**.04**	**-.19*** **		
SES	**-.02**	**.01**	**-.08** **		
School Size	**.01**	**.01**	**.08** **		
Faculty Mobility	**-.16**	**.09**	**-.05**		
Constant	**147.2**	**13.38**			

***p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001**

When student attendance and student mobility were entered in Step 1 of the regression, it significantly predicted LAL achievement, F (2, 333) = 338.41, $p < .001$, adjusted R^2 = .67, indicating that 67% of the variance in NJ HSPA LAL school performance can be explained by the Step 1 model or these two variables, respectively.

The negative beta value for student mobility indicated that schools with a lower rate of student mobility performed better on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL, accounting for 9.6% of the variance in performance. Student attendance accounted for 35% of the variance, favoring schools with better attendance rates.

When student attendance, student mobility, LEP, SPE, SES, and school size were entered in Step 2 of the model, the regression model's predictive power was improved, as evidenced by an R^2 change = .07, F (4, 329) = 20.92, $p < .001$, adjusted R^2 = .73. Four variables, student attendance, student mobility, LEP, and SPE were significant at $p < .001$ and two, SES and school size, at $p < .01$. Negative

betas indicated that schools with student populations demonstrating lower student mobility, fewer LEP and SPE student populations, and a fewer number of students on free and reduced lunch performed better on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL, whereas larger high schools performed better.

The strongest predictor variable in the model was student attendance, accounting for 35% of the variance in school performance on the NJ HSPA LAL. The second strongest predictor in the Step 2 model was student mobility, accounting for 6.3% of the overall model.

Step 3 of the model included all of the previous variables entered, with the addition of faculty mobility to determine what amount of the variance of school performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL, if any, could be explained by the inclusion of the variable of interest. When faculty mobility was included in the Step 3 model, R^2 change = .003, F (1, 328) = 3.53, $p > .05$. The inclusion of faculty mobility in Step 3 of the model did not significantly improve the overall predictive power of the final model, F (7, 328) = 133.29, $p < .001$, as is evidenced by no change in the adjusted $R^2 = .73$.

Consequently, both the Step 2 and Step 3 models accounted for 73% of the variance in High School performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL with all variables, except faculty mobility, significantly contributing to the models' predictive power.

The Step 3 model indicates that student attendance contributed the most explained variance to overall HS performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL, accounting for 35%; student mobility contributed 6.3%; LEP, 1.2%; SPE, 3.7%; SES, .7%; and school size, .65%. Faculty mobility was not found to be a significant predictor variable to HS performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL when controlling for student and school mutable variables.

Table 3 displays the results for the hierarchical multiple regression analysis for New Jersey high school performance results on the NJ 2009-2010 HSPA Mathematics (Math) assessment.

Table 3

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for NJ HS Performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math

Variable	*B*	*SEB*	β	R^2	Adj. R^2
Step 1				**.64**	**.64**
Student Attendance	**3.41**	**.20**	**.61*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.92**	**.10**	**-.34*** **		
Step 2				**.72**	**.71**
Student Attendance	**3.10**	**.18**	**.55*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.73**	**.09**	**-.27*** **		
LEP	**-.35**	**.08**	**-.13*** **		
SPE	**-.27**	**.05**	**-.16*** **		
SES	**-.04**	**.01**	**-.11*** **		
School Size	**.004**	**.001**	**.12*** **		
Step 3				**.73**	**.72**
Student Attendance	**2.94**	**.18**	**.53*** **		
Student Mobility	**-.69**	**.09**	**-.26*** **		
LEP	**-.34**	**.08**	**-.13*** **		
SPE	**-.29**	**.05**	**-.17*** **		
SES	**-.04**	**.01**	**-.10** **		
School Size	**.004**	**.001**	**.12*** **		
MA+ Faculty	**.13**	**.04**	**.10** **		
Mobility	**-.27**	**.11**	**-.07***		
Constant	**199.87**	**17.49**			

***p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001**

When student attendance and student mobility were entered in Step 1 of the regression, it significantly predicted 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math achievement, F (2, 333) = 298.72, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .64$, indicating that 64% of the variance in NJ HSPA Math HS school performance can be explained by the Step 1 model or these two variables, respectively.

The negative beta value for student mobility indicates that schools with the lower rate of student mobility performed better on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math, accounting for 11.7% of the variance in performance. Student attendance accounted for 37.2% of the variance, favoring schools with better attendance rates.

When student attendance, student mobility, LEP, SPE, SES, and school size were entered in Step 2 of the model, the regression model's predictive power was improved, as evidenced by an R^2 change = .08, F (4, 329) = 21.99, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .71$, indicating 71% of the variance in school performance in

HSPA Math can be explained by this model. All variables in the Step 2 model, student attendance, student mobility, LEP, SPE, SES, and school size, were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Negative betas indicate that schools with student populations demonstrating lower student mobility, fewer LEP and SPE student populations and a fewer number of students on free and reduced lunch performed better on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math, whereas students in larger high schools performed better.

The strongest predictor variable in the model was student attendance, accounting for 31% of the variance in school performance on the NJ HSPA Math. The second strongest predictor in the Step 2 model was student mobility, accounting for 7.4% of the overall variance.

Step 3 of the model included all of the previous variables entered with the addition of faculty mobility and MA+ to determine what amount of the variance of school performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math, if any, could be explained by the inclusion of the variable of interest.

The variable MA+ was found to be a statistically significant predictor in the simultaneous regression models run as part of the larger study; therefore, it was included in this analysis. When faculty mobility and MA+ were included in the Step 3 model, R^2 change = .01, F (2, 327) = 6.97, $p < .01$. The inclusion of faculty mobility and MA+ in Step 3 of the model did statistically significantly improve the overall predictive power of the model, F (8, 327) = 110.04, $p < .001$, as is evidenced by the slight change in the adjusted R^2 = .72.

