Theme: “Non Satis Scire: To Know Is Not Enough”

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The mission of AERA is “to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.” Our mission is sound.

We have been vigilant in executing the first half of our mission: We hold each other to high standards, we review critically each other’s scholarship, and we invest significant time and energy in an effort to publish only the best education research. We have been less vigilant and less effective, however, in promoting “the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.” In an effort to pursue more fully our mission—and to emphasize the use of education research—the 2012 Annual Meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, will include a host of innovative sessions and special events designed to engage AERA members and other participants in intense dialogue on the theme “Non Satis Scire: To Know Is Not Enough.”

While we as education researchers wholeheartedly agree that “to know” is critically important, we also recognize that the scholars who penned our organization’s mission statement were, indeed, visionaries. They realized that we would need to act effectively on what we know so that we would remain relevant as an organization. In these times when far too many children and adults in our global society have suffered—and continue to suffer—marginalization, neglect, and denigration, we must be vigilant in ensuring that our research is seen in the language of policy and legislation, as well as in the actions of teachers, administrators, school boards, parent groups, community organizers, foundations, and government officials.

We are challenged by our own mission statement with an imperative: to promote more effectively the use of research to improve education and, thereby, serve the public good. To that end, we must coalesce around what we know as a profession and act more effectively on that knowledge: Education must become the agent rather than the object of change as we expand our vigilance to ensure that our research is central to the enterprise of educating human beings in all circumstances, in all countries, and in all human conditions.

In her conclusion of The Flat World and Education, Linda Darling-Hammond included the following episode recounted by Martin Luther King in 1968:

I said to my children, “I am going to work and do everything that I can do to see that you get a good education. I don’t ever want you to forget that there are millions of God’s children who will not and cannot get a good education, and I don’t want you feeling that you are better than they are. For you will never be what you ought to be until they are what they ought to be.”

Dr. King’s statement serves to remind us that, as a profession, education research will never be what it ought to be until we promote more actively the use of that research to improve education so that it serves all learners well.
We, therefore, look forward to the 2012 Annual Meeting, where we will have opportunities to dialogue about how we can more effectively fulfill the second part of our mission. The theme of AERA’s 2012 Annual Meeting is intended to encourage submissions that not only promote discussion on how our members are already operationalizing our full mission but also present suggestions on what actions should be taken by the education research community to ensure that research knowledge is used to improve education and actually serve the public good. We encourage submissions that:

- Present historical perspectives on how AERA has fulfilled this part of the mission over the years,
- Emphasize innovative approaches to operationalize our full mission,
- Report scholarship on the promotion of education research,
- Review the literature on how other local, national, and international organizations promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good,
- Analyze poststructural critiques on the promotion of education research,
- Examine innovative scholarship by researchers whose work is currently being used to improve education and serve the public good,
- Explore how we might look to the future to unite in purpose and action to accomplish our mission to the fullest extent.

In an effort to provoke critical discussion, we have commissioned essays by leading scholars in the field that speak to the issue of “what we know that we know” and what we should do with that knowledge. Essays will be posted on the AERA website over the months immediately following the 2011 Annual Meeting. These essays are designed to provoke our thinking as we prepare to advance our submissions to the online system for the 2012 Annual Meeting. Our intent is that the 2012 Annual Meeting will stimulate a new dialogue about the contributions that education research can make to the public good. And we propose that every annual meeting attendee will leave Vancouver with a clearer vision of how to live out the true meaning of our commitment: “to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.”