

School Leadership News

The Newsletter of AERA Division A: Administration, Organization, & Leadership

Issue 21

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The American Educational Research Association (AERA), a professional membership organization, strives to improve the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education. AERA offers a comprehensive program of scholarly publications, training, fellowships, and meetings to advance educational research, to disseminate knowledge, and to improve the capacity of the profession to enhance the public good. Division A of AERA is devoted to furthering the aims of the organization through scholarly contribution in the areas of educational administration, organization, and leadership.

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Vice President's Column

Linda C. Tillman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

"Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave."



Greetings and I hope that you are having a restful summer! I want to thank each of you for your participation in an outstanding 2008 AERA Annual Meeting, as well as an informative Division A Business Meeting. I appreciate the support of Michelle Young, Executive Director of UCEA, Mark Berends,

Vice President of Division L, and Corwin Press for their support of our combined Wednesday night reception and the David L. Clark Graduate Student Seminar. A special thanks to Christopher Ruggeri (UCEA) who was responsible for the logistics of the Clark Seminar and who planned the meal for the combined reception. Members as well as guests commented on our fabulous spread on Wednesday night! Part of attending AERA is having good food and Christopher did an outstanding job of picking a great menu.

I would also like to thank Dean Kent McGuire (Temple University) and Interim Dean Jill Fitzgerald and Kathleen Brown, Chair of Educational Leadership Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for their generous support of the Division A Business Meeting.

Annual Meeting News

Well, as you know there is never any "downtime" when it comes to AERA so....the 2009 AERA proposal submission system is now open. This year's program chair is Len Foster (Washington State University). Len will be assisted by section chairs Kathleen Jorissen (Western Carolina University), Pamela Salazar (University of Nevada-Las Vegas), Curt Adams (University of Oklahoma), Rosusan Barteel (University of Mississippi), Paul Pitre (Washington State University), and Mark Gooden (University of Cincinnati). Proposals are due on August 1, 2008, 11:59 p.m., Pacific Standard Time. Please assist us as we prepare to present another outstanding Division A program for the annual meeting. You can go to aera.net to volunteer to be a session chair, discussant, and/or a reviewer.

Vice President's Column (continued)

Our most immediate need is proposal reviewers (particularly senior level faculty) as we anticipate a record number of submissions this year. Len will be sending you a message soon requesting your help in not only reviewing proposals but also in identifying reviewers.

Early Career Mentoring Initiatives

Division A sponsored an Early Career Mentoring Seminar at the 2008 Annual Meeting. The seminar was facilitated by several senior who brought their expertise: Steve Jacobson (SUNY Buffalo), Catherine Lugg (Rutgers University), James Davis (Temple University), and Gary Anderson (New York University), and myself. We received many favorable comments about the seminar.

Recently the Executive Committee of the University Council for Educational Administration accepted a recommendation of the UCEA Diversity Committee to hold an Early Career Mentoring workshop for pre-tenure faculty of color at the UCEA Annual Meeting. The first workshop will be held at the UCEA Convention in Orlando, FL (date and time to be announced). Jackson Scholar alum who are pre-tenure faculty as well as any other pre-tenure faculty of color are encouraged to participate in this workshop.

Division A will collaborate with the UCEA Diversity Committee in a joint effort to provide mentoring to pre-tenure faculty and will co-host the Early Career Faculty Mentoring Seminar at the 2009 AERA Annual Meeting. This seminar will be open to all pre-tenure faculty and will be held on the Sunday prior to the beginning of the annual meeting. We will be sending members additional information about the seminars via the Division A listserv. Should you have any questions about the seminars or our Early Career Faculty Mentoring initiatives, please contact me at ltillman@email.unc.edu, or Alan Shoho (Chair of UCEA Diversity Committee) at alan.shoho@utsa.edu.

Closing notes

Please be sure to consult the AERA website and *Educational Researcher* for news and updates on policies, procedures, and happenings in the organization. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, feel free to email me.

Finally, please let us know what is happening with you and about any innovative programs or research projects. You can always post your announcement on the Division A listserv at aera.net.

Congratulations!

Arnold Danzig was promoted to full professor at Arizona State University.

Jim Cibulka, University of Kentucky, was named president of NCATE.

Kofi Lomotey, Fisk University, was named Chancellor of Southern University at Baton Rouge.

Lisa Bass accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa.

Interrogating the EdD: New Directions for Leadership Preparation

By Gregg Garn, University of Oklahoma, Barry Sheckley and Richard Lemons,
University of Connecticut

"I am interested in applying to your Educational Leadership doctoral program. Should I pursue the EdD or PhD degree? What's the difference?"

Most would respond by saying: "If you want to lead a school or district, the EdD is the way to go. If you want to pursue a faculty position in higher education, pursue the PhD. However, in many Educational Leadership programs these differences have blended together to the point of being more theoretical than practical.

The University of Connecticut and the University of Oklahoma are working collaboratively with 12 other institutions to examine the preparation of K-12 professionals through the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED) (see <http://cpedinitiative.org/> for more information). Examining the entrance requirements, program of study, delivery of instruction, and dissertation topics has proven a healthy exercise at our respective institutions.

