Ensuring Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century
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What is This?
Ensuring Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century

JANE A. STALLINGS

Every past president has taken this opportunity to focus attention on the social, political, and educational issues current to their time and dear to their hearts. I'm not going to violate tradition. My position statement on the election ballot said:

My professional life for the past two and a half decades has focused on conducting and translating research into classroom and school reform. This has been an effort to improve education so that all students can ultimately become productive citizens in a democratic society. To accomplish this goal, students must come to school with healthy bodies, free from fear, ready to learn. This requires the joint efforts of parents, community representatives, psychologists, health care workers, juvenile services, government agencies, and teachers and administrators in full-service schools. I am particularly interested in full-service schools as the centers of research and development that in turn guide educational practice. As the most influential educational research organization, AERA is positioned to influence the national research and development agenda.

The title of my address is “Ensuring Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century: What We Know and What We Need to Know From Research.” The focus is on the plight of children. I believe a partial solution is integrated comprehensive school-linked services. To see why we need research and development in full-service schools, let's begin with the state of the nation's children.

The Plight of Our Children

Cheri Hayes, executive director of the Finance Project, wrote in the October 1993 Prospectus that, despite annual public expenditures approaching $350 billion on education and services, nearly a quarter of U.S. children are poor and live in families and communities that cannot meet their basic needs. Despite the broad consensus about the National Education Goals in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and even with strong indications of public and political eagerness for a renewed emphasis on domestic social policy, fundamental reforms have been slow to materialize in the nation's education, health, welfare, public housing, and social service systems.

There can be little wonder as to why educational interventions based upon the body of teaching and learning research from the 1970s and 1980s have had so little lasting effect for children at risk of school failure. The answer has taken a long time to emerge, but it is unequivocal: We were not considering the multitude of intervening variables. For example, although we knew that parents were crucial to child learning and that some children depended on the food they received at school for physical sustenance, we rarely included these variables as we assessed school success or school failure. It's clear now that when we assessed interventions, we were not using all the playing pieces. We did not ask in a systematic way “What is required for children to come to school ready to learn, so that their chances for success can be optimized? What are the factors that prevent the best, most creative teachers from succeeding with their students?”

Many factors that prevent even the best teachers from teaching have become clearly visible over the last 10 years. Some of these impediments to achieving our National Education Goals for all of our citizens include these frightening facts from the 1994 National Commission on Children report. Imagine in your mind—

- Nearly 13 million children live in poverty, over 2 million more than a decade ago.
- At least one in six children has no health care at all.
- Only slightly more than half of U.S. preschoolers have been fully immunized.
- On any given night, at least 100,000 children are homeless.
- Every year, more than a million young people join the ranks of runaways.
- The overall percentage of students graduating from high school between 1985 and 1990 decreased for Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics.
- Dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested than high school graduates. [Secretary Riley (1995) says that 82% of all people behind bars are high school dropouts.] Dropouts are six times more likely to become unmarried parents.
- Every year, approximately 1 million teenage girls become pregnant. Births to single teens increased 16% from 1986 to 1991. Data on Figure 1 (Wynne & Weinstien, 1995) indicate the increase in birth rates for White adolescents from 1940-1992.
- The juvenile violent crime arrest rate increased by 300% from 1960 to 1988.
- 155,000 American students bring guns to school every day.
- Driving after drinking remains the number one killer of adolescents.
- Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among adolescents, and has almost tripled since the 1960s.
- Homicide is now the leading cause of death among minority youth age 15 to 19 and is increasing for White youths.
- Reported child abuse increased 48% from 1986 to 1991.
- Fifty percent of America's adults are functionally illiterate.

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We need multiple approaches from many perspectives to solve these immense social-educational problems. In many parts of the country, anxious communities are forming enlightened partnerships among health, welfare, juvenile justice, and education systems to pool insights and resources. Leadership and funding are coming from school districts, from such organizations as the Children’s Aid Society, and from the DeWitt Wallace, Annie Casey, Danforth, Hogg, Stuart, and Ford Foundations. Many pilot projects providing school-linked comprehensive services are already under way; others are being planned.

