



NCPIE Update

A Publication of the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education June-July 2005

Inside this Issue:

- www.SchoolMatters.com
- NCPIE's Continuing Column: *Spotlight on the Evidence*
- Parent Involvement Resources and Upcoming Meetings/Trainings

National Web-based Clearinghouse for Education Information and Analysis: www.SchoolMatters.com

If you have never pointed your internet browser to www.SchoolMatters.com do it soon, because this web-site is loaded with a searchable collection of education performance data that can help policymakers, administrators, parents and community leaders better understand academic achievement data. An overview of the site was given by Kia Brown, Client Services Manager at Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services at the May NCPIE meeting.



Kia walked the group through the new site which was launched in March of this year. To date it is the largest easily searchable collection of education performance data ever assembled. In addition to student achievement information, financial data and student and community demographic breakdowns, the service includes powerful analytical tools and objective analyses provided by Standards & Poor's that present education leaders the information they need to make better-informed decisions about schools and school systems.

The Partnership to Provide SchoolMatters:

SchoolMatters.com is provided by the National Education Data Partnership, which was created to help transform the way education information is used by educators, policymakers, superintendents, and parents. The National Education Data Partnership is a collaborative effort of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services, Achieve, Inc., and the CELT Corporation and is generously funded by both The Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This partnership brings together three distinct but related education data efforts:

1. A Robust, Web-based Analytical Service for Education Data:

SchoolMatters.com is a powerful new online service available to education stakeholders, including policymakers, administrators, parents, and the general public. It offers unique comparison tools, ratios, benchmarks, and performance indicators designed to assist decision-makers in better understanding what is happening in our nation's school systems, how much we are spending, and where we can focus resources or attention to improve performance.

2. Consulting and Technical Assistance to Improve State Data Infrastructure:

The CELT Corporation is working with interested state leaders to conduct in-depth assessments of current state information technology systems and architecture. CELT provides state assessment reports that include a blueprint to help each state build a more sophisticated technology system, capable of supporting the increasingly robust data needs of today's education environment.

3. Assistance in Using Data Effectively in State and National Policymaking:

Achieve, Inc. will help local, state, and national policymakers identify and disseminate effective practices in using data to inform policy decisions.

Standard and Poor's School Evaluation Services:

In response to an expressed need by the education community for an impartial, transparent analysis of the nation's educational data, Standard & Poor's (S&P) created School Evaluation Services in 2001. The mission of School Evaluation Services has been to provide educators, policymakers, business leaders, parents, and taxpayers with an objective, independent analysis of school and school district data; with the goal being to use the data to implement more effective school reform policies.

Since its initial launch in 2001, School Evaluation Services has published annual reports on the strengths and challenges of more than 1,200 school districts in Michigan and Pennsylvania. Learning from their experiences in Michigan and Pennsylvania, and with funding from The Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, S&P's School Evaluation Services, in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers, is making its analytical services available to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico on the SchoolMatters website, as an objective source for information and analysis of the nation's public schools.

An Overview of the Site:

The site features analysis of academic, financial, and demographic indicators and trends; provides valuable comparative benchmarks; and presents impartial findings on the performance of schools. Use of the site provides access to broad set of information about schools and school districts, including:

- Student Performance: Analysis of student achievement measures, including national and state test results, as well as participation, attendance, graduation, and dropout-promotion rates.
- Spending, Revenue, Taxes, & Debt: Analysis of extensive financial data for each school district, along with state and county comparisons.

- School Environment: Analysis of performance in the context of the learning environment, which includes class size, teacher qualifications, and student demographics.
- Community Demographics: Analysis of community characteristics, such as adult education levels, household incomes, and labor force statistics. Independent research has shown that these factors affect student achievement.

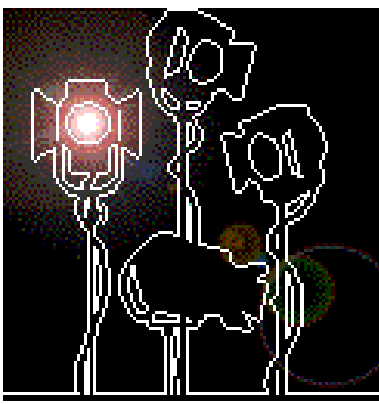
Additionally, SchoolMatters.com features a unique synthesis of financial and academic performance factors and promotes the sharing of "best practices" among schools.

