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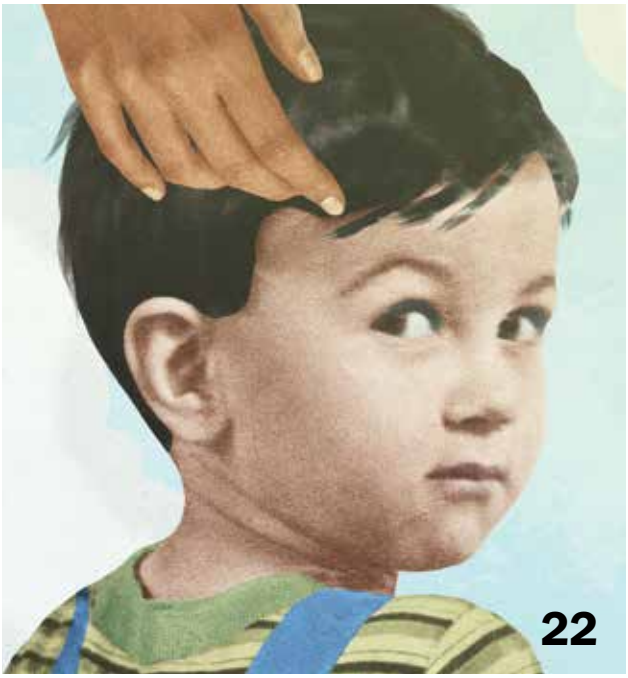
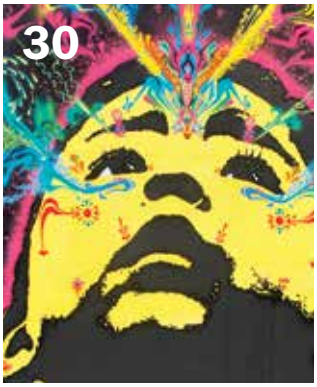
THEORY TO PRACTICE

AN INQUISITIVE REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION & HEALTH

COVER STORY

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY | COLLEGE OF EDUCATION





IN THIS EDITION

THEORY TO PRACTICE

IN BRIEF

IN DEPTH

COLLOQUY

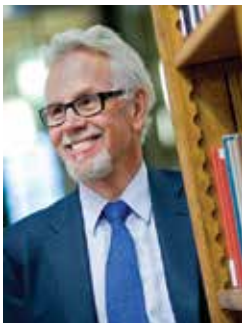
Time to Collaborate

As Lehigh University celebrates its Sesquicentennial during this 2015-16 academic year, the College of Education also marks two key anniversaries—100 years of education at Lehigh and 50 years of education as a College.

Over the course of the year, Lehigh will shine a light on the people, places and events that have withstood the test of time and that have made Lehigh the great institution that it is today—and is poised to become tomorrow.

We thrive because, as John A. Stoops, the College's first dean, once noted, "Lehigh's founders taught their University to be future-minded."

It is fitting then that we take a look at charter schools in this issue of *Theory to Practice*. Their proliferation across the country has given rise to vigorous debates among educators, lawmakers and others, reminding us of our collective responsibility to ensure that all children – regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location – receive a quality education. But sometimes, as voices rise on both sides of the charter school vs. public education debate, we lose sight of that promise to our nation's children. As the article strongly advises, it's time to start collaborating.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN HULVAT

In the search for common ground, the College of Education invited education activist Diane Ravitch to the campus earlier this calendar year. We include excerpts of our lively conversation with her, as she argued passionately for public education. This fall, the College will welcome Geoffrey Canada, who will present "The Promise of Charter Schools." Canada was prominently featured in the documentary *Waiting for 'Superman.*'

Also in this issue, we highlight the important research of associate professor Susan S. Woodhouse, who is challenging long-held beliefs about how mothers can best connect with their infants. Other articles focus on the research and global work of other scholars, interns and graduate students in the College of Education, including an important new collaboration among faculty – the Early Development and Education Initiative.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Theory to Practice* as we reflect on our accomplishments in this celebratory year — and look forward to what we can accomplish in the years to come.

Gary Sasso

Gary Sasso
Dean of the College of Education
Lehigh University

EDU/STATS

Recently released data from the National Center for Education Statistics:

- From 1999-2000 to 2012-2013, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased more than sevenfold, from 300,000 to 2.3 million students.
- In 2012-2013, 6.2 percent of all public schools, or 6,100 schools, were public charter schools.
- California enrolled the largest number of students in charter schools in 2012-2013—471,000, or 8 percent of the total number of public school students in the state. The District of Columbia had the highest percentage—42, or 31,600 students.
- In demographic shifts, 29 percent of charter school students were Hispanic in 2012-2013, up from 20 percent in 1999-2000; 35 percent were white, down from 42 percent, and 28 percent were black, down from 34 percent.

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Research

Helping troubled teens

Professor Lee Kern leads national study that finds students with severe behavioral disorders don't always get the services they need.

High school students suffering from severe mental health and behavioral disorders aren't always getting the services they need, according to one of the findings of a five-year study led by Special Education Prof. Lee Kern.

"Interventions are available that are very successful at reducing the difficulties adolescents experience, and schools are in an ideal position to provide these services," says Kern, who led a team of researchers from seven universities. But, she says, "we found, through a school resource mapping process, that school resources are not being used effectively and efficiently.

"For example, school staff spend a lot of time responding to crises, rather than putting preventive interventions in place. Also, trained school staff, including counselors, spend a lot of time on tasks such as scheduling that do not capitalize on their skills."

Because research shows students rarely follow through with community-based services, Kern says, school-based interventions are critical.

"Our concern is there are a lot of adolescents who greatly need mental health interventions, classroom supports, etc., but there are no guarantees they will actually get these services," she says.

The study was funded with a $10.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Kern and fellow researchers from Ohio University, University of Missouri, University of South Carolina, University of Kansas, University of Houston (TIMES) and Miami University of Ohio created the National Research and Development Center on Serious Behavior Disorders on the Secondary Level.

To assure students get the support they need, researchers are recommending that school officials conduct assessments to better identify students who have mental health difficulties and track dropout indicators, such as failing courses and high absenteeism.

In other findings, students appeared to show incremental improvements with certain key interventions. Also, disability labels appeared to be futile.

"We asked schools to refer students with the most intensive needs, whether they had a disability label or not," Kern says. "We found no significant differences in any area [with the exception of academic performance among students with learning disabilities] between students with and without a disability label. This has important implications because students with special education diagnoses are legally entitled services, but students without disabilities are not, in spite of their need."

Project PEAK: Getting Parents' Attention about ADHD

In a typical classroom of energetic kindergartners, up to three or more students may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition that will hinder their success with schoolwork and friendships. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, less than half of those affected children will have received the behavioral therapy they needed before entering kindergarten.