Why We Need School-Linked Comprehensive Services

The educational enterprise is huge and diverse, and for the majority of our citizens it functions very well, but far too many of our children are at risk of failing, dropping out, and never realizing their potential or their dreams.

Six years ago, I was supervising a student teacher in a third-grade classroom of an inner-city Houston school. A child came into the classroom with silent tears sliding down his cheeks. With a few questions and a look into his mouth, the teacher realized that the boy had a painfully abscessed tooth. The child’s distress captured everyone’s attention. Instruction stopped.

Many of the children from this poor and crime-ridden neighborhood do not come to school ready to learn. Admonitions to teachers to “Put Learning First” can’t be executed under these conditions. Unfortunately for the children in this Houston school, social services and health services are a bus trip away. What is more, the parents in this particular case could not be located. It is not unusual for teachers in this school to have parent permission slips on hand so that they may take children to their own dentist for emergency treatment. In the absence of services linked to the school, even though it is not in their job description, dedicated teachers become social workers or health care workers. The teachers, principal, and parents work many hours to provide the best possible instruction for the children.

Understand that even though this school was in the center of the drug and crime belt, it was better than most other inner-city schools. It had the “I Have a Dream” program and many after-school dedicated volunteer tutors. What it lacked was integrated, school-linked health and social services that would allow the teachers to teach.

People skilled in health and dental care and in child and family counseling are needed to attend to the children who come to school in pain or deeply disturbed and not ready to learn. Although many professionals, agencies, and politicians have strong opinions about the effects on learning of the lack of such services, little research in schools has included the crucial variables: the health and social welfare of the children and their families.

Three years ago, I visited two special schools in McAllen, Texas. One served 75 young women and their babies. I sat beside a 12-year-old girl, Tiwana, and her 2-week old infant as she did her arithmetic. She was getting her problems right. At that school, the young women received their basic courses, plus classes in parenting, child development, job-skills training, and/or college prep. The school provided the young students and their preschool children with all of their health and social services at the school site. The principal was a nurse educator. The result was that the recidivism rate for second unplanned babies was very low, and the school boasted one of the highest graduation rates in the city. The core of teachers who provided courses at this school also taught at an alternative high school a few blocks away, so I went to visit it.

The alternative high school offered a means for dropouts to reenter the school system and graduate. I asked one young woman, who had earlier attempted suicide, how this school was different for her. She said, “Adults listen, there aren’t bells jerking you around, and I can go as fast as I want to through the work.” After a year when she had wasted her life, she had completed two years of course work in one. She caught up with her classmates, would graduate, and was planning for college.

Early this March, I went back to McAllen, curious to see whether the two schools continued to thrive. I found that they had been joined into one new Options School serving 200 students. Options students represent a balance of racial, social, and economic groups from the McAllen high school district. Their common bond: They did not experience success in traditional educational settings. All came from high-risk situations that needed to be addressed, such as family dysfunction, homelessness, marriage, pregnancy, substance abuse, or combinations of these.

I spoke with Lori, a 17-year-old mother whose daughter is 2 years old. Lori is committed to supporting herself and her daughter, even though her father offers financial help. As a result, her schedule resembles that of many graduate students. She goes to school from 8:00 a.m. until noon, goes to work as a dental receptionist from 1:00-5:00 p.m., picks up her daughter at 5:30 p.m., goes to night class from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., then studies for the next day. She intends to enter training as a dental hygienist in the summer. She said, “I was dropping out to support my daughter until Options’ flexible schedule and services made school and work possible. My little girl and I are going to make it!” And they will!

Angel, 18 years old, told me of his struggle to support a wife and two children, and attend school, with no assis-
tance from either set of parents. At the large high school, he felt as though none of the teachers or counselors cared if he stayed in school or not. He tried to attend school and work also, but the school made no accommodation for his schedule. The only jobs he could get that allowed him to attend school, too, were at night, from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. He fell asleep in class. Worse, the work paid below minimum wage, not nearly enough to support his family. He applied to Options but they were over enrolled. He could not get a wage, not nearly enough to support his family. He applied to Options to accept him, and they did. He is now a leader and speaks eloquently for the program. He will graduate in December 1995. And Tiwana, she is 15 and her baby is 3. They both are thriving at Options.