Because the site is so dense with data and tools, there are tutorials available to help users learn how to navigate through the site and pull out the information that is most useful to them. *The Learning Center*, an interactive training module, shows you how to access the tools, analyses, and comparative data within the site. There is also a FAQ section and a glossary to help clarify terms specific to each state, as well as other common terms used throughout the website.

The site features a home page for each state. Within that home page is contact information for that state's department of education, a link to the individual state department of education's website, and state achievement data, including: basic state facts about the number of students, schools, districts and spending per pupil in the state. Also each state homepage features information on how students performed on state and national reading and math tests and the enrollment of students with special needs in the state. Additionally, adult education levels for the state are listed and compared against adult education levels nationally.

Each State homepage features the same four headings of information with comparison and analysis of achievement by districts across the state. There is state specific spending data including: student performance, spending, revenue & taxes, school environment, community demographics, and S&P Ratios.

And most importantly there is a Resource Center with information on how parents, educators, district and state leaders can use SchoolMatters.com to better understand the overall performance of individual schools. But the best way to really get a handle on what can be found on the site is to visit it for yourself. Point your browser to www.schoolmatters.com.



Spotlight on *A New Wave of Evidence*

A continuing column highlighting parent involvement research found in "*A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*" by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp.

This month our featured piece of research is "Moments of Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships" by Annette Lareau and Erin McNamara Horvat, 1999; Page 136

Published in the Winter 1999 issue of *Sociology of Education*, this research looks at the possession and activation of social and cultural capital by parents of third grade students in a small Midwestern town. Specifically, the authors review how social and cultural resources held by parents are or are not converted into educational advantages for their children. Additionally, the authors recognize that there is a corollary component to the study of capital in public education, in that schools often replicate existing social inequalities, broadly defined in research terms as the concept of social reproduction. The results of this case study highlight the differences between how some parents utilized the capital they possessed and the value given to their displays of that capital in public school settings.

The Methodology of the Research

This study was conducted in a small Midwestern town with a population of about 25,000 people. At the time of the study, the public school system enrolled approximately 1,500 elementary and junior high school students in six schools. Of these students, 52% were white, 44% were black, 3% were Asian, and 1% was Hispanic. Forty percent (40%) of the children in the district were eligible for free and or reduced lunch.

A sample of 24 children was chosen for in-depth interviews; 12 white students and 12 black. Separate two-hour interviews were held in the children’s homes with their parents and guardians. In all, interviews were conducted with 40 parents and nine educators (a principal, superintendent, school board member, school secretary, and five teachers. Interviews were also conducted with 26 other adults from the community at large. These community member interviews included civil right officials, such as the head of the local NAACP chapter and the executive director of a local community center in a black neighborhood, and city officials such as the city manager and a social worker. These community members spoke about the broader racial context of education and schools in the community.

Distribution of Children in the Study by Race and Social Class

Social Class	White	Black	Total
	(N-24)	(n=12)	(n=12)
Middle Class	9	3	12
Working Class	3	4	7
Poor	0	5	5

Note: Middle-class families are those in which at least one parent has a college degree and is employed in a professional or managerial position. Working-class families are those in which at least one parent graduated from high school (or is a high school dropout) and is steadily employed in a skilled or semiskilled position, including lower-level white color-work. Poor families are those in which the parents are on welfare; most of these families are high school dropouts or graduates

A Definition of Capital and its Value

The authors introduce a strict test and definition of capital in this study. They suggest that cultural and social resources become forms of capital when they facilitate parents' compliance with dominant standards in schools. Included in their definition of cultural capital are:

- large vocabularies,
- sense of entitlement to interact with teachers as equals,
- time,
- transportation, and
- child care arrangements to attend school events during the school day.

Social capital includes social networks with other parents in the school community who provide informal information about teachers. Additionally, the authors believe a distinct difference exists between the levels of cultural capital held by black vs. white parents. Because of the historical legacy of racial discrimination, i.e., segregated schools; forced desegregation, forced busing, open racial conflict, and a school boycott in the late 1980's by blacks in the community, the perception, by many black parents was one of continuing discrimination by the school system. Thus, some black parents were openly distrustful of the school district, which in turn placed them at a disadvantage when confronted with the established rules in which educators define desirable family-school relationships as based on trust, partnership, cooperation with and deference to white school officials. Because they lacked the same level of suspicion, distrust and hostility towards the school system, white parents were able to draw upon their sources of capital and approach their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust than did the black parents. This lack of suspicion took on substantially more value—capital—in an institutional framework in which the educators stressed positive, affirmative supportive encounters between families and the school. As such, educators were extremely hostile themselves to expressions of criticism toward them. Thus white parents had an advantage that some black parents did not have in complying with the school's standards as it relates to capital and its value in the school.