"ADHD is a chronic neurodevelopmental disorder that typically begins early in life and is associated with substantial educational and psychological impairment over the life span," says George DuPaul, professor of School Psychology. "Without treatment, many of these children enter kindergarten behind their peers, both academically and behaviorally."

A big part of the treatment plan for those ages 3 to 5, he says, rests with the children's parents.

To help parents, DuPaul and fellow professor Lee Kern developed Project PEAK (Promoting Engagement with ADHD Pre-Kindergartners), a face-to-face educational training program for parents of young children with ADHD. To increase parent engagement, DuPaul, Kern and their team are working on PEAK's second phase, allowing parents to complete online sessions without schedule or transportation restrictions.

"The web-based program includes 10 one-and-a-half-to-two-hour sessions focused on parent understanding of child behavior, implementation of various behavioral strategies and support for early reading and math," DuPaul says.

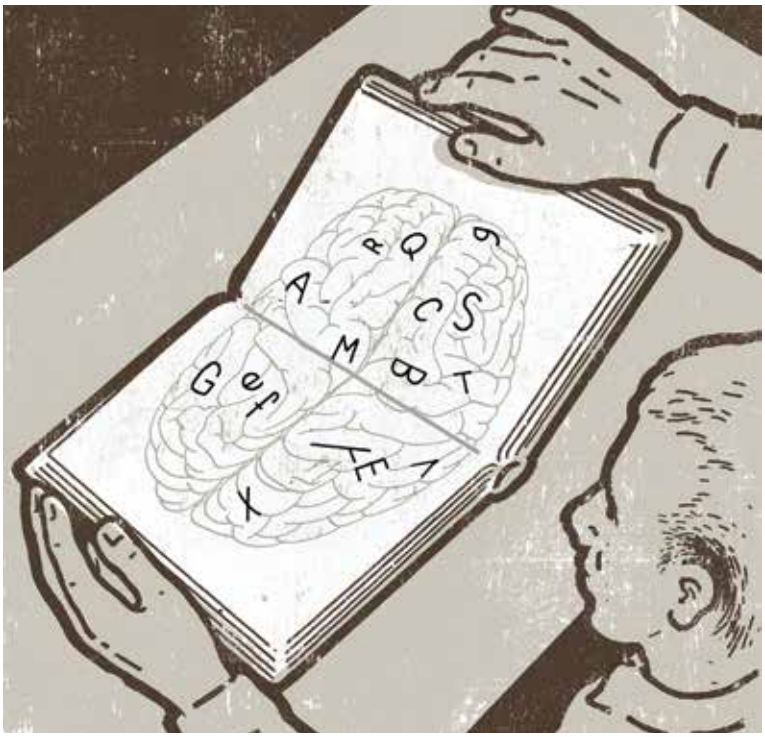
Parents view a PowerPoint presentation, watch example videos and respond to online questions. "For example," he says, "we teach parents to ask their children questions as they read stories to them."

Between sessions, a member of the Project PEAK research team contacts the parents to answer questions and troubleshoot treatment implementation.

So far, with the help of funding from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the team has worked with 19 families during the treatment development phase to help make the program feasible, engaging and effective. It now plans to work with an additional 30 to 35 families over the next 18 months to examine the relative effects of face-to-face vs. web-based training.

"Ultimately, our hope is that early identification and intervention will ease the negative impact of [pre-kindergartners'] ADHD symptoms and support families in helping their children enter elementary school ready to succeed," DuPaul says.

Interested in a screening? Go to lehigh.edu/projectpeak



Community Outreach

A partnership for better mental health

The student-staffed Community Voices Clinic provides free counseling services to South Bethlehem residents.

Lack of transportation and child care, financial hardship and the stigma frequently attached to mental health issues are among the many challenges people in marginalized communities face when it comes to obtaining necessary counseling services.

Lehigh's graduate program in Counseling Psychology is working to diminish those challenges. Partnering with the Bethlehem Area School District and St. Luke's University Health Network, the program has formed the Community Voices Clinic, a community-schools-based training site for master's and doctoral-level students in mental-health counseling and supervision.

"If you provide services where the family is already coming, there's not as much stigma—they have connections with the school, they feel comfortable. It's just easier," says Arpana Inman, professor of Counseling Psychology, licensed psychologist and clinic director.

Community Voices Clinic opened in 2012 at Broughal Middle School and Donegan Elementary in Bethlehem, Pa. Funded by St. Luke's, it is fully staffed by graduate students who incorporate evidence-based practice, multicultural competence and social justice in their free therapy services to uninsured and underinsured South Bethlehem residents. The clinic also provides weekly group sessions for senior citizens and career counseling and vocational training at the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley.

The clinic provides on-the-job training for graduate students who are involved with everything from creating forms to identifying needs and developing policies and procedures.

The clinic hopes to help provide integrated medical and mental-health care by partnering further with the St. Luke's family clinic at Donegan. The new partnership would allow clients to see a physician and, if needed, be referred immediately to a social worker and a counselor during that same visit. The ultimate goal is to work with community organizations to create an integrated center for well-being with a multidisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, nutritionists, counselors and psychologists.

In the Classroom

Early Development Initiative

Faculty combines expertise to develop evidence-based strategies.

Children's earliest years lay a critical foundation for future success in school and life. Research shows that children who enter school with a well-developed vocabulary, letter-sound knowledge and math skills do better academically and that children's social-emotional competencies are powerful indicators of later student successes.

With an aim of building knowledge and informing best practices in children's early learning and social-emotional development, an interdisciplinary group of Lehigh faculty has launched the Early Development and Education Initiative in Lehigh's College of Education.

Faculty members say they are committed to conducting research, enhancing the capacity of families and educators to promote children's positive development and establishing community-researcher partnerships to better support children in their homes, schools and communities.

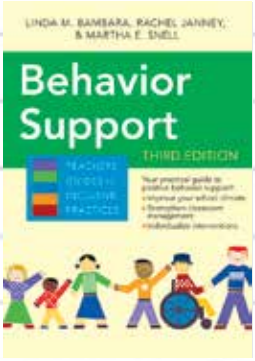
"This work is incredibly important because, as a collaborative group, we bring multiple perspectives that create a richer context for thinking about early development and education," says Robin Hojnoski, associate professor of School Psychology. "This, in turn, promotes innovative thinking about approaches to creating supportive contexts for very young children."

The initiative began to take shape about a year ago as new faculty members brought their research to the College of Education and added to the ongoing work being done.

Hojnoski says the initiative "seemed like a great way to connect all the programs. How do we create a niche?"

Individual COE faculty research interests include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, numeracy and literacy, comparative and international education, parenting, early interventions, parent and teacher practices, behavior disorders, educational leadership and attachment theory.