The Step 3 model accounted for 72% of the variance in high school performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math with all variables, including faculty mobility, providing a significant contribution to the model's overall predictive power. The Step 3 model indicates that student attendance contributed the most explained variance to overall HS performance on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math, accounting for 27.6%; student mobility contributed 6.6%; LEP, 1.6%; SPE, 2.9%; SES, 1%; school size, 1.3%; MA+, .9%; and faculty mobility contributed .5% to the overall model.

The negative value of the beta and standardized beta coefficient for faculty mobility, $\beta = -.07$, indicated that high schools with lower rates of faculty mobility performed significantly better on the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA Math assessment than those with high rates of faculty mobility. Common to all models, the most significant predictor variable for explaining the amount of variance in HS performance on both the 2009-2010 NJ HSPA LAL and Math was student attendance, followed closely by student mobility.

Conclusions and Discussion

Results from our study suggest faculty mobility as a statistically significant but weak predictor of HSPA Math performance and not a statistically significant predictor of LAL performance.

Results are consistent with The New York City Board of Education's (1992) investigation of the correlation between teacher mobility and student performance on the state's Regents Testing.

Results from this study also mirror Marrone-Gemellaro's (2012) research on the influence of NJ School Report Card variables on NJ ASK 5 Scores, which found faculty mobility to have a weak, but statistically significant, influence on NJ ASK 5 Math scores, but not on LAL scores. This finding

may also suggest that other content areas (i.e., social studies, the sciences, etc.) might also be negatively impacted by faculty mobility, warranting the need for further study.

Student attendance was the strongest predictor of HSPA LAL and Math performance in all models reported in this study with a greater influence on LAL performance than on Math performance. This result conflicts with Jones' (2008) findings, where the student attendance rate was not a statistically significant predictor of NJ ASK 5 LAL scores. Similarly, results of the current study refute Clément's (2006) examination that detected no relationship between excused absences and performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT).

Student mobility has a slightly greater influence on Math than on LAL performance, consistent with data reported by Xu, Hannaway, & D'Souza (2009) between the years 1997 and 2005. The researchers found that minority and disadvantaged students had the highest mobility rates and that mobility presented a negative influence on math achievement. The same study found insignificant gains for reading scores, postulating that math is a more "school dependent" subject (Xu, Hannaway, & D'Souza, 2009).

The percentage of special needs students in a school (SPE*)* has a greater influence on LAL than on Math performance. Special education males outnumber females in a ratio of 2:1, according to Wehmeyer & Schwartz (2001). Kleinfeld (1998) explains that females typically exceed males in writing ability, reading achievement, and certain other verbal skills on standardized achievement tests. It is reasonable that SPE would stand as a reliable predictor of achievement since twice as many SPE males than females test in LAL.

The percentage of limited English proficient students in a school has a slightly greater influence on Math than on LAL performance. The results from this study are consistent with results of statewide assessments across the United States. This finding raises questions, as it is reasonable to expect Limited English Proficiency to be a strong predictor of Language Arts performance.

Student SES has a greater influence on Math than on LAL performance. These results are consistent with Xu, Hannaway, & D'Souza (2009), who discovered minority and disadvantaged students had the highest mobility rates and mobility presented a negative influence on math achievement. One can deduce, therefore, that SES largely influences math achievement.

School size has a greater influence on Math than on LAL performance. These results were anticipated since large school size is linked to city schools normally populated with lower SES students and SES is a determinant of math performance. Therefore, school size would be a predictor of Math performance.

The dichotomous results of this study are curious. The fact that faculty mobility was found to have no influence on student LAL performance in spite of equal or higher faculty mobility (Ingersoll & May, 2012; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010) might be attributed to "school" being a literacy-based environment, perhaps not in an explicit manner but certainly in an implicit fashion.

To some degree, students are constantly developing LAL skills, as all teachers in a school implicitly teach literacy skills. Math, on the other hand, can be considered a very discrete subject. The skills, knowledge, and cognitive processes for learning are unique to the content. Students are not likely to transfer

skills and proficiencies learned in other subject matter classes to this area of learning. Since "school" is a literacy-based milieu, students are encountering LAL skill development on an ongoing basis, both explicitly and implicitly.

Common sense seems to suggest that a stable faculty is important for a consistent delivery of instruction throughout the school year. However, results from this study suggest that it may not influence student performance, at least as it is measured by standardized assessments, quite as much as one would think.

Even in the area of mathematics, faculty mobility, although significant, is still a weak predictor when other variables are considered. This is not to say that school districts should not do everything possible to maintain, develop, and retain staff, specifically quality staff and young inexperienced staff. One-third of all novice teachers leave the profession in three years, and more than 40% leave within five. Consequently, some students rarely get the benefit of having an experienced teacher (Dillon, 2009). This is a serious problem that needs more attention.

School administrators need to do what they can under their locus of control to improve working conditions. Good working conditions are associated with better teacher attendance, more effort, higher morale, and a greater sense of efficacy in the classroom (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988).

Ascher (1991) identifies those working conditions to include (1) strong, supportive principal leadership; (2) high levels of staff collegiality; (3) high levels of teacher influence on school decisions; and (4) high levels of teacher control over curriculum and instruction as conducive to promoting a positive work environment. Additionally, Leithwood (1992) identifies strong leadership practices to be those which (1) help staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; (2) foster teacher development; and (3) help teachers solve problems more effectively.

What Leithwood and Ascher seem to imply is that school leaders need to empower teachers and staff so that they can more effectively meet the needs of their students and grow as professionals. A teacher's desire for different tasks and expanded authority may go unfulfilled in this historically flat, undifferentiated profession (Lortie, 1975).

However, new roles, such as mentor teacher, instructional coach, teacher leader, and grade level team leader, have begun to emerge throughout the profession and may be the mechanisms needed to better empower teachers and discourage them from seeking professional fulfillment elsewhere.