This work flows out of a critically important question: How to develop individuals who can lead educational organizations effectively? The key problem is the rapidity of change engulfing education today. Leaders readily admit they regularly face tasks that they never anticipated and for which they are ill-prepared – tasks related to changes in instructional technologies, changes mandated by state and federal courts and legislatures, changes in the competencies required of high school graduates in the workforce, and changes that accompany the shifting fabric of American society.

One approach to preparing educational leaders for a shifting environment – one in which there is not a formulaic set of solutions, is to focus less on the content of the preparation program (e.g., specific courses, theories, and research frameworks) and, instead, work more adamantly on developing the thinking processes – the habits of mind – that characterize effective school leaders. Effective school leaders seem to have a creative ability to apply lessons learned from prior experiences to novel problem situations. Disciplined and facile in their thinking, these educators seek to understand root causes and seek high-leverage entry points as they tackle complex systemic problems, informed but not handcuffed by prior experiences, these effective leaders are able to seek solutions in a flexible, adaptive, and effective manner, to help leaders develop these abilities, universities may have to focus more on helping students develop rigorous cognitive skills around framing, deconstructing, and resolving current problems of practice. A promising approach to develop such skills may be to use emerging research on how experienced professionals learn best.

Principles of optimal professional learning

Optimal learning for experienced professionals, like those who enroll in leadership development programs, involves an intricate balance between factors related to individual learners, the key learning experiences in which learners engage, and the environment in which learning occurs.

Interrogating the EdD (continued)

Individual factors. Experienced professionals are always learning. Their learning tends to be filtered by experience-based mental models of how the world works. Because they have a less-than-perfect knowledge of events – and because of a limited capacity to process new information through working memory – they use mental models to compensate. Mental models help them to understand situations well enough to self-determine their behavior in a way that enables them to meet their innate needs. Since they often hold steadfastly to this mental model, they make lousy students. When someone – even a respected professor in a university course – outlines an idea that runs counter to their mental model, their tendency is to reject the contrary notion in favor of their own experience-tested mental model. For this reason the optimal learning process for professionals has an exclusive emphasis on refining – or adding complexity to – the mental models professionals use to guide their practice. From this perspective, course content is important as a means to the end of refining learners' mental models.

Key learning experiences. Learning is a by-product of reasoning. What professionals reason about often determines what they will learn. For example, when professionals enter a classroom and “reason” about how to learn enough so they can pass a test, through this reasoning they will learn how to take the test – and little more. In contrast when they experience how to “reason” deeply about using information and new analytic lenses to resolve complex problems of practice, they learn how to become more sophisticated problem solvers within their professional roles. For this reason the optimal learning process for professionals creates experiences where they must wrestle with complex problems of practice, using research of best practice and strong theoretical models that can strengthen thinking and expand mental models.

Environmental factors. The settings in which individuals work are the most powerful, yet most under-utilized, sources for professional learning. When professionals describe how they became proficient, they typically credit work settings that supported ongoing, unfettered, and collaborative inquiry into problems of practice. For this reason an optimal learning program engages professionals in an inquiry process that builds upon the rich opportunities available in a work setting.

Specific ideas for change

Universities interested in changing their programs to better prepare educational leaders for the equivocality they will face in their practice might reflect on their current practice related to five general areas.

Admissions criteria. Preferred candidates would have a wide range of leadership experiences and a strong commitment to finding viable solutions to problems of practice. Measures such as GRE scores are secondary to a strong record of achievement in managing and resolving difficult issues in educational settings.

Program of study. The practice of requiring learners to enroll in a set of loosely coupled course experiences would end. In its place, learners would engage in a cohesive set of experiences that prepare them to think complexly and generate creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. To accomplish this integration,

Interrogating the EdD (continued)

the program might focus on a single, comprehensive issue (e.g., leadership for large-scale instructional improvement). Components of the program would address this broad-based issue from multiple analytic perspectives. For example, instead of a course on “educational policy,” this program might immerse learners in experiences where they reason deeply about how federal, state and local policy can constrain and enable instructional innovation. Moreover, students would develop their capacity to think with a policy frame (along with other powerful frames) in the face of novel problems.

Instruction. In line with the description of the program of study, the program would place a greater premium on how individuals learn and a lesser emphasis on what is taught. Instead of focusing on which courses to include in what semester of the program, faculty would design opportunities that involve professionals in rich and coherent experiences that enhance cognitive capacity. The curriculum would be dominated by internship opportunities, inquiry projects carried out through partnerships with districts, educational associations, and agencies. Courses would be cognitive laboratories, opportunities for exploring research, analytic frameworks, and candidates' own mental models in relationship to their internship and inquiry experiences.