As part of the initiative, faculty members are combining their areas of expertise to develop evidence-based strategies to support early development and education. The team is exploring options for undergraduate and graduate specialized training, externally funded research, and a variety of community partnerships. The team also will host programming for parents, educators, students and home visitors on the latest innovations.



BOOK REVIEW

Positive behavioral supports (PBS) aim to eliminate problem student behaviors and increase prosocial skills. In *Behavior Support: Teachers' Guides to Inclusive Practice*, Linda M. Bambara, professor of special education at Lehigh, and co-authors Rachel Janney, consultant, and Martha E. Snell, professor emerita at University of Virginia, provide a research-based guide to implementing PBS in the classroom and schoolwide.

"A powerful read with helpful tools and student snapshots that lend insightful ideas to support effective practice."

—Robin Drogan, assistant professor of Special Education, Bloomsburg University

The book also includes contributions from Lehigh special education doctoral student Raquel Burns and Dolly Singley '15 Ph.D.

To keep the focus on learning in schools, the authors provide strategies to prevent bullying, to create safe school climates, and to provide individualized interventions for the most challenging students.

The book includes step-by-step instructions for implementing effective positive behavior support, tips and case examples.

Community Outreach

'We Believe in You'

A counseling psychologist helps inner-city youth develop strategies to succeed. It's part of his work with a midnight basketball program.

Close to 10 on a Friday night, Chris Liang, associate professor of Counseling Psychology, stands before a group of black and Latino kids in a middle-school cafeteria in Allentown, Pa. "We believe in you," he tells them.

Liang, joined by two Lehigh graduate students, has come to lead a workshop for the Allentown Mentoring Enrichment Network (A.M.E.N.), a midnight basketball program that aims to help inner-city youth stay in school and off the streets, improve their academics and their futures. Liang's involvement with the non-profit is twofold: to conduct research into the program's effectiveness and provide the middle-school and high-school students with strategies to succeed.

To help them create a vision for themselves, graduate student Deangie Davis begins an exercise: Imagine waking up in 10 years, she tells them. Everything is perfect. You look in the mirror. Who do you see? Who have you become? What kind of life do you have?

For the next hour, as the youngsters are asked to think about whether they need to go to college to be successful and whether their teachers treat people differently based on their race, Liang offers help in how to talk to school counselors, deal with racism and handle obstacles so that the students don't get derailed.

"We want them to think about positive future selves," Liang says later. "A lot of their lives they're told, *Don't do this.* We think that's important, they need to understand consequences. But if that's all they're hearing, it's not very hopeful. We want to instill a belief in these kids that they can achieve."

After joining Lehigh's faculty in 2012, Liang, whose area of research includes the impact of racism on boys of color, was looking for community partners to figure out how to support the boys' academic and psychological well-being. Through a research team member, he learned about A.M.E.N. and its work in mentoring youth, mostly boys. Liang found a kindred spirit in Pastor Charles Olmeda, the program's founder.

"One of the things I thought

I could do was to help develop a better understanding of what was going on for the kids," Liang says. "What were their experiences and perceptions of racism, their experiences of their school climate, their conformity to traditional masculine ideologies?"

Though midnight basketball is the program centerpiece—the kids play basketball on Friday nights—workshops that teach life skills, such as how to resolve conflicts, are a key component. Participants cannot play basketball unless they also join in that night's workshop.

Liang and his research team looked at such issues as masculinity, discrimination, ethnic identity and sense of community. They planned to analyze school data to assess how those variables might be associated with behavioral problems and academic outcomes such as grades and truancy.

Arnold R. Spokane, professor and program director of Counseling Psychology, helped to deliver career interventions: How do they get where they want to go?

Though the research is ongoing, Liang says preliminary data show the students are benefiting from the program. They sensed they mattered. Parents reported their children were developing both confidence and relationships, with coaches as mentors.

The more connected the students felt to A.M.E.N., the more motivated they were to do better academically. Whether that motivation correlates to better grades needs more study. Liang is planning to work with the Allentown School District to develop an after-school program to further those goals.

Mountaintop Research

Discovering Creativity

After assisting students with their homework, the Lehigh tutors who volunteer in after-school homework clubs for South Bethlehem children often struggle with what to do next.

"There aren't very many options and [students] often don't enjoy being forced to do something. So it would be nice for them to have something more enjoyable to do," says Helen Ard '17.

Ard and four other undergraduates—Kaylee Kilgore '17, Do Hee Kim '16, Samantha Mahabir '16 and Brianna Ruggiero '18—participated in a Mountaintop project to address that problem. Students immersed themselves in a wide range of artistic experiences and used the activities to develop a portfolio of arts-based resources intended to better engage students.

Silagh White, director of Arts Engagement and Community Relations; George White, professor of Educational Leadership, and Jon Drescher, professor of practice in Educational Leadership and director of the Urban Principals Academy at Lehigh (U*PAL), mentored the team.

Basing their research loosely on the Zoellner Arts Center's performance schedule, the team worked with two Muhlenberg College students to learn circus arts. They interacted with a dancer, a puppeteer and the Touchstone Theatre's summer program. The group also joined U*PAL as they partnered with the Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic

Education and Social Imagination in New York City, spending a day at Lincoln Center with its famed jazz ensemble to learn about leading and following, and another at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, discovering the art of observation. Students then created a collection of resources and activities based on their experiences and tested them with students in Donegan Elementary School's summer learning program. More inspired tutoring shouldn't be far behind.

In the Classroom

Creature Counting etc.

Second-graders converse with virtual 18th century Moravians. Preschoolers take to "Creature Counting." Middle-schoolers prepare a virtual farmers' market.

To enhance student learning, graduate students in Lehigh's College of Education designed video games that were used as part of classroom instruction in history, math, science and technology.

Ph.D.-candidate Julie Oltman, who aimed to help second-graders learn about colonial Moravian history, designed a mobile digital Augmented Reality (AR) game, which is played in a specific location – in this case, the historic district of Bethlehem, Pa.

The students took on roles of young members of a colonial Moravian society, moving through tasks that involved work, prayer and life-stage decisions that brought them into "contact" with 18th century people and places. Location-based activities were triggered by latitude and longitude coordinates. Students had to apply geospatial knowledge to complete "quests" that uncovered clues about colonial Moravian society.

"Watching them have 'conversations' with virtual historical characters in the actual places those characters lived and worked almost 300 years ago was awesome," says Oltman, who described seeing second-graders running with iPad minis to get to the game's next GPS point.

Megan Stotz '15 Ph.D designed "Creature Counting" to boost learning of a mathematical skill known as subitizing, or the ability to recognize a number pattern without counting. (Adults show the skill when they know what they rolled on a die without counting the dots.) At the preschool level, mastery of the skill is considered foundational for future mathematics learning.