Teachers require assistance with their pedagogical goals and feedback based on empirical, as well as anecdotal, methods of teaching, which in turn will lend itself to enhancing student achievement. Strategies that offer the opportunity for enhancing teachers' sense of effectiveness, such as team teaching and joint planning, can be instituted in schools without the addition of major resources or restructuring (Corcoran et al., 1988) and can be another avenue for teacher empowerment and job satisfaction.

If past practice and the research tell us anything, they support the imperative that current practicing principals need to be actively involved in the recruitment, selection, and development of all staff, particularly those new to the profession.

They need to promote collegiality, collaboration, and autonomous decision making among teachers at all experience levels if they

are going to impede the high rate of faculty mobility, not only among those new to the craft, but specifically for those who serve in the areas of most need, our poor urban communities. The focus on both the quality and level of administrative support provided to our public school teachers is essential if the rate of faculty mobility is going to be amended and a consistency and continuity of instruction is going to be delivered to the students of our nation.

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Research Article

The Advanced Placement Opportunity Gap in Arizona: Access, Participation, and Success

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Abstract

Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and AP test-taking are widely viewed as indicators of students' college readiness. We analyzed enrollment in AP courses and AP test outcomes in Arizona to document disparities in students' access to rigorous curricula in high school and outline some implications of these patterns for education stakeholders. Findings suggest that although 80% of high schools in Arizona offered at least one AP course, the total number of AP courses offered varied considerably across schools. Small schools and schools that served higher percentages of minority students were less likely to offer a wide range of AP courses than large schools and schools with majority White student populations. Although Hispanic students were underrepresented in AP courses, they had the highest test-taking rate. Only a third of the Hispanic students who took AP courses passed the AP test.

Key Words

AP courses, opportunity gap, college readiness

Introduction

Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses is widely viewed as an indicator of a student's college readiness, particularly by selective colleges and universities (Geiser & Santelices, 2004). For this reason, AP courses and their corresponding exams play an important role in high school students' college preparation and admission. The College Board's AP Program supports 38 AP courses in a range of subjects including Calculus, Biology, World History, Studio Art, and foreign languages (see https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse).

Many colleges and universities offer college credit to students who receive a score of at least three out of five possible points awarded on AP exams. College students with AP credit are often able to skip general studies courses and take courses related to their majors earlier than students without AP credits.

We analyzed enrollment in AP courses and AP test outcomes in Arizona to document disparities in students' access to and participation in AP courses as well as pass rates of AP tests. Because AP enrollment and outcomes are often viewed as important metrics of high school students' access to rigorous curricula, our analysis highlights one dimension of what Carter and Welner (2013) described as the opportunity gap, or inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities.

We focused on Arizona because minority students are a majority of the state's public school population. In 2009-2010, Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students comprised 53% of public school students in Arizona (authors' calculations from Arizona Department of Education data).

Given that Arizona's demographics reflect what the demographics of the nation are projected to look like in 2025 (Glass, 2008), current patterns of educational access and opportunity in Arizona might provide insight into policy issues that school leaders in other states might face in the future.

Background

Participation in AP courses has increased during the past two decades because of the growing reputation of the AP program, colleges' increased reliance on AP course participation as a measure of college readiness, and federal policies aimed at expanding participation (College Board, 2011; Shaw, Marini, & Mattern, 2013). AP courses and exams have been touted as indicators of equity and excellence (The Education Trust, 2013; Hallett & Venegas, 2011).

Even after controlling for student background and prior academic performance, students who participate in AP courses and exams tend to perform better on a range of college outcomes than their peers who do not take AP courses (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Chajewski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; Mattern, Shaw, & Xiong, 2009; Scott, Tolson, & Lee, 2010; Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). Students who attend high schools that offer a greater variety of AP courses are more likely to enroll in more selective colleges and universities (Klugman, 2012).

Finally, students who pass an AP exam in high school and place out of introductory college courses do as well or better in advanced college courses than students who take their introductory courses in college (Burdman, 2000; College Board, 2011).

Though the claim that AP course-taking and performance are significant predictors of college success has been criticized by some (Geiser & Santelices, 2004; Sadler & Tai, 2007; Thompson & Rust, 2007) and supported by others (Shaw et al., 2013), there appears to be a greater consensus that AP course participation increases a student's chances of being admitted to college and receiving more financial aid (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming, & Trapani, 2002; Hacsi, 2004; Santoli, 2002), a finding that holds when controls for student demographic variables are included in the analysis (Chajewski et al., 2011).

Yet, there have been persistent inequalities in the distribution of AP courses across schools (The Education Trust, 2013; Hallet & Venegas, 2011). Students of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are enrolled in AP courses at lower rates than majority students (The Education Trust, 2013; Klopfenstein, 2004; Moore & Slate, 2008; VanSciver, 2006). School characteristics rather than student enrollment in AP courses are associated with AP course availability; schools serving low-income and minority students tend to offer fewer AP courses than their counterparts in more affluent communities (Barnard-Brak, McGaha-Garnett, & Burley, 2011; Dougherty, Millor, & Jian, 2006; Klopfenstein, 2004; Moore & Slate, 2008; Zarate & Pachon, 2006).

Purpose

Because AP course-taking has been linked to college success as well as college admissions, bureaucrats at the U.S. Department of Education have invested in efforts to increase the participation of low-income students in AP courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). More recently, federal officials in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights have worked with school districts to ensure that minority students have access to AP courses and other educational experiences aimed at increasing students' college readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to describe the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in AP courses in Arizona to explore disparities within the state's schools, determine the extent to which students are taking and passing AP tests, and outline the implications of these patterns of AP enrollments and outcomes for education stakeholders**.**

Method

The data for this analysis were drawn from the U.S. Department of Education's 2009-2010 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). The CRDC collects information on a wide range of school and district characteristics, including student enrollment and participation in educational programs and services by race/ethnicity, gender, limited English proficiency, and disability.

We selected all of the regular public high schools included in the CRDC dataset, which comprised all high schools in Arizona located in districts that served more than 3,000 students, and data on high schools in 21 smaller districts. Our final sample was comprised of 172 schools.