The Options staff provides comprehensive services to meet its students' varied needs. Counselors offer students personal and group counseling and present various activities and programs during each day's advisory period. A social worker is on hand to serve as a liaison for the student with family and community. A school nurse assists in detection, treatment, and referral. Student services such as smoking-cessation classes, health screening, and prenatal classes are provided for students who need them. Job opportunities and training are provided through the Job Training Partnership Act and through cooperative programs administered by the school's career/technology department. Child care is also available while students are attending classes. This school costs approximately $7,400 per student, compared to $4,500 for students in regular high school.

I visited another impressive school, this one in lower Manhattan. It serves a high crime, poverty-stricken population equal to Houston's. Here I found a full-service, extended-day school designed to integrate the programs and services of a community center into an innovative neighborhood school. This school stems from a partnership among the Children's Aid Society, the New York City Board of Education, and the Board of Community College School District Six.

The Children's Aid Society had decided that its next neighborhood center should be in the Washington Heights-Inwood section of Manhattan, which had the highest poverty rate in the city as well as the highest level of drug addiction and crime, including murder. Two of every three babies were born to teenage mothers. Over 85% of the students were Latino with limited English proficiency. Students from this district ranked lowest (out of 32 districts) in reading at or above grade level. The Children's Aid Society, hoping to alter this bleak picture, made plans to build a community center in the district.

The New York City Board of Education and District Six were well aware that Washington Heights-Inwood had the city's largest youth population and that its schools were already overcrowded at 116% of capacity and were planning to build the needed school on the site Children's Aid Society had identified as desirable. When Children's Aid Society asked if they might be a partner in the new school, the idea was met with enthusiasm by the New York School District. The plan that unfolded was that traditional school would end at 3:00 p.m. and the Children's Aid Society would then begin its recreational, educational, medical, and mental health activities. The dental and health clinics are right inside the front door and social services are only a few feet away...available to students, families, and the community.

The school, IS 218, opened in March 1992 and now serves 1,500 students in Grades 6 through 8. It is open 15 hours a day, 6 days a week, year round, and almost half of the students enroll in the extended-day program. At the end of three terms, IS 218 had the highest attendance in the district and had raised academic scores above those of a school serving a similar population. Over a thousand parents are regularly involved in the courses and workshops offered them at the school. According to Koerner (1993), "IS 218 has become the hub of life of the neighborhood it serves" (pp. 35-36).

A comprehensive 10-year evaluation of students, parents, teachers, and community has been planned for IS 218. The measurement tools and variables have been identified. However, the analyses to be used to examine the relationships among the variables are less clear. It is obvious that it would be foolhardy to parcel out the effects of various program components. Walk in the school and feel the positive energy. With the contributions of so many constituents, a synergy is created that challenges current evaluation methodologies.

AERA, OERI, and School-Linked Comprehensive Services

In fall 1994, AERA and OERI hosted the "Working Conference on School-Linked Comprehensive Services for Children and Families." Attendees were drawn from 23 projects that demonstrated improvement in the lives of the children involved and included project leaders, representatives from schools, federal agencies, colleges, parents, and adolescent students. Each group brought its evaluator to share ideas about research issues. Among the projects represented were these:

- Healthy Tomorrows (California): Achieved the state's lowest infant mortality rate for African Americans in some of the state's poorest communities.
- Washington Heights (New York): Raised student test scores and had the lowest absence rate in the city.
- Decker Family Development Center (Ohio): Raised English and math scores.
- Early Education Services (Vermont): Raised earned income, reduced welfare, increased adult education, decreased number of pregnancies, and increased the birth weight of infants of teenage mothers.
- Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority (Georgia): Decreased dropout rates and helped highest risk middle school students achieve norms.
- Migrant Education Summer Institute (Florida): Kept 89% of the 230 participants in school (or graduating) in contrast to 54% of a control group.

Other projects are described in the monograph prepared by OERI and AERA (1995).