Assessments. To maintain a cohesive emphasis, all assessments would focus on the efficacy of a candidate's work as it relates to addressing the broad-based issue on which the program is focused. Unit tests, quizzes, term papers, course exams, and general exams might be replaced with careful reviews of the recommendations candidates develop from their inquiry into problems of practice. These authentic assessments would afford candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the complexity and agility of their thinking, as opposed to whether they learned the “right stuff.” A body of university researchers and experienced practitioners working in partnership could jury these reviews.

Capstone project/dissertation. The capstone project would mirror the emphasis on resolving problems of practice. The format might be similar to one a senior educational leader might present to a legislative body on ways to address a complex educational issue. As such, the key focus would be on providing a set of viable recommendations grounded in solid logic and evidence – evidence culled from candidates' inquiry projects as well as studies from the research literature. Instead of being judged in terms of a contribution to theory, this capstone would be assessed in terms of its contribution to practice.

Conclusion: So, in answer to your question about the EdD? If you want to enroll in a program that builds your capacity to think deeply about problems of practice, then the EdD is for you. And the process of developing an EdD program that prepares educational leaders to deal successfully with the problems of practice is good for both the institution and the profession.

Interrogating the EdD (continued)

Suggested readings:

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- Keeton, M. T., Sheckley, B. G., & Griggs, J. (2002). *Effectiveness and efficiency in higher education for adults: A guide for fostering learning*. . Dubuque:IAKendell/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Kehrhahn, M. T., Sheckley, B. G., & Travers, N. (2000). *Efficiency and Effectiveness in Graduate Education* (Vol. 76): Association for Institutional Research.
- Schulman, L.S. (2007). *Practical wisdom in the service of professional practice*. *Educational Researcher*, 36(9), 560-563.
- Schulman, L.S., Golde, C.M., Conklin-Bueschel, A., and Garabedian, K.J. (2006). *Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal*. *Educational Researcher*, 35(3), 25-32.
- Walker, G.M, Golde, C.M., Jones, L., Conklin Bueschel, A., and Hutchings, P. (2008). *The formation of scholars: Rethinking doctoral education for the twenty-first century*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Jossey Bass: San Francisco, CA.

AERA Leadership for School Improvement SIG Dissertation of the Year Award

Call for Nominations

The AERA Leadership for School Improvement SIG (LSI) announced their dissertation of the year competition at this year's SIG meeting during AERA. While LSI has offered this award in the past, several changes have been made including an increase in the cash award for the recipient to \$1000 and a stipend of \$300 for the Dissertation Chair. Eligible dissertations must be completed and formally accepted between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2008 and the winning recipient will be awarded at the 2009 AERA meeting. In addition to the cash award, the winning doctoral student, who is expected to attend the AERA meeting, will be provided the opportunity to present his/her work at a poster session and receive an award plaque at the LSI SIG business meeting. Criteria for the award includes membership submission of the dissertation by a LSI SIG member or the student of a LSI SIG member, align with the SIG mission, and identify the problem studied within the context of school leadership and student learning. A full copy of the announcement can be obtained by sending an email to Susan Korach at skorach@du.edu.

Policy to Practice

Accountability Frameworks: A Structure for Organizational Learning?

By Curt Adams, The University of Oklahoma

Many educators cringe when hearing the acronyms NCLB or AYP. This common reaction led to some consternation upon discovering that after studying processes, climates, and structures found in learning organizations several of my students relied solely on traditional NCLB indicators to create an accountability plan for a school district. These students, primarily administrators, experience the daily frustrations associated with an external accountability system that is misaligned with the local needs of schools. Schmidt (2008) and other policy scholars assail such a misalignment as a policy-to-practice gap that harms teaching and learning (See: Heck, 2006; Hursh, 2005). Why then did these administrators (my students) view a holistic accountability plan that measures both processes and outcomes as impractical? Are external accountability policies so restrictive that adding additional measures is viewed as an extra burden?

Continuous improvement, an espoused goal of many schools, is not achieved by adopting the latest "proven" program to meet AYP, or simply examining achievement data. It depends on developing the internal capacity to generate knowledge on problems/issues plaguing teaching and learning, and using this knowledge to transform organizational behavior. Learning organizations create a normative culture defined by systematic approaches to problem solving, experimentation with new strategies, learning from previous experiences, learning through vicarious experiences, and communicating knowledge efficiently within the organization (Garvin, 1998). Outcome measures alone do not provide the comprehensive data that are used by learning organizations to enhance performance.

The basic premise of accountability policies is the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, but the means to achieve this objective are framed at the federal and state level on rewards and punishments. What does this mean for school district and school accountability plans? Do external accountability frameworks allow teaching and learning to be examined through diverse lenses that provide different vantage points to assess performance, as advanced by Huber and Hutchings (2005); or are they largely focused on making value judgments about a school's academic outcomes? Instead of turning to the literature to better understand how the practice of accountability is carried out within the framework of state mandates, I solicited the thoughts of three superintendents from three demographically distinct school districts, as well as from three principals within these districts, on this issue. Three questions were asked:

- 1) How much latitude does the state accountability plan allow your school district/school in constructing accountability policies?
- 2) To what extent are the perceptions and attitudes of different school agents represented in your school's/ school district's accountability plan?
- 3) How does your accountability plan align with the unique values, ideologies, and cultures in your school district/school?