We checked our CRDC sample against the data available in the Common Core of Data (CCD) to assess the representativeness of the sample of schools used in our analysis. Forty-eight unified and high school districts were not included in the CRDC sample, all small districts with enrollments of less than 3,000 students. These 48 districts, over half of which (60%) were rural districts, enrolled 19,514 high school students. The 172 schools in our sample served 251,490 students, or 93% of the students

attending regular public high schools in Arizona. Because school districts with less than 3,000 students are underrepresented in the CRDC dataset, the number of high schools in Arizona that do not offer AP courses is likely higher than reported herein. In addition, only one Arizona charter school was represented in the CRDC dataset; therefore, we did not include charter schools in the analysis.

We calculated descriptive statistics using SPSS. The data allowed us to explore the availability and types of Arizona AP courses, as well as the demographic characteristics of schools and AP students.

Results

We began by looking at the characteristics of schools that offered one or more AP courses and compared these schools to schools that did not offer AP courses. Approximately 80% of the 172 public high schools in the sample provided at least one AP course, but the number of AP courses offered varied considerably. The majority (64%) of these schools were located in cities and suburbs and enrolled approximately 1,750 students on average. Sixty-four percent of the schools that offered AP courses provided between six and 15 courses, whereas 20% provided five or fewer.

The 34 schools that did not provide AP courses were among the smallest in our sample, with enrollments ranging from 20 to 860 students. The schools that did not offer AP courses served a total of 11,950 students, with an average enrollment of approximately 350 students. Seventy-four percent of these schools were located in small towns and rural areas of the state and served a substantially higher percentage of American Indian students and a lower percentage of White students than the full sample (see Table 1).

Within the group of 138 schools that offered at least one AP course, the smallest schools in the sample also offered fewer types of AP courses. While all of the largest schools offered AP mathematics and 77% offered AP science courses, only 41% of the schools in the bottom quartile for student enrollment (schools with 1,370 or fewer students) offered AP courses in math and science. Fifty-six percent offered AP mathematics and 53% offered AP science; 41% offered both.

Table 1

Demographics of Schools and AP Students

	All schools (172 schools)	Schools that did not offer AP courses (34 schools)	Schools that offered one or more AP courses (138 schools)	AP students (138 schools)
American Indian	6%	11%	4%	3%
Asian American	3%	1%	3%	6%
Black	6%	5%	6%	5%
Hispanic	39%	42%	38%	31%
White	46%	41%	48%	55%
Total Students	251,490	11,950	239,540	32,495

Source: Authors' calculations from CRDC data; figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The 138 schools that offered one or more AP courses enrolled a total of 239,540 students. Of those, 32,495 (14%) took at least one AP class. In nearly half (43%) of the schools that offered AP courses, 10% or fewer students enrolled in AP courses. Table 1 compares the racial demographics of schools that offered AP courses to the racial demographics of students who took one or more AP courses. On average, Asian American and White students were overrepresented in AP courses. Conversely, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students were underrepresented in AP courses. The AP participation gap for Hispanic students was substantial (7%). Because our measure of AP participation was broad (a student was counted as an AP student if he or she was enrolled in at least one AP course) we do not think the underrepresentation of Hispanic students we document here is attributable to the relatively fewer AP courses offered in smaller and rural schools.

We also examined the distribution of AP courses by the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch;

however, we were missing information on that variable for 15% of the schools, including all of the schools in one urban school district. These schools enrolled 31,100 students, or 12% of the students served by our sample of schools. Schools that were missing information on this variable tended to serve fewer minority students and offer a slightly higher number of AP classes than the schools with complete information on all variables. The correlation between the percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch and the percentage of minority enrollment was .84 (N=146, $p < .001$).

Although the results in Table 1 suggest that, on average, the racial demographics of Arizona students taking at least one AP course roughly mirrored the demographics of the schools they attended, these figures mask some school-level inequalities in access to AP courses. In 37 schools, Hispanic students, the second largest demographic group attending Arizona's public schools, were underrepresented in AP courses by more than 10 percentage points.

Our next step was to examine the association between school demographics and the number of AP courses offered. As the total school enrollment of Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students increased, the number of AP courses schools offered decreased. When White students comprised more than 50% of a school's student population, the number of AP courses offered tended to increase (see Table 2).

Table 2

Percentage Minority Enrollment and Number of AP Courses Offered

Percentage Minority Students	No AP courses	Between 1 and 5	Between 6 and 10	Between 11 and 15	Greater than 16
25% or less	18%	11%	18%	31%	48%
Between 26 and 50%	24%	22%	35%	33%	30%
Between 51 and 75%	32%	19%	20%	23%	17%
Greater than 75%	26%	48%	27%	13%	4%

Source: Authors' calculations from CRDC data; figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Table 3 provides an overview of AP test-taking and outcomes. Fifty-four percent of the 32,495 students enrolled in one or more AP courses took AP tests in at least one subject, and 32% of enrolled students passed at least one AP test. Although Hispanic students were the racial/ethnic group with the largest proportion of test takers (61%), only 26% of the Hispanic students enrolled in AP courses passed at least one AP test. White and Asian students had lower rates of AP test-taking than Hispanic students but passed AP tests at higher rates. As Table 1 indicates, American Indian students had the least access to AP courses and the lowest participation rates among all racial/ethnic groups. They also had the lowest test-taking and test-passing rates.

Table 3

Student Enrollment, Test Taking, and Outcomes

	Enrollment in AP courses	Percentage tested	Percentage of enrolled students who passed one or more AP exam
American Indian	560	21%	8%
Asian	2,600	52%	37%
Hispanic	8,410	61%	26%
Black	1,495	40%	14%
White	19,430	53%	35%
Total	32,495	54%	32%

Discussion

Enrollment in Advanced Placement courses continues to increase nationally, but disparities between the percentage of White students and the percentage of minority students taking AP courses persist. Simply put, fewer students of color have access to AP courses because their schools either do not offer AP courses or offer only a limited selection (see Table 2).