We spent the four evenings of the conference listening to insights and deliberations that had been developed in each of the cross-cutting work sessions during the day. Little is known about why some efforts at delivering school-linked comprehensive services succeed while others do not. There is ample evidence that some school-linked collaborations experience turf wars, lack of leadership, and in desperation give up. While acknowledging failures, it is important to...
identify and study in depth those projects that are succeeding in delivering health, welfare, and education to the most at-risk populations. Through our discussions we found a number of common characteristics across all program types. They include committed leadership, cultural sensitivity, participant-driven design and evaluation, interprofessional development, flexibility in approaches, and the need for new research approaches.

Conference reports highlighted the point that comprehensive-service models are complex, multivariate entities. Though existing research and evaluation paradigms may be useful in studying single components of multiservice models, we need ways of capturing and understanding the synergistic effect of various combinations of services and the interrelationships of service providers and clients. We need research and evaluation approaches that will do the following:

• Consider the whole system, rather than isolated components, with particular attention to the interdisciplinary nature of the models.
• Combine quantitative and qualitative methods in research and evaluation design.
• Extend the studies over enough years to reflect the development of the model and to capture the long-term impact and its changes over time.
• Ensure that research designs for school-linked comprehensive services are sensitive to the diverse settings and populations involved.
• Bring service providers and clients into the development of the program and the design of the evaluation at the beginning.

Because many of the program efforts will be designed to address local problems within local constraints, the emphasis will necessarily be on designing valid evaluations. This means evaluators are needed who are familiar with a variety of research and evaluation approaches, who are sensitive to cultural differences, and who have experience with complex models in field settings. Such evaluators must be developed. Mary Wagner at SRI International is an evaluator for California’s SLS program. She states she was ill prepared to deal with the multiple variables found in the multiple sites. Measurement programs in universities should have intern training with the Mary Wagners and Susan Phllibers who are pioneering these complex evaluations.

Finally, flexibility must be built into timelines for evaluation to accommodate shifts in funding sources. We recognize that although process data will be available early in the implementation phase, information on the nature and extent of outcomes may take a decade to assemble.

Expanding Need, Diminishing Political Commitment

The problems of our young people and families seem more daunting than they ever have. In part, this is because we are trying to educate children and families at risk of poor health, poor housing, inadequate food, and chronic unemployment. The dangers facing a growing segment of today’s families and children have grown beyond our existing capacity to cope. Present resources are spread far too thin to meet the needs. And yet more cuts have been passed by the House of Representatives in their urgency to complete their Contract with America. The Children’s Defense Fund Action Council (1995) states that from these actions:

• 4.8 million children would lose health benefits.
• 3.5 million children would lose food stamps.
• 1.6 million pregnant women would lose nutritional supplements.
• Nearly 200,000 children would lose Head Start.
• 193,000 blind and disabled children would lose Supplemental Security Income.

Talk shows hosts daily assure us that efforts to help needy children and families waste money and encourage dependence and fraud, and that welfare is nothing more than patronizing “big brotherism.” This scenario reminds me of A Christmas Carol, where Dickens (1914) has the Ghost of Christmas Present show Scrooge two ragged waifs, saying “This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both,. . .but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see written that which is Doom unless the writing be erased.” And Scrooge asks, “Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?” The point is remade every Christmas season and at the very next election when another school bond or tax parcel is voted down while more prisons are approved for construction.

As Americans, we pride ourselves on our generous contributions to assist in national disasters, with a single child who has fallen down a well, or world famine. But we also have collective civic obligations that should impel us all to seek solutions to our broad, social ills, not simply ignore them or blame the victims.

Dealing with social conflict by passing laws to allow private citizens to carry concealed handguns is not a long-term solution, nor is social justice enhanced by building more prisons. In the face of the shift of government from a service paradigm to a business paradigm, we need to be persuasive in providing evidence that crime prevention through education is not only more humane but is also more cost effective.

We need research to show how the long-term costs of school-linked comprehensive services compare with the long-term costs of their absence. For example, the Options project is graduating 200 students a year. To what extent is the higher cost of Options offset by having graduates who are more productive, less dependent, and less likely to commit crimes or go to jail? How will the cost compare with the taxes eventually paid by its employable graduates? We need to know the facts.