In the game, students were shown a friendly monster without eyes. Through the use of an AR app on an iPad, a subitizing arrangement appeared on the monster in the form of eyes. Students were asked to subitize how many eyes the monster had. Preliminary data showed the game may help children to recognize number patterns with which they previously struggled.

In her dissertation pilot, Farah Vallera created an AR mobile learning game for middle-schoolers in the Allentown (Pa.) School District that challenged them to complete a "farmhand training program" using an iPad during a trip to an agricultural education center. It tied together STEM fields by having students collaborate as agricultural scientist, biotechnologist, engineer or mathematician to prepare for a virtual farmers' market.

"Students visited eight stations earning virtual badges," Vallera says, "while they answered agriculture, math and science questions built into the challenge, participated in hands-on science and engineering tasks, used their iPads to 'catch' a loose goat that escaped the fence, and gained valuable information from their real-life tour guides."

A child plays the Mystery Shape Game at the Da Vinci Science Center.

A Living Lab

Taking Science to the Public

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." This oft-quoted Shakespearean line has served to teach generations of students that the names of things really should not impact one's ability to recognize them.

Robin Hojnoski, associate professor of School Psychology, is trying to determine if the same premise holds true for geometric shapes and a young child's ability to identify shapes by name, through an ongoing partnership with the Da Vinci Science Center in Allentown, Pa.

The study invites children visiting the center to play the Mystery Shape Game, in which they are asked to feel the 3-D shape hidden in a bag. They are then presented with images of 2-D and 3-D shapes and shapes in nature and asked to identify which shape matches the one in the bag. The project is funded by a National Science Foundation grant as part of the National Living Lab Initiative.

"The overall goal of National Living Labs is to bring the science of child development into community settings," Hojnoski says. "This helps to engage families in understanding how science works and understanding how science is connected with child development. Whereas in classrooms we are interested in instruction and educational interventions, at the Da Vinci Center, we can ask broader questions related to how children think and learn about shapes and other mathematical domains."

Early data indicate that the 2-D activity was easiest for the children, while the "shape in nature task" was more difficult.

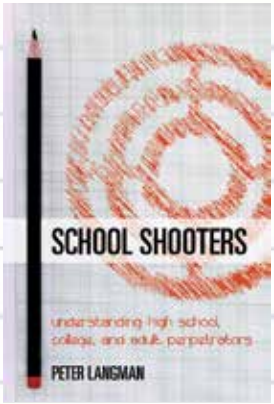
"Preliminary results suggest that hands-on experiences with shape provide children with a wealth of information that informs the mental representations they create. These representations can then be used for general problem-solving as well as a foundation for more advanced geometric understanding," she says.

BOOK REVIEW

Psychologist Peter Langman '00 Ph.D. has studied school shootings around the world and evaluated those considered a serious risk for committing mass violence in schools. In his newest book, *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College and Adult Perpetrators,* Langman builds on his earlier research to identify patterns and misconceptions.

"Langman dives deep into the backgrounds of our nation's school shooters to analyze their mindsets, discover patterns and dispel common myths. He uncovers numerous critical misconceptions about school shooters and presents key findings to strengthen prevention and intervention practices for keeping schools safe."

—Kenneth S. Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services



Langman conducted research into attacks in the United States, Germany, Finland, Scotland and Brazil. Drawing on case studies, he addresses threat assessment and the warning signs of potential violence. Resources also are available at www.**schoolshooters.info.**

The Reach of Research

Education in America is at a crossroads. Lehigh's commitment to innovative research and focus on applying research to practice allow College of Education faculty to help shape education and mental-health policy across the nation.

Allentown, Pa.

In the "before" video, two teens sit and talk in a high school cafeteria, with a quiet, disengaged student with autism sitting between them. Despite the teens' attempts to include the student with autism in their conversation, he remains rigid and detached, and after a few minutes, gets up from the table.

In the "after" video, the same students sit together, but this time, they all take part in the conversation. The student with autism initiates conversation and asks questions about what his friends have said. The other students do a better job of involving the student with autism in their dialogue, and the three have a pleasant social interaction.

What happened between the filming of the two videos is at the

heart of Special Education Prof. Linda M. Bambara's research into the communication skills of teens with autism. Together with Christine L. Cole, professor of School Psychology, Bambara and a dedicated team of doctoral student research assistants in Special Education and School Psychology are training students in the art of conversation.

"Deficits in social-communication skills is one of the hallmark characteristics of individuals with autism," Bambara says. "And in order to succeed in the world and form relationships with other people and have friends, you need to know how to have a conversation."

To help students with autism develop these important communication skills, Bambara, Cole and their team are doing dual training of both high school students with autism and fellow students without the disability. They are providing autistic students with tools to initiate conversations and to keep them going. They are also teaching students without the disability the strategies for first engaging students with autism, then prompting them to converse back. "Because, after all," Bambara says, "conversation is not just about starting a conversation, but about topic maintenance skills—something many kids with autism lack."

The research is greatly needed, Bambara says. Few studies focused on social outcomes have been conducted in high schools. Most peer-mediated interventions have been for preschoolers and elementary students with autism, where interaction revolves around play.

"In high school and beyond, what does interaction revolve around? Conversation," she says.

Preliminary data from three case studies show the training is working. Both the students with autism and their peers without the disability exhibited marked improvements in the quality of their interactions following the training.

"Ultimately," Bambara says, "by improving the communication skills of students with autism, we want to impact their quality of life."

Lehigh Valley, Pa.

Eleven school administrators took part in an innovative study that aimed to better track how principals use their time—and how that might correlate with student achievement and student behavioral/emotional risk.

The administrators were set up with Pebble Smartwatches, allowing Lehigh to randomly contact them daylong for a month to track how much time they spent on administration, instruction and other areas. Students were later screened for behavioral and emotional difficulties.

The project was led by Bridget V. Dever, assistant professor of School Psychology; Craig Hochbein, assistant professor of Educational Leadership; and George P. White, Iacocca professor of Educational Leadership.

"What we wanted to know," says Dever, "was whether what principals were doing on a daily basis was really relating to student outcomes."

The data showed links between how principals spent time and student outcomes. Among early findings: When principals spent more time on administration, students reported better coping and social skills and fewer internalizing problems; when principals reported more time on non-school activities, students in those schools reported higher levels of behavioral and emotional difficulties.

Following changes over time will help to pinpoint causation in these associations, Dever says.

The on-going project also will look at whether there are any links between how well students perform on standardized tests and how principals spend their time.

Around the World

In a world that has becoming more connected, Lehigh faculty have become an integral part of the international dialogue surrounding education—particularly in regions where educational reform is undergoing intense scrutiny.