The data for Arizona mirror the national pattern of increased participation in the aggregate and inequitable course availability for Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students (The Education Trust, 2013). Unequal access to high-quality education places many minority and low-income students at a disadvantage when curriculum-based or content-focused achievement tests such as the AP test become increasingly important in the college admissions process (Shaw et al., 2013).

According to the Education Trust (2013), if these students were equally served, more than 640,000 additional students of color and low-income students would benefit nationally. Notably, Arizona students' test-taking and test-passing rates are well below the national average (College Board, 2011). Nationwide, 28% of the class of 2010 took at least one AP exam in high school and 17% scored three points or higher, while the corresponding figures for Arizona students' test-taking and test-passing rates were 16% and 9%, respectively.

Implications

Marzano (2003) argued that a "guaranteed and viable curriculum," or a combination of the opportunity to learn a challenging curriculum and time, is the school-level factor that contributes the most to student achievement. A school-level factor refers to a feature of schools that can be changed without a large increase in resources. All students should have access to college preparatory curricula such as those available in AP courses, as well as equal opportunities to compete in the college admissions process. Klepfer and Hull (2012) demonstrated that taking AP courses can help mitigate the effects of below-average achievement and economic disadvantage in high school on students' post-secondary success.

The college persistence rates of low-income and low-achieving students who took AP courses closely resembled those of their high-income, high-achieving peers.

This is significant because researchers have shown that the individual and social returns to education are substantial. College graduates are more likely to register to vote, delay marriage and childbearing, have lower divorce rates, and have a higher probability of being employed than their less educated peers (Avery & Turner, 2012; Long, 2010).

On average, college graduates earn 84% more than high school graduates over the life course (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). As Levin (2009) highlighted, increasing educational equity or closing the opportunity gap makes economic sense because of the direct effects on individuals' earnings as well as the indirect societal benefits.

Our analysis indicated that access, enrollment, and achievement gaps in AP course-taking continue to be salient in Arizona. High schools in low-income or rural areas may not be able to attract or retain teachers trained to teach AP courses (Monk, 2007). Minority students often experience barriers to participation in AP courses (Sheperd, 2008; Tyson, 2013).

Teachers or counselors may not refer students to AP classes because of perceptions about their academic abilities or educational goals (Campbell, 2012). Some students are reluctant to enroll in AP courses because they are afraid they will not be academically successful or that they will be among the few minority students in these classes (Tyson, Darity & Castellino, 2005).

Finally, some districts that serve working class and racially diverse student populations may be reluctant to increase AP course offerings because district administrators perceive little demand and need among their students and view other resource and staffing needs as more pressing (Klugman, 2013). These issues highlight the need for inclusive and equitable policies and programs aimed at increasing access, test-taking, and preparing students for AP courses and examinations.

Though the Arizona Department of Education receives federal funds to provide partial exam fee waivers for AP students eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, these funds are directed toward students and do not help low-income and rural schools expand their AP course offerings or improve students' academic preparation for AP courses. Investments in rigorous curricula, course materials, and highly qualified teachers should be targeted at the communities with the highest needs to ensure they have the means to support expanded enrollment (Holstead, Spradlin, McGillivray, & Burroughs, 2010).

In Arizona, Hispanic students, the most underrepresented group in AP course-taking, have a high AP test-taking rate but a low AP test-passing rate. This suggests that once enrolled, these students are interested in the opportunities AP courses provide.

Such students would benefit from academic support to help them pass AP exams. District and school leaders should also consider modifying policies that limit AP course enrollment to students with the highest academic achievement (Tyson, 2013) and develop programs and strategies to prepare students for AP rigor (Flores & Gomez, 2011).

For example, schools and districts should examine the curricula of prerequisite or gateway classes and the content covered in existing AP courses to confirm that students are well prepared for AP classes and exams (Hallett & Villegas, 2011).

Another promising strategy for expanding the AP pipeline is to identify academically promising middle school students and ensure they are enrolled in rigorous and challenging classes as they transition into high school (VanSciver, 2006). Teacher training, online courses, and student incentives should also be explored as avenues for increasing student access, enrollment, and success in AP classes (Holstead et al., 2010; Sheperd, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Making rigorous curricula available to all students should be an imperative for all schools. Because AP courses can help bridge gaps in college access and achievement, expanding students' access to a broader range of AP courses and expanding students' participation in courses and testing is vital (The Education Trust, 2013). As Berliner (2013) and others have observed, "It's really the opportunity gap, not the achievement gap …" (para. 8; see also Welner & Carter, 2013).

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Commentary

Education Reform As a "Weapon of Mass (Education) Destruction" Versus Artful Resistance As a "Weapon of Mass Creation"

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Abstract

For the purposes of this article, I am advocating for a set of creative educational practices that are artistic in process and product, which are established with the intent of resisting, refusing, and revolutionizing the ways in which we conceive of, or embody, education praxis in public schools. As predatory reformers attempt to colonize public education, via private corporate interests (Ravitch, 2013) laying "claim" to everything from assessment, curriculum, instruction, instructional materials (including literature used for reading instruction), data collection, and delivery models, it is imperative that to resist these efforts we creatively re-imagine how we work together; it is "possible to articulate a set of parameters for solidary relations through which to imaginatively construct new ways of entering into relations with others" (Gatzambide-Fernandez, 2012, p. 145).

Key Words

education reform, art, democracy

"I can easily picture the worst, because the worst can easily happen."
EUGENE IONESCO, *Rhinoceros (1959)*

In 2011, I was invited by my colleague Tom Poetter to write the forward to his powerful book *Education Leadership in the 21st Century*. In that forward one thing I stated was:

> *Educators are at war* (my emphasis) with policy "reform." They are fighting to defend the professionalism of their vocation. They are in a war wrought at the hands of a dominant ideology called corporate "reform" that generates a fear-based culture in which panic leads to the surrender of critical thought and democratic rights, ironically cloaked in an ideology of morality and freedom. (p. 2)

At the time, I mused that perhaps my language was a bit on the strong side. Now, in 2014, I no longer feel that way. In fact, I have recently revised my language to more strongly identify what is now happening in education policy. It is "predatory reform" (McDermott, 2014).