Three Aspects of the Activation of Capital Process

In this article, the authors highlight three aspects of the reproduction of social inequality in education process:

1. The value that schools attach to social and cultural capital. For example, the value of capital depends heavily upon the setting. In this instance, the field of education and a school that values deference rather than criticism.
2. The ways in which parents activate their capital. There is a big difference between having capital and utilizing it. Parents with social and cultural capital may choose to activate capital or not and they vary in the skill with which they activate it. To be successful parents must use their capital in ways that are accepted by school officials.
3. The legitimacy that schools grant to displays of capital.

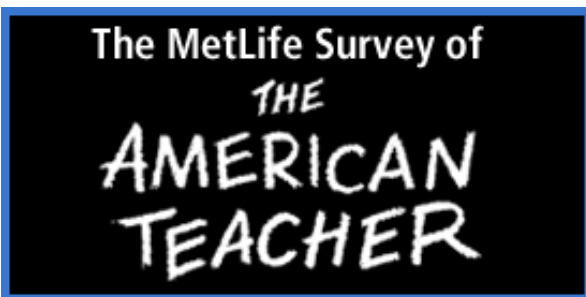
Findings and Conclusions

1. The educators in this study believed that they enthusiastically welcomed parent involvement and that their requests were neutral, efficient and designed to promote higher levels of achievement. The reality was that they selected a narrow band of

acceptable behaviors when it came to parent involvement. Chiefly, they wanted parents to only be positive, supportive and to not question their judgments or assessments. They praised parents who praised them and liked those parents that were deferential and expressed empathy with the difficulty of teachers' work. Again, as stated above this standard was hard for some black families to meet. Which led to their eventual exclusion.

2. There were social-class differences in how some black parents managed their concerns with the school. Middle-class black parents were more likely than poor blacks to maneuver and customize their approach and activate their capital to achieve desirable school experiences for their children. Additionally, while some working-class white parents did have conflicts with the school, they were more likely to focus on their individual child's experience and activate their capital more skillfully in ways that the school saw as supportive. As such, they experienced inclusion.
3. The authors assert that the role of race is independent of class and echoes other research that has suggested the dominance of race in shaping school experiences.
4. The authors suggest that a useful conceptual framework is that of moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion of parents by school officials. They contend that the activation of capital in a manner that is considered legitimate and valued by the school leads to moments of inclusion where factors come together to give an advantage to a child academically. Moments of exclusion happen when capital is activated in a manner not accepted by the system whereby forces come together to provide a disadvantage for the student.

(Source: "Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family School Relationships," *Spotlight on the Evidence, The Connection Collection Abstract, and several internet reviews, class syllabi, and abstracts.*)



National MetLife Survey Shows New Teachers Feel Their Biggest Challenge is Parent Engagement

MetLife recently released *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships*. The survey, the latest in MetLife's annual series conducted

by Harris Interactive® since 1984, examines the experiences of teachers, principals, and secondary school students upon entering a new school.

"New teachers tell us that working well with parents is a critical component of effective teaching, but also their greatest challenge," said John Geraci, Vice President of Youth and Education Research at Harris Interactive®. "These new teachers rely on the principal and more

experienced teachers at their school for guidance on how to meet this challenge and the others they face during their first years in the classroom."

The survey focuses on the experiences of new teachers – those in their first five years of teaching – and students who have made the transition from elementary to secondary school, and some from junior to senior high. Principals were asked about their early work experiences and the support they provide to new teachers and students. The study examines relationships among members of the school community, the degree to which teachers have an impact on students' lives, and teacher and student perceptions on parent involvement and school safety. The survey also assesses job satisfaction among teachers and principals, and provides a portrait of teachers likely to leave the profession.

Key findings include:

- New teachers are most likely to report the biggest challenge that they face as a teacher is communicating with and involving parents. Three in ten (31%) believe that this is the greatest challenge, compared to two in ten (22%) who say that it is getting sufficient resources and two in ten (20%) who say that maintaining order and discipline in the classroom is the greatest challenge.
- Secondary school students are less likely than elementary students to feel safe and say that their teachers care about them at their current school than at their previous school.
- 18% of new teachers and 20% of students were not given tours of their new schools.
- 31% of secondary school students did not receive information or guidance about what classes to take when they first started attending their current school.
- 75% of secondary school students describe their parents as "very" or "somewhat" involved. These students are more likely than their peers who describe their parents as "not very involved" to have other positive associations with school, including having very satisfying relationships with their parents (47% vs. 14%) and teachers (22% vs. 13%). They are also more likely to strongly agree that they are interested in their classes (32% vs. 24%).

