WASHINGTON, March 30, 2009—With the need for excellent teachers for every student becoming increasingly apparent, education researchers are studying classroom practices to determine those that lead to improvements in learning. The March issue of Educational Researcher, published by the American Educational Research Association, features four articles on observational tools that hold promise for advancing classroom instruction. Taken together, the Educational Researcher articles present evidence that classroom observers, software, and teacher logs can help teachers individualize and improve their instruction. Moreover, the use of such tools can facilitate future research studies that examine classroom practices and describe effective instruction.

- **The ISI Classroom Observation System: Examining the Literacy Instruction Provided to Individual Students** by Carol McDonald Connor, Florida State University; Frederick J. Morrison, University of Michigan; Barry J. Fishman, University of Michigan; Claire Cameron Ponitz, University of Virginia; Stephanie Glasney, Phyllis S. Underwood, Shayne B. Piasta, Elizabeth Coyne Crowe, and Christopher Schatschneider, Florida State University.

Through use of an Individualizing Student Instruction (ISI) classroom observation and coding system, researchers examine whether children in ISI intervention classrooms receive recommended amounts of instruction, based on their language and literacy skills. They can then compare literacy growth in those students who received individualized instruction with the achievement of children receiving instruction that is not specifically individualized. Using the results, the researchers can begin to define how effective classrooms function to ensure achievement.

- **“Where Is the Action?” Challenges to Studying the Teaching of Reading in Elementary Classrooms**, Robert G. Croninger and Linda Valli, University of Maryland

The results of this 5-year longitudinal study of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers describe challenges researchers face in determining exactly how, in the complex environment of the classroom, students develop reading skills and the relationship of their reading instruction with literacy achievement. The demands of high-stakes testing with an emphasis on achievement require that researchers define how reading skills are best taught. But the pervasiveness of reading in the classroom makes it difficult for researchers to define the key factors leading to reading achievement, to determine the boundaries of reading instruction, and to assign responsibility for improvement. Noting the complexity of the classroom environment, the authors set determination of a thoughtful, systematic approach to examining reading instruction as a research priority.
• **Conceptualization, Measurement, and Improvement of Classroom Processes: Standardized Observation Can Leverage Capacity**, Robert C. Pianta and Bridget K. Hamre, University of Virginia

Classroom observations can be an important tool as researchers seek to better comprehend the components of effective teaching. Because classroom teaching is a vital factor in achievement, more evidence is needed to capture teacher-child interactions and identify specific processes that contribute to learning and positive social adjustment. Writing in support of observation in the classroom, the authors propose “that it is now feasible to focus on direct assessments of a teacher’s performance in the classroom as an instructor, socializer, motivator, and mentor.” Used for professional development, observation of classroom practices can lead to teaching and interventions better aimed at student improvement.

• **Studying Reading Instruction With Teacher Logs: Lessons From the Study of Instructional Improvement**, Brian Rowan, University of Michigan and Richard Correnti, University of Pittsburgh

Researchers look at findings from the *Study for Instructional Improvement* and the issues that arise when researchers use teacher logs, another observational method, to measure classroom instruction. The researchers found that “teacher logs can be a cost-effective, reliable, and valid way to measure instruction.” Logs frequently provided data nearly equivalent to that of trained observers, and their use is far less expensive.

*Educational Researcher* is a peer-reviewed publication of the American Educational Research Association and is available online at [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net). The four articles are based on research first presented in *Measuring Classroom Instruction: The State of the Art*, an AERA session at the Association’s 2008 AERA Annual Meeting in New York.

—AERA—

*Note to News Reporters and Editors*: To reach AERA Communications, call (202) 238-3200; Helaine Patterson ([hpatterson@aera.net](mailto:hpatterson@aera.net)) or Lucy Cunningham ([lcunningham@aera.net](mailto:lcunningham@aera.net)).

The 2009 AERA Annual Meeting takes place April 13 to 17 in San Diego. Pressroom will be located in the San Diego Convention Center, Room 1A. Telephone: (619) 525-6238 For complimentary press registration, contact AERA Communications at [outreach@aera.net](mailto:outreach@aera.net).

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is the national interdisciplinary research association for approximately 25,000 scholars who undertake research in education. Founded in 1916, AERA aims 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. [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)