Using a language of fear; i.e., that our "failing education system" is a "threat to national security," predatory reformers rely on a societal instinct for security to trump any desire for meaningful and sustainable public education. Beginning with the crisis narrative spawned by *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner et al., 1983) thirty years ago, this fear-driven push for reform continuously resurfaces, most recently with a 2012 report by the Council on Foreign Relations[1]. Spearheading this report, task force leaders Condoleeza Rice and Joel Klein (2012) claim, "Educational failure puts the United States' future economic prosperity, global position, and physical safety at risk" (para. 2).

The answer in 1983 and now is the same: more testing, more micromanagement, and more accountability:

> The report advocates three education policy changes to counter the acknowledged "national security concern": (1) increased assessment and expectations in subjects critical to the nation's security; (2) increased choice and competition to spur academic invention; (3) a publicly available "national security readiness audit" that would increase school and legislator accountability (2012, para. 8).

Translation: test more, track data, turn schools into venture capital pet projects via "academic invention," and hold everyone accountable except the testing companies and politicians. Educators, students, and parents *are* at war with predatory reformers. In an effort to micromanage every millisecond of school activities in the name of "security," invasive and abusive surveillance techniques such as high stakes standardized testing are employed. When fear arises, the impulse for control is never far behind. However, this pernicious cycle begs the questions: What (or better, who) are we controlling? What are we afraid of? Are these fears real or manufactured? Are greater surveillance and control techniques working? For whom are they working? And what are we losing, or ignoring?

[1] http://www.cfr.org/united-states/uzsz-education-reform-national-security/p27618

Bad Policy

The poet William Wordsworth (1888) once noted, "We murder to dissect" (p. 187). Numerous accounts from school districts across the country, from Chicago to Seattle to Long Island, report that what the policies proliferated by education bureaucrats are dissecting are students and what those practices brought on by those policies are "murdering" are students' chances at a meaningful education (Brady, 2011).

Research indicates strong correlations between high stakes testing and increased (1) dropout rates, and (2) disciplinary problems leading to the school-to-prison pipeline (Fairtest, 2011; NYCLU [2]; Kilpatrick, 2010). Translating these findings, we might conclude that increased accountability policies via testing in the name of national security are sending more children out onto the streets without diplomas and into the prison pipeline.

Solórzano (2008) points out that in states like Texas and New York, which use high-stakes testing as a graduation requirement, disproportionate numbers of Blacks and Latinos and English Language Learners are failing the tests and as a result are being "retained, tracked, and denied graduation" (as cited in Kern, 2013 p. 312).

This is all ironic because research also indicates that creative, arts-based, culturally relevant classrooms improve student achievement (Horowitz & Webb-Dempsey, 2003; Eisner, 1998). It appears as if we eliminate that which research indicates works in favor of what research shows does not. According to Dillon (2006), The Center for Education Policy reported that 70% of the nation's school districts have eliminated courses to make more time for math and reading.

This, despite research (Catteral, 2012) which has demonstrated correlations between arts activity among students labelled as "at-risk youth" and "positive academic and social outcomes in comparison to students who did not participate in those programs" (p.11). We ought to be rightly concerned that because of loopholes in policy, new reform initiatives driven by high-stakes testing, including charters and vouchers, "will continue to marginalize students with exceptionalities, minorities, and students in poverty, as well as arts and humanities programs" (Hourigan, 2014, p. 35).

In an era of rising surveillance and accountability, most of what teachers teach and students learn is now under the magic microscope of Common Core standards and a new testing regime which attaches scores to teachers' jobs, school closures, and children's opportunities.

Push Back

Yet, there remain some avenues by which we might push back. If we are at war and education is a matter of national security as Arne Duncan and the panel of self-proclaimed education experts have been saying ever since *A Nation at Risk*, we might consider retaliating against these "weapons of mass reform" with "weapons of mass creation" (Donnelly, 2014). Creativity and the arts, enacted in the necessary spaces with the necessary people, can, and should, be our main source of resistance.

[2] http://www.nyclu.org/issues/youth-and-student-rights/school-prison-pipeline

Of course, there are two major caveats to this suggestion.

First, we have to push beyond the idea that the arts make learning "fun." Not that it does not—for most people, at least. But to reduce artful and creative experiences to little more than a form of entertainment delegitimizes the potential of artful forms of expression to disrupt dominant and oppressive systems of reform. Students uniformly coloring in "Santa faces" (Jardine et al., 2006) on the Friday before winter break can hardly be considered meaningful, much less radical.

If art is merely "fun," it is far easier to eliminate it from schools on the grounds that students need to learn "the basics." Similarly, relying on a formalized museum conception of "art for art's sake" (Anderson, 2010; Gablik, 1991) as something done by an elite few, we abandon the authority of all art production to the lone artists, museum curators, and philanthropists to represent the artist's voice for our society.

But the arts can also empower students and teachers to voice dissent and to critically re-examine the world around them. And I think the reformers know this. As Salman Rushie (2012) states:

> Originality is dangerous. If you want to increase the sum of what is possible for human beings to say, to know, to understand, and to therefore in the end, to be, you actually have to go to the edge and push outwards … This is the kind of art whose right to exist we must not only defend but celebrate. Art is not entertainment. At its very best, it's a revolution. (para.12).

Secondly, in tandem with my first point, we must recognize that *The Arts* (my emphasis and caps) "don't *do* anything" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 211). We need to move beyond a totalizing discourse that suggests "art" in and of itself raises consciousness or changes oppressive systems. If anything, Gaztambide-Fernández suggests that while we romanticize the magic power of "the arts," they can easily (and quite often) reproduce the (same) "oppressive character of mainstream schooling" (p. 213) that many arts-based educators hope to transgress. Rather, the arts are a "set of discourses implemented within a context" (p. 214). As such, these "discourses of the arts both arise out of and continually reify hierarchical conceptions of artistic practices in education and broader society" (p. 214). The arts, like any system of meaning-making (Rolling, 2011), can be as oppressive (or as liberating) as the context, audience, historical moment, and creators determine they will be.