RWANDA

Three Lehigh students are helping the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village to revise its monitoring and evaluation system. The village cares for youth orphaned during and after the 1994 genocide. The team, led by Alexander W. Wiseman, associate professor of Comparative and International Education, will visit with village leaders and evaluation specialists in late 2015 or early 2016.

CHINA

COE's Office of Global Online Graduate Degrees and Training partnered with Nanjia (Shanghai) Culture Communication Ltd. to provide development workshops for practicing counselors in Shanghai. Arnold Spokane, professor of Counseling Psychology, and doctoral student Ge Song conducted the workshops that emphasized therapeutic skills for working with mental health issues across cultures.

LATVIA

Iveta Silova, associate professor of Comparative and International Education, is researching how early literacy textbooks "construct" children and childhood in post-socialist countries of Eastern/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Her research focuses on the late Soviet and post-Soviet textbooks published in Armenia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine.

CAMBODIA

Led by Sothy Eng, professor of practice of Comparative and International Education, four students took part this summer in Caring for Cambodia, a non-governmental organization. Santi Martinez, Jeevan Jain-Cocks, Linda Nguyen and Shannon Cassidy worked on a number of initiatives in Cambodia, including a new database system for educators and an English curriculum for second-graders.

GERMANY

Six Lehigh students spent two weeks at the University of Tübingen as part of a cultural and academic exchange, participating in a seminar led by Alexander W. Wiseman, associate professor of Comparative and International Education. Many of the students are part of a collaborative research project that looks at how universal education has become increasingly "scientized."

CZECH REPUBLIC

Christine Novak, professor of practice in School Psychology, led students Morgan Coonrad, Jonathan Ross, Lauren DiNapoli and Tuan Pham in working with three non-governmental organizations on social inclusion projects, focusing on the Roma. Students interviewed Czech citizens about their experiences with discrimination, creating Voices of Prague for Equality on Facebook and a YouTube video.

Sothy Eng's father listens to monks chanting.

Opposite: Sothy Eng's mother offers food to monks, wishing for betterment of her rebirth.

A Story of Survival

Forty years ago, the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh and unleashed a wrath of vengeance against its own people. The genocide war in Cambodia left almost 2 million people dead from execution, starvation and disease. Many were the country's most educated citizens.

My father always speaks of a dream he had during the first week of evacuation from Phnom Penh. Literally, that dream led him to find his new place that allowed him and my mother to survive, and of course, for me to write this story.

Perhaps it was my frequent visits home with inquisitive graduate students that prompted me to ask, in detail, the story I had wanted to hear. As a child of genocide survivors, it was something I feared, something I ignored. Yet, the more students I brought to Cambodia, the more their questions made me realize that my family's story was something to be acknowledged, for the survivors and for their children. And so begins the story of one family, who much like the rest of the Khmer people, faced tragedy and immeasurable sorrow, and somehow, found a way to survive.

On April 17, 1975, my family was informed that Khmer Rouge (KR) soldiers were evacuating Phnom Penh. My parents knew what the KR was planning. My father worked at the Social Republican Party headquarters, the officially recognized government backed by the United States. My family could have escaped days earlier in Operation Eagle Pull, the U. S. evacuation of Phnom Penh, but my father felt he was saving himself and my mother and abandoning everyone else he loved. He would rather die trying to save them than try to live with the guilt of leaving them behind.

So there they were. They packed everything they could. The next morning, the KR announced all people in Phnom Penh should return to the villages of their families, extended families or ancestors. My father knew if he went back to his province, Kampot, he would die. Instead, he decided to go in the direction of Vietnam, along with my mother's sisters and parents. If they could reach Vietnam, they would have a chance

for survival. In the mass exodus, it took three days to travel six miles, reaching Prek Eng district. My father felt something was trying to stop him from going forward. So he stopped there.

That night, my father lit 34 incense sticks and prayed for a sign for the best place to relocate. He dreamed not of a map of a place he had seen before but of broken bamboos. Early dawn, he discussed the dream with my grandfather. He immediately referred it to the village "Puk-Russei," literally meaning broken bamboos. It was where my aunt's in-laws lived. So they decided to cross the Mekong River to come to the Broken Bamboos village.

KR officials were there to thoroughly document their background. They asked where my family came from, what they did for a living, if my father was a former soldier. My parents knew that acknowledging their past would lead to swift execution. My father lied – he said he was illiterate, selling baguettes, by foot, at the Phnom Penh Port. The KR officials allowed them to stay but kept coming back almost every day for a month, searching for inconsistencies.

One night, three KR soldiers came to the house and took my father away. It was clear by this point in the revolution that leaving home in such a way meant death. Again he was asked the same background questions. He never revealed his true identity. After three hours, he was released.

In total, my father was "taken out" to get killed three times. One afternoon, as he watered vegetables in the community garden, he was approached by KR soldiers instructing him to follow them. He survived by telling them the vegetables needed to be watered now, otherwise the plants would die and the community would starve.

After the evacuation, my mother had delivered a baby girl. She later had a complication and was sent to a KR hospital, leaving my father to feed the baby with just rice porridge. KR soldiers came to the house yet again, this time instructing my father, the baby, my aunts and grandparents to follow them. They were taken to a large boat. While people boarded, the baby started to cry, strangely loud. My father asked if he could delay his departure until my mother got discharged so the baby could have breast milk. KR officials looked up his name, pulled out a red pen and crossed out his name. They took my father and the baby home on a cart. My father thought at that moment perhaps the spirits of the temple where the boat docked helped him, and perhaps they did.

The boat left with all of my mother's sisters and parents. They have yet to return home.

A few days after my mother arrived home, the baby died. She was not the only sibling of mine who died during the war. Two boys and a girl were stolen by diseases all too common during the KR regime.

After the war ended in 1979, my father was free to unwrap the cloak of lies that protected him and my mother for almost four years. He became a principal of a junior high school in the village. He has since helped many children to get an education. Growing up, I remember many of his students came to visit him with bags of rice and produce to thank him.

My parents currently have two sons and a daughter—all born after the war ended. They said Puk-Russei village gave them a life. I grew up there till I finished high school, before moving to Phnom Penh for college and later to Texas Tech University for graduate school.

While they suffered the pain and sorrow of losing their children, they have shown my brother, sister and I the importance of faith and family and hope.

From time to time when we meet, my parents, especially my father, talk about that dream and how fortunate they were to survive. While they suffered the pain and sorrow of losing their children, they have shown my brother, sister and I the importance of faith and family and hope.

Both still believe in dreams. Last year, we children offered them their wish by having a "merit-transfer ceremony to the next lives and to the dead relatives" based on the dream my father had that year.

—By Sothy Eng, professor of Practice of Comparative and International Education at Lehigh University.

A LONGER VERSION OF THIS BLOG POST FIRST APPEARED ON THE HUFFINGTON POST.