Accountability Frameworks (continued)

Urban Superintendent

Question 1: *Our district's accountability plan is based primarily on academic assessments but also includes other criteria which support the district's goals: school activity fund audit, special education IDEA compliance, partners in education, faculty attendance, teacher tenure, faculty advanced degrees or Nationally Board Certified. The accountability plan has twenty performance measures and schools are evaluated on each measure using a 4-point scale. The score for each school is used to determine the schools to be recognized for distinguished schools (the three highest scoring school on the accountability plan), exemplary schools (those schools averaging at least 3 points and above) and commended schools (those schools making significant improvement compared to results from the previous year*
Question 2 and 3 were not answered.

Urban Principal

Question 1: *The accountability plan is a set of 20 performance indicators to measure how well schools meet defined school board priorities/goals. As such, they are objective measures of how well schools meet attendance, quality of test scores, compliance with special education requirements. More to the point, at the end of the year the district sends out a variety of survey instruments to various populations. The results are tabulated. What the data are used for is unknown. I have seen a directive for principals to review teacher satisfaction data with the teachers and to develop action plans at the building level to correct any deficiencies found or, if no deficiencies existed, to maintain the existing level of satisfaction within the building. This is a long answer that might have been summarized from the beginning as 'not much'.*

Question 2: *The only applicable item is the building level review of building level teacher satisfaction data. I've seen nothing else to indicate that there is any alignment of other data with district accountability plans.*

Question 3: *Again, in this particular case, building principals were directed to use their data to develop plans for their schools. The directive was not slanted to reflect any particular bias toward specific district goals, guidelines or policies.*

Suburban Superintendent

Question 1: *Obviously, we followed the parameters of the state plan; however, the district standards and expectations exceed those of the state. We felt students of our district deserved the best we could provide; we did not find the state plan to constrict our progress.*

Question 2: *The Director of Assessment was integrally involved and responsible for providing the requested assimilated assessment data. However, in addition to that all principals were required to analyze their assessment data and develop and implement strategies for increasing student learning in the areas of language arts and mathematics. These became part of their site goals. They were required to do the same as part of their respective comprehensive local education plans. These also became part of their site goals.*

Accountability Frameworks (continued)

Question 3: *The teachers and principals are directly involved in the analysis of the assessment data and the subsequent development of improvement plans. The appropriate district office administrator work with the principals via ongoing discussion in regard to their plans and progress. Parents are directly involved in the development of the curriculum and standards, which are reflected in the assessment data.*

Suburban Principal

Question 1: *The district's accountability plan is unyielding to modification in the instructional elements, but the cultural elements of the school provide freedom to frame the instruction in a means that is unique and innovative. For example, curriculum and resources for instruction are parallel throughout the district, but the instructional strategies can be elaborated by the individual teacher, based on that teacher's strengths of delivery and professional development obtained. This is an exceptionally challenging sell to the classroom teacher because the initial parameters presented seem professionally limiting. The teacher must understand the full cycle of the instruction model to see the liberties that exist within the framework.*

Question 2: *Our district's instructional model was designed with the input of various school agents. Because the model is cyclical in nature, the refinement element of the cycle requires feedback from each of the agents to its effectiveness and, therefore, insures the ongoing involvement of each stakeholder will continue. The greatest challenge exists in conveying the accountability plan to individuals from all vested areas who were not involved in the plan's construction.*

Question 3: *The plan aligns well with the values and ideologies of our school site and has the potential to be an exception tool in returning teachers to a focus on instruction rather than bureaucracy. Our site has existed for several years in a climate of open dialogue regarding upcoming changes and adjustments to policies and practices. The district's plan has been revealed in section and has, as a result elicited layers of the onion atmosphere which has led to much distrust of the plan. The plan is not as contradictory to our site's values and ideologies as is the presentation of the plan.*

Suburban Superintendent

Question 1: *Our district's accountability plan is framed around the state's performance indicators of student achievement, attendance, and highly qualified teachers. District benchmark tests and authentic teacher made tests supplement the requirements of the state. We recognize the accountability deficiencies of only measuring achievement indicators and not process indicators but our current capacity precludes us from incorporating diverse measures.*

Question 2: *We tried to have diverse representation on the taskforce to develop an accountability plan. Many teachers, administrators, and parents were represented. We believe in creating a culture of inclusion but it is sometimes hard when you deal with families in poverty. Traditional structures do not work. I would say that we have not had much luck engaging our economically poor families.*

Accountability Frameworks (continued)

Question 3: Our accountability plan largely reflects the values of our majority middle class population. This group values education and stresses educational excellence. Achievement indicators motivate many of these students but our low-income population is not as emphatically wedded to test scores. They are more concerned with the personal experiences of their children. Two distinct cultural mindsets have created a tenuous relationship among the different classes of constituents.

