2007 Annual Meeting Theme

The World of Educational Quality

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The theme of the 2007 AERA Annual Convention is "The World of Educational Quality." This theme can be interpreted in a number of ways and points to both an expanded range of inquiry and an intensified focus on the meaning of quality in education research and practice.

The theme highlights the importance of attending to educational systems and education research outside the United States. There are efforts around the globe, in both developed and developing nations, to reform educational systems, improve equity of access and opportunity, and strengthen student learning. Many of the reform attempts show similarities to recent initiatives in the United States, but others are quite distinctive. Some of reform accomplishments—in improving literacy and educational mobility, for example—have been dramatic. Knowledge gained in one nation or setting may have implications for policy and practice in many others, and researchers and policymakers increasingly recognize the importance of a comparative perspective on education and education research. This Call for Proposals encourages work that looks beyond our own borders.

The term "World" is also intended to stimulate greater attention to disciplines outside education research. Numerous other disciplines have developed perspectives, methods, and empirical findings that have substantial potential for advancing research in education. The call solicits work that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of our field and that applies novel methods to educational problems or finds useful ways to integrate the methods and perspectives of other disciplines.

The theme calls for a heightened focus on the quality of the educational enterprise. Many people have come to see quality as largely synonymous with rising test scores; this call refocuses our attention on the diverse aspects of educational quality. It solicits investigations of many other aspects of student growth and accomplishment—for example, students' ability with transfer tasks and students' acquisition of important personal dispositions, such as effort and resilience—as well as the quality of the educational endeavor itself, for example, the quality of teachers and other school personnel, school organizations, curricula, and assessment systems.

Finally, the call solicits an intensified focus on the quality of education research. It invites an expanded discussion of the criteria for evaluating the rigor and utility of research, a discussion that reflects both advances in the social sciences and the broadened perspective on practice and research that motivates the call. It requests new examples of the best we might accomplish in our efforts to contribute to improved educational policy and practice.