As charter schools proliferate, a polarizing debate could use common ground.

The Charter Challenge

By Margie Peterson • Illustrations by Jason Jagel

E.L. Haynes Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., won awards for its student achievement gains in 2008, 2009 and 2010 with a diverse mix of students of all races, socioeconomic levels and English language learners.

In 2009 and 2010, three EXcel Academy charter schools in Miami-Dade County, Fla., were closed after just a couple of years in existence because of dismal scores on the state's standardized tests.

Under the charter school model, both outcomes could be seen as examples of success: Good schools flourish; bad schools close.

But does that model ignore the collateral damage of students' educations disrupted, taxpayer money misspent and neighborhood schools shortchanged? Or does it take fresh thinking to innovate in education and elevate learning for students who might otherwise be stuck in traditional public schools that are failing them?

Few topics in education evoke stronger reactions. Public school teachers unions and their allies say it's amateur hour in the landscape of American education as charters proliferate across the country, some run with little oversight and by people with little experience as educators. The result, they say, is a more segregated school system with charters siphoning money and the best students from neighborhood schools, leaving them with more at-risk students and less money to educate them.

Charter advocates, who include wealthy philanthropists such as Bill Gates, Eli Broad and the


TRUTH
FLEXIBILITY
TEACHER INVOLVEMENT
DIVERSITY
LOTTERY
HEDGEFUND
ENGINE OF DEMOCRACY
WANNA LEARN SOMETHING?
THEM VS. US

Walton Family Foundation, argue charters are providing poor children with the kind of educational opportunities and school choice that middle-class and wealthy families have always had by virtue of where they live.

Both sides have valid points, said Gary Sasso, dean of Lehigh's College of Education, and what's needed are efforts to find common ground.

"You have people on both sides of this issue cherry-picking the data that support what they want to support," Sasso said. "What we're trying to promote as a college is that there needs to be a way that we can find common ground. That common ground might be found in research-intensive colleges of education that insist on the best objective data regarding education policy and practice."

Sasso made comparisons to extensive drug trials in medicine, when benefits and side effects are weighed. "None of that exists in education," he said. "There is no research-to-approval process in education."

The irony in the charter debate is that charters were initially proposed by Albert Shanker, the longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers. He saw such schools as potential bastions of educational experimentation and innovation, whose successful methods could then be shared with traditional public schools.

Shanker envisioned charters as schools run by small groups of teachers and parents who would have five-year contracts to prove the schools' worth.

Today, charters are publicly funded, independently operated and authorized by a state-approved entity. They have more autonomy and flexibility in areas such as staffing and curriculum than traditional public schools but administer the same state standardized tests. Unlike with traditional school districts, the public does not get to elect charter school boards. And, their finances and methods are not subject to oversight.

Since Minnesota passed the first law allowing for the establishment of charter schools in 1991, 42 other states and Washington, D.C., have followed suit. Currently, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, more than 6,700 charter schools educate more than 2.9 million students, or about 6 percent of all public school students.

The vast majority of charters—88 percent—are not unionized. The two largest teachers unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, and their allies suspect that wealthy hedge-fund managers and philanthropists such as the Waltons of the Walmart fortune support charters at least in part because they want to weaken one of the stron-

gest segments of public sector unions, and therefore a large liberal voting bloc.

Meanwhile, charter advocates argue the rigidity of teachers' contracts would stymie the flexibility their schools need to boost achievement. For example, many charters have a longer school day and school year than traditional public schools—which unions might balk at. Charters also want freedom to fire teachers without long, drawn-out struggles with unions.

So the battle lines are drawn. Yet there have emerged some education analysts who say lionizing charters or demonizing them misses the point. Matthew Di Carlo, a senior research fellow at the Albert Shanker Institute in Washington, D.C., says the question should be why do some work well and others poorly?

"At a national level, the differences between charter schools and the regular public schools to which they are compared are usually either not statistically discernible or they are quite modest," Di Carlo said. "To me the most interesting thing is they vary a great deal between states, within states and, most importantly, by school."

Among those that do well on state standardized tests are charters that extend the school day, he said. Other successful strategies include high doses of tutoring.

'No Excuses' Schools

It's generally accepted that family income and parents' education levels are the strongest predictors of how students will do in school. Yet a few high-profile charters serving low-income populations boast of turning that truism on its head.

KIPP schools and Success Academy are among what's been dubbed "No Excuses" schools that employ longer school days and school years to achieve better test results than regular public schools. KIPP—Knowledge is Power Program—has 183 schools around the country and Success Academy has 32 schools in New York City.

The 2014 test scores put Success Academy in the top 1 percent of all public schools in New York state in math and the highest 3 percent in English.

Both school networks work with large numbers of minorities and low-income students, though they generally have fewer students with disabilities and those who are English language learners. They are known for strict discipline, strong test-based accountability and requiring parental involvement.

Craig Hochbein, an assistant professor in Lehigh's College of Education, said the admissions process at charters such as Success Academy makes it likely that the students who get in have involved family members and advocates. In an op-ed piece in *Newsday,* Hochbein suggested that if all public school students were automatically put in a lottery for a seat in a charter school when they registered for school, that advantage would disappear.

"If I think my charter school is better than the traditional public school," Hochbein said, "and I think that it has nothing to do with who applies to my school, who I admit or any of what we call in the research world 'selection bias,' then I want to go out and prove it to the world. Give me whoever you've got. Give me a group that looks just like the public school."

Skeptics argue the charters' high scores are attributable to intensive test prep and lower-performing students quitting KIPP and Success Academy schools. Unlike in neighborhood schools, few of those who leave are replaced by new students in the higher grades.

Sasso said charters like Success Academy and KIPP are not for every child, and they shouldn't compare their results to those of traditional public schools that are operating with a different set of rules. The "No Excuses" regimen is stringent, but for those students who stick with it, the schools can put them on a better trajectory, he said.

Research Under Fire

There have been dozens of studies on the effectiveness of charter schools, but the largest come from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). In a 2009 study, CREDO looked at schools in 15 states and Washington, D.C., and found that 17 percent of charter schools had students who performed better than students in comparable traditional public schools, 37 percent of the charters did worse, and 46 percent showed no statistical difference.

In 2013, CREDO released a report that studied charters in 26 states and New York City and found that 25 percent had "significantly stronger learning gains in reading than their traditional school coun-

terparts, while 56 percent showed no significant difference and 19 percent of charter schools had significantly weaker learning gains." In math, 29 percent of charters did better, 40 percent the same and 31 percent worse.

CREDO's latest study, "Urban Charter School Study Report on 41 Regions," released in March, found that "urban charter schools in the aggregate provide significantly higher levels of annual growth in both math and reading compared to their [traditional public school] peers."