For the purposes of this article, I am advocating for a set of creative educational practices that are artistic in process and product, which are established with the intent of resisting, refusing, and revolutionizing the ways in which we conceive of, or embody, education praxis in public schools. As predatory reformers attempt to colonize public education, via private corporate interests (Ravitch, 2013) laying "claim" to everything from assessment, curriculum, instruction, instructional materials (including literature used for reading instruction), data collection, and delivery models, it is imperative that to resist these efforts we creatively re-imagine how we work together; it is "possible to articulate a set of parameters for solidary relations through which to imaginatively construct new ways of entering into relations with others" (Gatzambide-Fernandez, 2012, p. 145).

I am advocating for artful actions and engagements invoked in, with, and through disempowered educational communities, some–but not all–of whom might be artists, who are talking back against education reform.

So Why Is Art A Necessary Facet of Education, Democracy, and Resistance?

Hedges (2012) states, "Artists, writers, poets, activists, journalists, philosophers, dancers, musicians, actors, directors and renegades must be tolerated if a culture is to be pulled back from disaster" (para. 1).

Such "renegades" are necessary to begin seriously questioning what counts as learning and knowledge generation. In a post 9/11 world where the unknown equals fear, policy- makers justify raising the stakes. Their ever-widening circles of data collection and tracking are justified in the name of "measuring outcomes."

What we need is to re-center the search for *generative uncertainty* as a valuable process in education. Can we recapture the idea of the unknown as something to be embraced, and not to be erased? We need to take more risks, as teachers and learners, not only in the day-to-day learning process; we must take risks to reclaim public education from the hands of predatory reformers.

But how might art invite risk-taking? The poet Charles Bukowski in a poem titled *Style* (1975) states:

> *Style is the answer to everything.*
> *A fresh way to approach a dull or dangerous thing*
> ***To do a dangerous thing with style is what I call art*** *…*
> *Bullfighting can be an art*
> *Boxing can be an art*
> *Loving can be an art*
> *Opening a can of sardines can be an art*
> *Style is the difference, a way of doing, a way of being done*

Teaching ought to be a dangerous thing done with style. Because it *is* an art. And true learning is dangerous, because it invites change. As cited earlier, the arts can re-inscribe oppressive and colonizing effects on classrooms … or it can offer a process of solidarity and resistance, in which we "teach to transgress" (hooks, 1994). In a dangerous style, we might invoke questioning and a challenge of *what is* for *what might be*. Science is good stuff. It gives us solid information to help guide educational practices. But science should be a tool, not a way of *doing*, in education. Artists use science in their craft. But the end results are far greater than the processes employed. As the poem says, education as dangerous style, as a way of doing, as a way of being done, *creates all the difference*. Artful teaching is *not* the absence of standards. Artful and creative teachers are not afraid of assessments or evaluation. They are afraid of being reduced to a number. They are afraid of a single, narrow, imposed definition of science. They reject the idea that a score can tell you what you need to know about a child.

Teaching as dangerous style requires emergence.
Sometimes we don't know what is going to happen during the act of learning. Personal interests and connections to content can cause excitement and originality to emerge in the middle of a lesson. Dangerous style lets a teachable moment in the classroom go where it needs to go. God forbid! The content explored might not even be on the test. The fact that it matters to students should matter more, don't you think**?**

Teaching as dangerous style requires collaboration.
Teachers work together. Creativity isn't something a teacher goes into the back room and mixes up in a beaker. It happens through our communities when we share a common vision and look toward our imagination for solutions "built on empathy, democracy, and social justice" (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, & Stuhr, 2010, p. 15). We must detach our schools and children from the "number thumpers" who want to isolate teachers from one another and who promote competition against one another as the model for students and schools. "Race to the Top" is a name that in itself suggests that there must also be losers.

Teaching as dangerous style requires transformation.
Educational goals cannot always be predicated on the outcomes or objectives written by someone hundreds of miles away in some office building working for a textbook company. He or she does not know the unique needs of individual children or how learning must be creatively accommodated to meet each student's needs. The writers of those scripted objectives do not know individual communities. Meaningful learning can hardly be fully ascertained even by a good educator modifying standards to his or her particular students when the effects of that teaching are measured by fixed and standardized instruments.

The content of what we teach, even if it is standards-based, *must* reflect the needs and identities of children. It must be determined by locally developed, creative and *purposeful* assessments. The culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings,1995; Sleeter, 2005) adjustments needed from day to day, from classroom to classroom, and child to child do not come in a teacher's manual. They come from creative problem solving. They come from being open to imagine what each child needs and how best to *create* that learning space for him or her. *They do not come* on a standardized test. And yet, educators are coerced into a system which undermines the creative capacities of students and teachers.

The Art of Creative Resistance

Effective resistance requires some sort of solidarity. We need a solidarity formed through creative systems that embrace multiplicity, ambiguity, and the unknown. We are confronted with a system of corporate-led, federally-fed, top-down structures (Tienken, 2013) so wide and so deep, and so lacking in transparency, that we have little idea where it begins or where it might end.

Speaking of "creative solidarity," Gatzambide-Fernandez (2010) writes:

> What do I mean by creative solidarity? I mean a solidarity that underscores a way of being with each other that contingently presents itself against a sense of normalcy and coherence. I mean a solidarity that operates under the assumption that we are incomplete, in the process of becoming, a future anterior … not a solidarity that assumes commonness and sameness, but one that assumes difference; not a solidarity that builds boundaries to protect resources but one that enters an interstitial space between boundaries, that creates a third space; not a solidarity that stands on the notion that a core identity will be detained or will be retained. (p. 315).
> In this sense, solidarity is not synonymous with "unity."