Suburban Principal

Question 1: We pretty much follow the district accountability plan. The teachers actively review benchmark test results to identify areas of instructional improvement and areas of growth for individual students. We also examine state test results and attendance data to make instructional and curricular decisions. This is a collaborative process with teacher committees taking the lead in interrogating their own practice and planning for improvement. I feel the district listens to what we have to say and supports the strategies we construct to meet identified needs.

Question 2: We listen to the concerns of parents and other constituents and use these to inform our practice but at the end of the day we are the professionals and we have the final say in decision-making. Teachers are very involved in the process. We think of ourselves as a professional learning community that is always striving to improve.

Question 3: To be honest, our policies have not adapted to the changing demographics. We did not foresee the influx of low-income families to the district. This diversity is good but it presents challenges, one being the complete inclusion of our new population. We have to experiment with creative ways to engage these students and parents more in the educational process.

Accountability plans highlighted by the superintendents and principals appear to mirror external policies. Extensive data on student and school performance are being gathered, and the information gleaned through the data collection process is used to judge performance and to inform practice. In this regard, external accountability frameworks provide a structure for schools and school districts to continually improve performance through the analysis of outcome data. Whether or not discursive practices on these indicators occur in schools and school districts largely depends on their leaders. From the limited information, it is not known how data are transmitted and used, a distinguishing characteristic of learning organizations.

A second characteristic of learning organizations advanced by Garvin (1998), that of measurement, appears underdeveloped based on the responses. Only outcome indicators are used as performance measures. Outcome data do not capture other factors that underlie changes in performance, such as collective efficacy, student motivation, trust, academic optimism, quality instruction, and program coherence, to name a few. Because of successive clustering methods and cut scores, changes in outcomes are not always attributed to changes in performance (Heck, 2006), making measures that capture conditions for teaching and learning in schools important indicators for gauging the effectiveness of policies, processes, and

Accountability Frameworks (continued)

practices. Such measures can also be used to capture the unique culture and needs of local school districts/schools that are not reflected in large scale accountability systems. These data can function as a bridge between external policies and local needs, providing schools with the comprehensive information that is needed to improve teaching and learning and external constituents with additional indicators that better reflect the complex nature of learning.

Reengineering accountability policies and plans to parallel the behaviors of learning organizations has the potential to change the way school performance is conceived and measured, but educators and policy makers alike must see the value in such a model before it becomes an expected feature of accountability plans.

References

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Heck, R. (2006). Assessing school achievement progress: Comparing alternative approaches. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(5), 667-699.

Huber, M., & Hutchings, P. (2005). The advancement of learning: Building the teaching commons. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hursh, D. (2005). Neo-liberalism, markets, and accountability: Transforming education and undermining democracy in the United States and England. *Policy Futures in Education*, 3(1), 3-15.

Schmidt, M. (2008). Risk policy processes: Accountability and school leadership. In Eugenie Samier and Adam Stanly (Eds.). *Political Approaches to Educational Administration and Leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Policy to Practice is a new and recurring feature of the Division A Newsletter and is edited by **Curt Adams, University of Oklahoma**. For comments or questions about the feature, please contact Curt at: Curt.Adams-1@ou.edu.

AERA Division A members on the move!

Recent moves for members during the 2007-2008 academic year include:

Jonathan Becker – Hofstra University to Virginia Commonwealth University; Ethan Heinen – West Virginia University to Central Connecticut State University; Charol Shakeshaft – Hofstra University to Virginia Commonwealth University; Whitney Sherman – Old Dominion University to Virginia Commonwealth University

Upcoming moves for the 2008-2009 academic year include:

Jeff Brooks – Florida State University to Auburn University; Gary Crow – Florida State to Indiana University; Gaetane Jean-Marie – Florida International University to University of Oklahoma-Tulsa; Margaret Grogan – University of Missouri-Columbia to Claremont Graduate University; Lisa Kensler – Lehigh University to Auburn University; Matt Milltello – University of Massachusetts-Amherst to North Carolina State University; Anthony Normore – Florida International to California State University-Dominguez Hills

**Announcing a special issue of the
International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education
Featuring Collaborative Articles written by Jackson Scholars and Mentors**

Volume 21, Number 5

"Sometimes I feel like the problems started with desegregation": Exploring Black superintendent perspectives on desegregation policy. By Sonya Douglas Horsford and Kathryn Bell McKenzie

Women secondary school principals: Multicultural voices from the field. By Barbara Rivers Wrushen and Whitney H. Sherman

"Trusting" schools to meet the academic needs of African American Students?" Suburban mothers' perspectives. By Karen Stansberry Beard and Kathleen M. Brown

Narratives on experiences of African American women in the academy: Conceptualizing effective mentoring relationships of doctoral students and faculty. By Cosette M. Grant and Juanita Cleaver Simmons

"What you see is [not always] what you get!": Dispelling race and gender leadership assumptions. By Latish Reed and Andrea E. Evans

Conceptualizing a critical discourse around Hip-Hop culture and Black male youth in educational scholarship and research. By Darius Prier and Floyd D. Beachum

Announcing publication of the
SAGE Handbook of African American Education

Edited by Dr. Linda C. Tillman, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The **Handbook of African American Education** reflects historical and current perspectives on African Americans in secondary and post-secondary education. Its content promotes inquiry and development of questions, ideas and dialogue about critical practice, theory, and research about African Americans in the United States educational system.