The report, which looked at charters in cities in 22 states, said that gains in math and reading were especially significant for charter students who are black, Hispanic, low-income and in special education. But the results varied by region, with charters in 11 of the cities doing worse than traditional public schools in math and charters in 10 of the regions doing worse in reading.

The 2015 study has drawn fire. Working with a statistician, journalist Andrea Gabor found problems with the CREDO research model. For example, if a student dropped out of a charter school, he or she was eliminated from the study. Gabor argued that those dropping out are likely to be the weaker students whose test scores would bring down the charter school's average.

The New Orleans Experiment

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina wiped out much of New Orleans, including its poor-performing public schools. Seeing an opportunity to start fresh, the Louisiana Department of Education fired the unionized public school teachers en masse and accelerated the Recovery School District's transformation to 100 percent charter schools. Education reformers, charter school operators and some 400 Teach for America recruits headed to New Orleans for what was to be a great educational experiment.

So how has it worked?

By some accounts, it has succeeded dramatically. Standardized test scores for the all-charter Recovery School District have risen consistently, with the number of students scoring basic or above rising from 37 percent in 2009 to 57 percent in 2013.

But there have been complaints. In the 2007-2008 school year, expulsion rates in the Recovery School District were 10 times the national average, according to a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Recovery School District has been the target of class-action suits, including one in 2010 by parents who claimed the system excluded special education students and another last year arguing that students with learning disabilities and mental health problems were being disciplined harshly and moved from school to school.

While the New Orleans experiment shows that a district can go completely charter, it's such a unique situation that it's difficult to draw conclusions about charter schools overall, Di Carlo said. That's especially true because funding from the state and private donations has pushed per-pupil spending much higher than pre-Katrina levels.

"There was a massive influx of money into New Orleans, both public money and private money," Di Carlo said.

Charters are generally governed by nonprofit boards. But in most states, those boards can hire for-profit companies to run their schools. As of the 2011-2012 school year, 42 percent of charter students were enrolled in schools run by private educational management organizations, according to an analysis by the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado Boulder. And while these charters claim they are public schools in order to receive public tax dollars, most argue they are private when it comes to disclosure of their finances.

Certainly, traditional schools have had their share of financial scandals, but the proliferation of charters and their relative autonomy has given rise to myriad allegations:

- A principal for an Orange County, Fla., charter high school was paid $519,453 amid plans to close the school for poor performance in 2012. Under her contract, the principal was paid $305,000 per year for leading NorthStar High—almost three times what the highest paid traditional public school principal in the county was paid.
- Former operators of the Right Step Academy Charter School in Minnesota were sentenced to federal prison for using taxpayers' dollars for a Caribbean cruise and luxury cars and to pay off personal credit card debt.
- The Ohio State Auditor's staff made surprise vis-

its to 30 charter schools in the fall of 2014 and discovered the number of students was substantially lower than what the schools had been reporting to the state, which uses attendance to calculate aid. Within the seven schools with the biggest gaps, about 900 students were missing.

A report released in April by the pro-union Center for Popular Democracy found about $203 million in fraud, waste and mismanagement in charter schools in 15 states.

Searching for Common Ground

Charter skeptics fear that ultimately America could end up with a segregated, two-tier public school system, with more English language learners, homeless kids, children with severe disabilities and those with behavioral problems in regular public schools and higher-performing children with involved parents in charters. They point to statistics that show charter schools are somewhat more segregated by race and socioeconomic class than traditional public schools and have higher teacher turnover.

It doesn't have to be that way, according to Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter, authors of *A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education.* They argue that reform efforts should be aimed at creating charters with a diverse student body and those that give teachers more voice in how they are run. They point to successful charters such as City Neighbors Charter School in Baltimore and High Tech High in San Diego, where those initiatives are part of the schools' mission.

"Charter schools can be such a good vehicle for integration given the fact that they have a lot more flexibility in enrolling students across an area and building from the ground up a model that is specifically designed to attract families from a wide variety of backgrounds," Potter said.

Now a fellow at The Century Foundation, Potter taught for two years at Two Rivers Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., which emphasizes project-based learning. She described it as a "fantastic experience" that gave her insight into how Albert Shanker's vision of charters could be realized.

"In order to make teaching jobs sustainable, one of the things teachers are looking for is meaningful input into school decisions and some reasonable expectation of job security and employment protection," Potter said.

Charters and the unions that want to represent their teachers could negotiate "thin contracts," which allow the school administrators more flexibility than regular union contracts but give teachers a say and job protections.

"We think there are a number of [charter] schools that are doing a fantastic job today of really working around these issues of teacher voice and student diversity," she said.

In the search for common ground, Lehigh dean Sasso said, American educators need to preserve the democratic values that gave rise to this country's public schools.

"I still believe that they are the engine of democracy," Sasso said. "If we give up on that, we give up on what this country was supposed to be."

In Retrospect: Michael George

The director of the Centennial School welcomed representatives of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to the school in May to observe best practices for dealing with students with behavioral problems. Told their visit could help inform federal policy on the use of restraint and seclusion, George once again found Centennial School in the spotlight for adhering to Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports Techniques.

Centennial School, governed by Lehigh University's College of Education, was featured in last year's article, Respect Begets Respect.