"Any good organization – be it a school or a business – must be able to attract and keep good people," said MetLife Chairman and CEO Bob Benmosche. "Schools must make ensuring the success of new teachers a top priority." "The degree to which teachers and students are supported upon their entry to a new school can have a great impact on their ability to achieve," said Sibyl Jacobson, MetLife Foundation President and CEO. "This survey can alert schools and districts to the areas in which new teachers and students need more support and help guide them in addressing those needs."

Harris Interactive® conducted the survey on behalf of MetLife between November 29, 2004 and January 12, 2005 in the United States with nationally representative samples of 841 public school principals of grades K-12, 800 public school teachers of grades K-12 with five years or less of teaching experience, and 1,073 public school students in grades 7-12. Teachers and

principals were interviewed by telephone. Student interviews were conducted online. For the teacher and principal data, figures for school level, sex, region and size of place were weighted where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. For the student data, figures for grade, sex, race, size of place, region and parent's education were weighted where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population.

Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships is the latest in a series of teacher surveys sponsored annually by MetLife. The surveys are designed to bring the voices of teachers and students to the attention of policymakers and the American public. Survey topics change each year to address key issues—from reform to violence—but the premise remains the same: to give voice to those closest to the classroom. Full survey reports can be downloaded from MetLife's Web site at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey or obtained by writing to MetLife, ATT: Survey of the American Teacher, 27-01 Queens Plaza North, Long Island City, NY 11101.

Parent Involvement Resources & Upcoming Meetings & Trainings

NEA Produces New Guide for Educators: C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps

This guide was featured in the March 2005 issue of the Update as a part of an overview of the National Education Association's (NEA) work to end achievement gaps in the academic levels of America's public school children.

C.A.R.E.: *Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps* provides a multi-themed approach to closing the achievement gaps -- focusing on Culture, Abilities, Resilience, and Effort (C.A.R.E.).

Closing student achievement gaps is one of the most pressing challenges facing public education. Educators, with the support of the community, must:

- Reach all students—students from multiple ethnic, racial, language, and economic backgrounds; students of both genders; students of comparable ability who are not currently achieving at equal academic levels
- Ensure that all students have access to high-level classes and high-quality teachers and attain more high school and college diplomas

C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps helps educators reflect on the causes of disparity in student achievement and explore ways to improve academic success by using innovative, research-based instructional strategies.

By focusing on the themes of cultural, economic and language differences; unrecognized and undeveloped abilities; the power of resilience; and the importance of effort and motivation, *C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps* advances the idea that if educators view these qualities of students as strengths, rather than deficits, they can be successful in closing achievement gaps.

Don't forget to check the NCPIE web-site periodically for new information on parent involvement at www.ncpie.org

NCPIE's June Meeting and Presentation

Our next NCPIE meeting will be **Wednesday, June 29th** from 9:00 to 12:00 at NEA, Conference Room B. NEA is located at 1201 16th Street NW, Washington DC. Please join us at 9:00 for coffee and conversation. The meeting will begin at 9:30.

This month we have a team of presenters led by Karen Willoughby, Coordinator of the Fairfax County School's Family Services and Involvement Section (FSIS), Fairfax, VA. They will talk about how some schools in Fairfax County have embraced the concept of creating welcoming environments using a program known as a "Welcoming Environment Walk Through: Seeing Your School as Others See It". The purpose of the 'Walk Through' is to examine how inviting the school appears to a diverse community and to determine strategies that will make the school more welcoming and therefore, increase parent involvement. There are four basic components to the 'Walk Through':

- 1) Examining the physical environment such as the parking areas, classroom, main office and hallways;
- 2) Examining school-wide practices and policies including interviews with principal and administrative staff;
- 3) Observing personal interaction throughout the school and looking for inviting, friendly faces and tones; and,
- 4) Examining written materials and communications including newsletters, parent handbook, fliers, web sites, telephone message lines and other communication systems.

Through assessing the needs in these critical areas, schools can develop plans to meet the needs of their school communities and improve their environments, creating a foundation for increasing parent and community involvement. Karen and her team will share with us in greater depth how the Walk Through is actually implemented and the positive outcomes and changes that have evolved because of it.

This will be a critical meeting for all of us who care about making our schools more welcoming to families. I hope to see you on the 29th.