Jail costs over $20,000 a year for each inmate; prison costs more. Can we find a way of measuring the savings of a Washington Heights project that reduces criminal activity significantly? How about a project like Vermont’s Early Education Services or California’s Healthy Tomorrows? We know that low-birthweight infants have far higher hospital costs at birth and often have higher life-long medical and disability costs. How do we measure the savings resulting from fewer unplanned pregnancies of school-age girls as reported in the Options school?

Companies that worry over the cost of teaching their employees to read with comprehension, to write clear E-mail messages, and to know enough math to tell whether a number makes sense or not understand the cost benefits of better schooling. Public private partnerships that produce better-prepared graduates can be a magnet for industries that are expanding or relocating. To what extent can new types of cost-benefit analysis convince politicians to support the intervening health and welfare variables necessary to attain and sustain education for all?
Table 1
Selected ED Programs House Bill Would Eliminate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>FY 1995 funding (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents as Teachers</td>
<td>$10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National programs</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-to-work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal activities</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School improvement programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and drug-free schools</td>
<td>481.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law-related education</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout demonstrations</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellender fellowships</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Native Hawaiians</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in early childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education and violence</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual, immigrant education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual programs</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational, adult education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based organizations</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer, homemaking education</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech-prep education</td>
<td>108.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voc ed national programs</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute for Literacy</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National programs research, demonstrations</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State literacy resource centers</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace literacy partnerships</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy training for homeless adults</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy programs for prisoners</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law school clinical experience</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban community service</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early intervention scholarships, partnerships</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Opportunity Crops</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College housing (federal administration)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education research and statistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education infrastructure</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star schools</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International education exchange</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower telecommunications demonstration</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy programs</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, demonstrations</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime bill activities</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*Would be partially offset with an addition of $11.5 million for transitional programs.

Source: House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

What Can We Do?

You in this audience include some of the best minds of our time. You are at the forefront of the education world. How do we proceed? Is it time for a new paradigm... can we link more pieces of the puzzle... health, social welfare, juvenile justice, extended day educational opportunities, community participation? I think the answer is yes!

In contemplating the difficulties we face, I take heart from Esther Peterson—a citizen for all seasons at 88—an ever-activé advocate for workers, women, children, and consumers who says,

Do what is right, let the conscience follow. We learned that we had to develop a community awareness. You’ve got to believe that, fundamentally, people are good and build on that. You’ve got to point injustice out to them and let them know that this is a wrong. (Kemper, p. 15)

She harbors no patience for individuals who have given up on the system.

"Shame on you!" she says to democracy dropouts. "Shame on you. Get off your fanny," she exhorts, "and go do something about it. Write a letter. Make a call. Write an op ed, or write a proposal. There’s no end of things that can be done!" (Kemper, p. 17).

What can we do? You and I in this audience? AERA is speaking out loud and clear to California Proposition 187. All of the mayors and the Governor have been informed that AERA will not return to California until the bill is repealed. We can and must also speak out for the children and vulnerable of the nation. First, you can fight the Scrooges and their perennial questions: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" Fight off attempts to reduce the school lunch programs and to take away medical care for children, even if they are undocumented aliens.

Look at who is on Congress’s hit list when cutting the budget (see Table 1). Who is thinking of the consequences of the cuts such as workplace literacy, literacy training for the homeless, literacy for prisoners, parents as teachers, and bilingual programs? Who is to bring evidence of the social effects and cost effects of these decisions? If not us, then who? We must approach the complex social/educational problems from multiple perspectives and be open to multiple solutions. This Congress will be most persuaded by evidence of cost-effective social programs. Figure it out, it costs less to educate than to incarcerate! We must gather data and disseminate the evidence. Although the comprehensive school-linked services model is not a panacea, community projects such as the one in Washington Heights hold great promise for school and community restructuring. AERA and OERI must develop and sponsor a research agenda to learn how, why, and where programs for at-risk populations are working. To quote an old Chinese proverb, "Unless we change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed." My colleagues, let us each do our part to change the direction. Let us begin!

References