The **Handbook** serves as a comprehensive collection of scholarship that presents theoretical and empirical work on historical perspectives, teaching and learning, secondary school leadership, higher education, current issues, and education policy. This comprehensive body of work will also make significant contributions to the scholarship on African Americans in the broad context of United States education and society. Learn more about this title at:

<http://www.sagepub.co.uk/refbooksProdDesc.nav?level1=300&currTree=Subjects&prodId=Book229131>

Announcing a New Information Age Publishing Book Series:

Educational Leadership for Social Justice

Series Editor: Jeffrey S. Brooks, Auburn University. Series Editorial Team: Denise Armstrong, Brock University; Ira Bogotch, Florida Atlantic University; Sandra Harris, Lamar University; Whitney Sherman, Virginia Commonwealth University; George Theoharis, Syracuse University

Contact Jeffrey S. Brooks at: jeffreysbrooks@auburn.edu for more information about this series.

The purpose of this book series is to promote research on educational leadership for social justice. Specifically, we seek edited volumes, textbooks, and full-length studies focused on research that explores the ways educational leadership preparation and practice can be a means of addressing equity concerns throughout P-20 education. Possible topics include, but are not restricted to the following issues:

- **Race** and educational leadership
- **Class** and educational leadership
- **Gender** and educational leadership
- **Ethics** and educational leadership
- **Ethnicity** and educational leadership
- **Culture** and educational leadership
- **LGBTQ** issues and educational leadership
- **Equity** and educational leadership
- **Access** to educational leadership
- **International and Comparative** perspectives on leadership for social justice
- **Research methodologies** and educational leadership for social justice

And many, many others...please contact us with your ideas and questions!

Proposal and Manuscript Submission Process

We invite you and your colleagues to submit a book proposal of approximately 5-8 pages. All proposals will undergo editorial team and/or blind peer review. Proposals should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction and overview:** Explain the scope of the book project and describe how it is grounded in and extends the extant educational leadership for social justice research base, broadly conceived. Proposals should be aligned with the purpose of the *Information Age Publishing Educational Leadership for Social Justice Book Series*.
2. **Summary of contents:** Provide a proposed table of contents, brief synopsis of each chapter, and an approximate page count for each chapter, including any references and appendices.
3. **Timeline:** The timeline should include initial phases of the publication process that will lead to initial submission of chapters. From that point, accepted manuscripts will undergo editorial and blind peer review.

Please note that while we encourage many kinds of proposals, including textbooks, edited volumes, and full-length studies, we expect all proposals to be grounded in relevant and appropriate inquiry and perspectives. We look forward to hearing from you!

Joseph Murphy
An Interview with an Exceptional Scholar in Education: Part 3

Carol A. Mullen, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
camullen@uncg.edu

Joseph Murphy of Vanderbilt University is the subject of this leadership portrait. Murphy, an architect of the educational leadership profession, creates blueprints for national standards, structures, and policies. His scholarly work and life habits, direction and aspirations, assessment of trends in the profession, and advice for aspiring leaders and academics are the structural elements of this report. Democratic concepts and agendas for education emerged from the interview. Verbatim quotes reflect the words of Murphy in the first section and of his referral colleagues in the one that follows. In spring 2005 I interviewed Murphy and his colleagues who corroborated the accounts, without knowledge of the scholar's reactions. This interview is part of a biographical portraiture study of exceptional scholars in education. The next issue of this newsletter will feature an interview with another top scholar, the last in a four-part series.¹ Specifics regarding issues of research design, protocols, procedures, and analysis can be found in the formative (Mullen, 2004) and summative (Mullen, 2006, in press²) publications.



Joseph Murphy—Architect

The characteristic of *architect* emerged from analysis of the multiple data sources (i.e., interview transcriptions, survey results, and salient documents). An *architect* designs plans for others' use.³ Murphy, fitting this definition, exhibits vision, focus, and expertise by producing alternative blueprints of the profession. These rebuild school administration and reconceptualize the educational leadership profession itself (e.g., see Murphy, 2002). Not only through his scholarly efforts but also his practical efforts, Murphy has influenced the practitioner and policy sides of scholarship. Notably, for years he has led the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards initiative in reshaping educational leadership preparation.

At the Workbench: Habits and Routines

Murphy described himself in statistical terms—he is outside the norm, not having children or outside interests: “I’m probably in the last standard deviation with somebody.” He played with categorizing his efforts, saying, “I probably put about

Interview with Joseph Murphy (continued)

70% of myself into research, 20% percent into teaching, and 10% percent into service."

Work is life for Murphy, and he is directed by and immersed in it: "If you have a passion for it, and this is true in every industry, it's not really work anymore." He elaborated, "I'm saner now—15 years ago even my wife had to have an appointment to see me. The house could have burned down, and I wouldn't even have known it." His commitment to scholarship is unwavering: "Not many have probably written more in the last 20 years, for better or worse."