Its possible meaning is not predetermined nor its actions prescribed for us. *Solidarity is not defined by, nor defines, who we are but builds upon what we do.* For example, being in creative solidarity does not demand that all teachers take some same action because they are teachers as a unified identity. Forms of creative solidarity are less a call to teachers, telling them, "You must do this …" by virtue of their identity as a teacher as much as it is a journey that each of us takes, compelled by our individual purposes or experiences, and through which we find each other along the way.

Solidarity, not in our common identity but in our shared fight toward a reclaiming of teaching and learning, one that exceeds the "benefits" any single one of us might receive, is our course of action. We stand together as we move forward. Solidarity becomes a verb instead of a descriptive noun.

We must find cracks, fissures, little and big ways into, and around, existing power structures. This can only happen through our relational imaginative capacities. Drawing on Alfred North Whitehead's complexity theory for understanding the universe, Gatzambide-Fernandez suggests that solidarity conceived as a creative act is "chaotic" in that it cannot be manifest in some preceding design; it will emerge of its own accord, with no template, no plan, no unifying body to direct its course. For Whitehead, creativity "only exists in the manifestations of creativity in the world; it does not have an existence separate from this" (Halewood, n.d., para. 17).

The second way in which creativity is needed for resistance is that we must be creative in how we approach our acts of civil disobedience, our acts of dissent, and empower ourselves and others to change the system because the system right now *is moving in the wrong direction* And our (shared) creative capacities might offer new visions and actions for fighting back. We have to begin drawing from a new well of ideas and resources that provoke artful and imaginative possibilities.

It is our most powerful weapon. Kevin Zeese (2012) of the Occupy movement echoes this idea of creative solidarity:

> Mass movements have to be diverse … creativity of tactics is critical to our success. With diversity you bring to the movement different histories, different ideas, different identities, different experiences, and different forms of nonviolent tactics. (para 4).

In order to control for the purposes of "security," we eliminate creative risk taking. Wayne Au (2012) writes, "Get one generation as the 'tested generation' and we'll have a bunch of educators who cannot effectively imagine an alternative." When that happens, who will fight for the inclusion of creativity in any school environment? No one.

But how well do we prepare our teachers to approach education as a creative process done with dangerous style? What must we do to eradicate the weapons of mass education destruction?

First, teachers need to take back their profession. Teachers need creativity in order to imagine a new narrative, to re-create their *own* identities. They need opportunities both in teacher preparation programs and professional development venues to discover how to take generative and creative risks. It is clear enough by now that what we are calling for (demanding, really) and our actions are both deemed "dangerous." We might creatively engage with what James Rolling (2010) calls a "pedagogy of possibility" (2010, p. 99). No one teacher or administrator can do it alone. This is why creative solidarity becomes a necessity. We have all had moments where others have told us to remain silent …" "or else …" We have had our jobs threatened for writing or saying something that "might get us in trouble." We have felt negative backlash for opting our kids out of high-stakes testing. We have been reassigned to the most difficult teaching positions to "teach us to be quiet."

One has to seriously wonder if we are still living in a democratic society when speaking the truth, grounded in facts and research, makes one appear crazy. It makes one wonder about the sanity of those who are fearful of one and perceive one as a threat. It makes one wonder how much Kool Aid is actually being poured into the citywide water systems.

Creativity and complacency cannot exist in the same space. Which do we want for our children and for ourselves? A world that is constructed for us by others, or one in which we possess the tools to make one for ourselves? What is our choice to be? We need creativity, not compliance, to re-imagine and protect our public schools. We need to imagine and enact "weapons of mass creation" (Donnelly, 2014). And we need teachers, great teachers, to show us how it can be done.

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Morna McDermott teaches theory and methods courses in Towson University's College of Education in Towson, MD. Her scholarship and research interests focus on democracy, social justice, and arts-informed inquiry in K-post secondary educational settings, and working with beginning and experienced educators. She explores how the arts serve as a form of literacy that challenges traditional classroom learning and dominant narratives. Her most recent book with Information Age Press is entitled *The Left Handed Curriculum: Empowering Educators through Creativity.* She is also one of the founding administrators for the group United Opt Out National. E-mail: mmcdermott@towson.edu

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AASA Resources

- AASA has partnered with one of the nation's premier leadership development organizations, The SUPES Academy, to create **The AASA National Superintendent Certification Program.** The 2-year program, launched this past summer in California, focuses on sharpening the skills that successful superintendents acknowledge are needed to thrive on the job.

  School system leaders who complete the program are eligible to receive 24 credits—a monetary value of approximately $25,000—toward a doctor of education degree administered by Nova Southeastern University.

  For more information go to AASA's home page at www.aasa.org and click on the link to The AASA National Superintendent Certification Program or visit http://www.aasa.org/superintendent-certification.aspx or contact The AASA National Certification Program Offices, toll free, at 855-803-7547.

- Learn about **AASA's books program** where new titles and special discounts are available to AASA members. The AASA publications catalog may be downloaded at www.aasa.org/books.aspx.

- **Join AASA** and discover a number of resources reserved exclusively for members. Visit www.aasa.org/Join.aspx. Questions? Contact C.J. Reid at creid@aasa.org.

- **Upcoming AASA Events**
  Visit www.aasa.org/conferences.aspx for information.

  - ✓ **2014 Legislative Advocacy Conference, July 8-10, 2014, Washington, D.C., Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill**

  - ✓ **2014 AASA & ACSA Women in School Leadership Forum, October 2-3, 2014, Rohnert Park, Calif., Doubletree by Hilton**

  - ✓ **2015 National Conference, February 26-28, 2015, San Diego, Calif., San Diego Convention Center celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the founding of AASA Note: Call for Proposals is Now Open until May 26th**

- ✓ **2016 National Conference, Feb. 11-13, 2016, Phoenix, Ariz., Phoenix Convention Center**