School Improvement: Energy and Purpose

Murphy's energy and purpose are "anchored in what [he calls] school improvement." He explained, "All my work is designed around the creation of more productive schools," which are "places where all kids learn at high levels, where achievement is equitably distributed across the school, and where the school is responsible for what happens—all these value adages, such as high achievement." His work in educational administration, the development of leadership, and relevant policy issues is "all centered on that same issue."

Anchoring School Improvement: Sources of Contribution

Murphy focuses on school improvement and student success, asking, "How do you get schools to the point where all kids are successful?" Toward this end, his life's work involves having "repositioned our understanding of school leadership away from simply organization and management, governance, and politics to what we call instructional leadership and learner-centered leadership." This concept has been at the center of the struggle "to shift the whole profession of school administration toward an educationally anchored conception."

For decades, Murphy says, it was *not* the norm in our profession to invest in the success of students, in effect treating school improvement as the process and productive schools as the product. He has devoted himself to designing this standard for the field, which orients "leadership to making a difference in the learning of kids, the faculty, and their schools."

Murphy's writings on literacy, professional development, and teacher leadership are all integral to his vision of school improvement. Hence, these pathways are by no means an end in and of themselves. This pattern of thinking extends to *Leadership for Literacy* (Murphy, 2004), which again puts learning/teaching at the center of instructional leadership, school improvement, and productive schooling. He clarified: "I wouldn't put literacy at the center—I'd put learning and teaching there," seeing this positioning as integral to a democratic school agenda.

Using a circles metaphor to further illustrate school improvement, he explained that "the inner circle has to be our most profound understanding of learning and teaching," and the "outer circle is where leaders show they have organizational fluency." He added, "Organizational and political tools get kids to high levels of literacy" when "learning [is treated] as the center."

Continuing Along the Path: Major Trends

Murphy described the state of school leadership as recent as 10 years ago wherein educators could have "continued along the path we'd been following that favored administration in organization, management, governance, and politics," or

Interview with Joseph Murphy (continued)

“we could have taken the other fork, concerned with learning and teaching: We took the *good* fork and made the *right* change.” The “learning-centered leadership” path was once revolutionary: “It’s easy to say now that teaching/learning should be at the center of school administration and that we need learning-centered leaders,” but for the profession to “come to some agreement on what we valued,” the educational leadership field had to change. Three promising foundations—school improvement, social justice, and democratic community—were erected for this purpose (see Murphy, 2005).

The work that Murphy collaboratively undertakes “has been about moving people in this direction.” Faculty are developing the core foundational areas in their programs and writings.

Get to the Workbench: Advice for Budding Academics

Murphy has given plenty of advice to junior professors about developing their scholarship and increasing their productivity. As a former department chair, Murphy counseled junior professors, advising “You can only be productive if you work. Get to the workbench everyday. Set a schedule and stick to it.” He extended the same counsel to budding academics more generally, arguing

You can’t say ‘I’m going to work on my article on Monday or Friday.’ This is not going to help. You’ve got to be really diligent and aggressive about setting a schedule for your scholarship. You have to work on your scholarship, and if you don’t allot the time to do it, it’s not going to automatically occur.

The junior professors who received their chair’s counsel were urged to “stay home and work at least twice weekly.” Consolidating one’s meetings on particular days was an additional tip.

Operating at the Boundary: Aspiring Leaders and Academics

Murphy also encouraged “colleagues in practice to fight the good fight” by learning to live “at the boundary of the circle” of school administration. With “one foot in the circle and one out,” leaders can “push the envelope,” unlike those who completely enter the circle, becoming absorbed in the daily business of schools. “You have to stay on the outer bound of the circle because that’s where you’re going to make the difference, that’s where improvement’s going to come, and that’s where things are going to happen,” he exclaimed. About democratic instructional leaders, Murphy concluded that “it’s their ability to use the routine stuff to push the learning/teaching agenda forward that separates really good principals.” Notably, principals “look at every decision to be made with an instructional and learning pair of glasses.”

New faculty should know, he added, that it is not only essential to work hard but to select carefully, which for principals means emphasizing school improvement and student success.

Highlights From Murphy’s Referrals

As “a very disciplined writer,” Murphy produces proposals for conferences based on papers he has completed. His “singular focus” was seen as unusual: “He knows what his writing projects are going to be one or more years in advance.” In regard to Murphy’s scholarly habits, he writes in longhand before typing and uses “snail mail.” He sustains a highly predictable schedule, jogging daily and maintaining

Interview with Joseph Murphy (continued)

an indexing system for projects. He works “completely unruffled all day long,” and as department chair “he got around to see the faculty.”

Murphy’s commitment to scholarship was simultaneously viewed as a commitment to practice: “While there’s no doubt about Joe’s stature as a scholar and his commitment to quality research, his focus truly is on improving practice and on research that can drive improvements in practice.” The other referral affirmed that Murphy “took the lens off of the managerial day-to-day within leadership practice and put it on student learning.”

Murphy was described as focusing on instructional leadership with respect to “what it takes for administrators to affect student learning.” He was viewed as a central force in “administrators being seen as champions for learning.” His work with the ISLLC standards has made “an enormous difference in the practical, as well as the preparation, side of the house.”

One could mistakenly get the impression that Murphy cares only about work. However, his colleagues—a university leader and state leader, both former doctoral students—shared images of him as a committed teacher, mentor, and colleague. Among their many accolades was his award for graduate instruction and graduation of at least 24 doctoral students, with one PhD receiving AERA’s (Division A) dissertation award. Although Murphy did not discuss his interactions with doctoral students or significant impact on them during the interview, the testimonies of his graduates painted a picture of a mentor’s efforts that were centering, if not life-changing, for them. Doctoral candidates who have joined him in the effort to improve schools and who have coauthored on this topic are his lifelong colleagues. His coauthored writings with practitioners and exhaustive research on various school reform topics inform his teaching of aspiring leaders.

As teacher, Murphy’s “profound effect” on students was attributed to “his sense of integrity and purpose in improving education.” He “pushed students to think about how *they* could make schools a better place.” His ideas about the importance of learner-centered leadership in school reform had personal meaning. For one colleague, this was understood in terms of “learning to operate as a leader who has a moral compass, not only a sense of vision.” Because of the importance they believe he attaches to his teaching and mentoring roles, the 20% or so that he says that he gives to teaching would be nonquantifiable to them. As further evidence of this assessment, they described his labors in human, not statistical, language.

Through Murphy, aspiring leaders and scholars learned to *do*, not just *think*, leadership.

Endnotes

¹Each of the four interview reports is an adaptation of the larger study (see Mullen, 2006; in press).

²NCPEA *Connexions* (www.cnx.org) is an online clearinghouse for educational leadership materials/modules; submitted manuscripts are externally reviewed even though this is not a journal, meaning that published articles can be submitted elsewhere for review and publication.

³The source of the definitions (i.e., architect) provided is <http://dictionary.reference.com>.

⁴Non-identifiers are used for the referral colleagues.

Interview with Joseph Murphy (continued)

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Editor's note: This interview with Joseph Murphy is the third in a recurring series of interviews with acclaimed educational leaders conducted by **Carol Mullen**, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The next issue of School Leadership News will feature the last interview.

AERA Announces Annual Meeting Theme and Call for Proposals: "Disciplined Inquiry: Education Research in the Circle of Knowledge"

At a time when knowledge creation and use require spanning boundaries between academic disciplines, education researchers can take pride in their long tradition of multidisciplinary work. AERA's 2009 Annual Meeting will celebrate this tradition and look ahead to assess new ways that education research and disciplinary inquiry might be more effectively integrated.

Read the full CFP at: <http://aera.net/Default.aspx?id=5318>

From the Editorial Team

Hello all! We are pleased to announce that this second issue is the first *School Leadership News* using an Editorial Team model has gone well. Joining me on the team are **Gaetane Jean-Marie** and **Curt Adams** of the University of Oklahoma; **Sheldon Watson** of Central Connecticut State University; **Whitney Sherman**, Virginia Commonwealth University; **Karen Crum**, Old Dominion University, and; **Danna Beatty**, Tarleton State University. Over the next several issues we will be developing a new features and seeking to enhance the overall quality of the newsletter. If you have any comments, ideas or announcements, please contact me at: jeffreysbrooks@mac.com.

Thank you for your support!
Jeffrey S. Brooks, Auburn University

Call for Support

Our goal continues to be expanding the content and distribution of the Division A Newsletter. To make our Newsletter a "must read" for our entire membership, we are seeking:

- commentaries that focus on topical issues
- perspectives that provide readers with insights about Division A concerns
- critiques and recommendations to improve the newsletter content and format
- information and announcements to include in future issues
- volunteers to serve as reporters, historians, and so forth
- calls for proposals and papers relevant to Division A members

Submissions or suggestions for improving the newsletter should be sent to **Linda Tillman** ltillman@email.unc.edu or to Jeffrey S. Brooks jeffreysbrooks@mac.com. Please help us keep each other well informed about Division A and our fields of interest.

Submission Guidelines and Deadlines

In addition to the sections included in this issue, ***School Leadership News*** periodically considers publication of brief articles on issues that are trenchant and of interest to Division A members. Restrictions for publication will apply (preferably no more than 1,000 words or 5 to 7 pages of double-spaced text) in order to meet newsletter page limitations (2-3 pages). The editors reserve the right to edit for style and length. Suggestions for articles will be accepted from Division A officers, committee chairs and members, and members of Division A and related Divisions or SIGs. Please contact Jeffrey S. Brooks at jeffreysbrooks@mac.com for specific information about specific details and deadline.

We invite you to browse both the AERA Division A Web Site and the Archives of the Division A Newsletter, both available at **www.aera.net**.

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