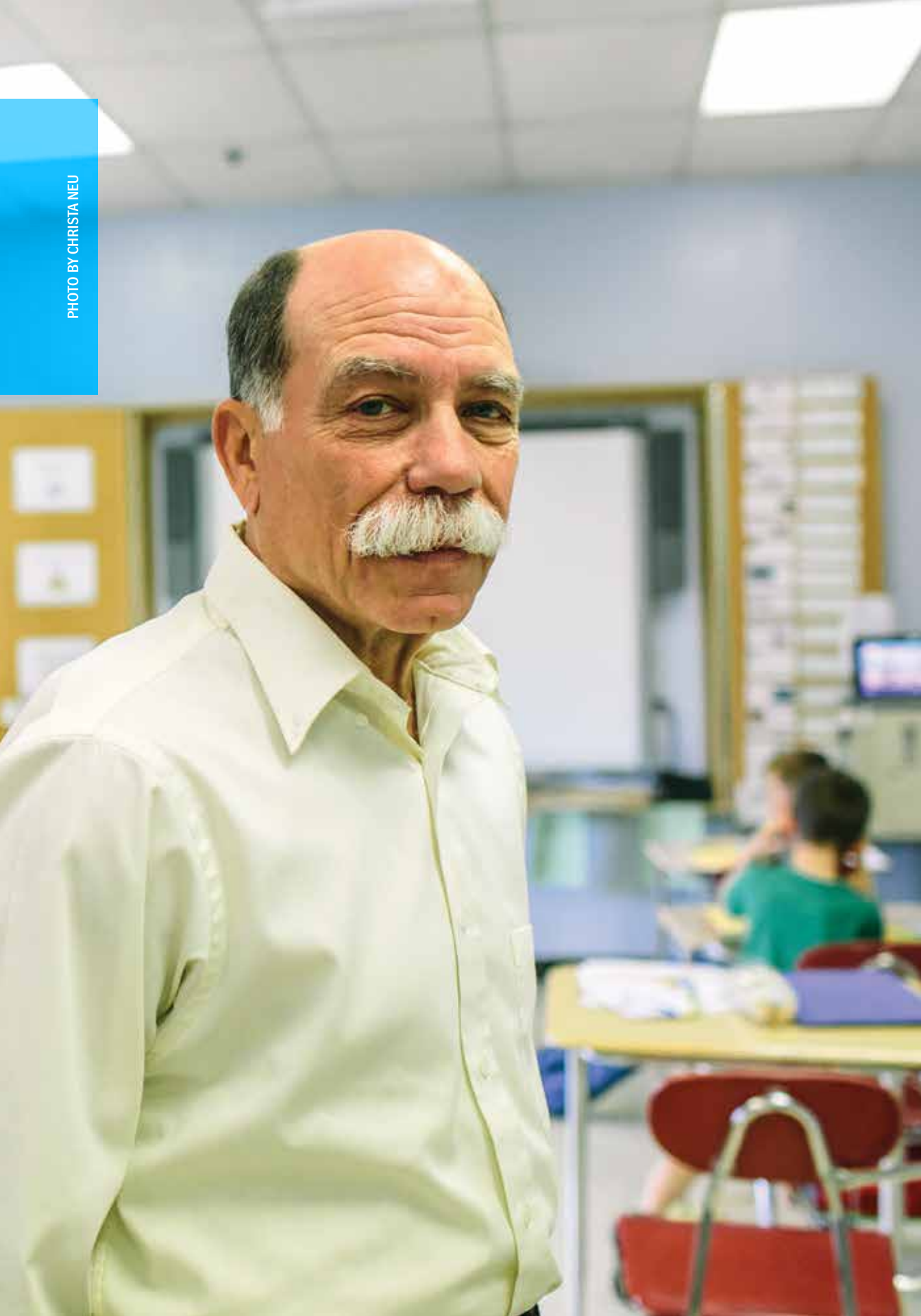


PHOTO BY CHRISTA NEU

FOSTERING A SECURE ATTACHMENT

A Lehigh University professor is challenging long-held beliefs about how mothers can best connect with their infants.

By Ann Wlazelek

Illustration by Laurindo Feliciano

Children who feel safe and secure with their mother by their first birthday have a better chance of growing up happy, healthy and better prepared for school, experts say. And, studies show, mothers can foster such a "secure attachment" by sensing and responding to their infants' needs for comfort or encouragement with a sweet tone of voice and affectionate comments.

But in racially diverse and low-income families, a mother's sensitivity does not appear to be a key predictor of secure attachment, according to research by Susan S. Woodhouse, associate professor of Counseling Psychology at Lehigh University. Woodhouse is challenging some of those long-held beliefs and exploring the early roots of mental health and educational disparities in a five-year, federally funded research project.

Prior studies examined primarily white, middle-income families. When Woodhouse started looking at moms of different racial and ethnic backgrounds who had little money or help, she found many moms whose parenting styles appeared insensitive, yet still made their babies feel safe and secure.

"Clearly, there is a gap in our understanding of what parenting behaviors really make the most difference in promoting a secure attachment," she said. To find answers and close the gap, Woodhouse was awarded a $2.1 million grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, one of the federal government's National Institutes of Health.

Her grant, titled *Caregiving, Attachment, and Regulation of Emotion*, or CARE, will observe 200 primarily low-income women and their infants at 6 months and 12 months of age to determine what behaviors lead to a safe and secure attachment and what actions detract from it.

"We hope to learn what Mom behaviors make the most difference in predicting baby outcomes," said Woodhouse, the study's principal investigator. "If we want interventions that work when there are limited resources, we want to focus on what matters most."

One of the reasons Woodhouse became so intrigued with this field of study is personal. In addition to being the mother of a 7-year-old daughter, Woodhouse was considered a "fussy baby" by her own mother. Woodhouse said her mother spoke only Spanish when she immigrated to the United States from Madrid and felt isolated.

"Hearing my mom talk about the lack of support she faced made me want to reach out to other moms," she said.

The study began in March 2012, when Woodhouse was on the faculty at Pennsylvania State University, and months later followed her to Lehigh, where she expects to finish the project by February 2017. With more than 100 moms and babies so far enrolled, Woodhouse has begun to analyze the data.

She is concentrating on what appeared to work best in earlier research with a smaller group: the simple act of a mom holding her child "chest-to-chest" to calm the infant's crying, even if the mom didn't do it every time her child cried.

"My new discovery is the key importance of chest-to-chest soothing when infants cry," Woodhouse said. "Even if a mother is making a lot of mistakes and being insensitive along the way, as long as she finally relents and comes through in the end by soothing the baby chest-to-chest, that baby will be secure. She doesn't even need to do it every time. As long as she does it at least 50 percent of the time, that baby will still be secure."

In fact, mothers can compensate for not soothing the child chest-to chest at least half of the time the child cries. Babies can still feel secure if the moms display what Woodhouse and staffers call "calm connectedness." For example, babies were secure if the moms made themselves available to look at their child when their babies were looking at them or carried their babies on their hip while doing other things in the house or garden.

CARE also is assessing some parent behaviors Woodhouse found in prior research that worked against a secure attachment. Woodhouse found some year-old infants were unable to feel secure after their mothers had purposely scared them by yelling, threatening to leave or lifting them repeatedly high into the air. In one example, Woodhouse said, a mother screamed "boo" to try to stop the child from crying.

Being able to find security and contentment in the first year of life is important, experts say, because it provides a basis for future relationships. Insecurity in infants, if not altered, can lead to poor behavior, problems with school readiness and mental-health problems.

Woodhouse and her research team have been enrolling women at community events, housing projects, child-care centers and clinics. Research team members discuss the study and hand out brochures to anyone who might qualify. They tell moms the research focuses on "how mothers and babies deal with everyday feelings and stress that are a normal part of raising healthy children." Participants must have a child 6 months of age or younger who is not yet crawling.

Moms and babies are tested and observed in their homes and in a lab-playroom, which offers a comfortable couch, age-appropriate toys and two cameras mounted near ceiling corners.

At the first two-hour visit, when the baby is 6 months old, staffers check heart rates and swab mouths for the hormone cortisol to assess stress levels of the mother and baby during normal tasks, such as strapping a child into a car seat.

By watching how babies' cortisol level goes up after a simple stressor and then how quickly this stress hormone goes back to normal, Woodhouse can gauge whether a good mother-baby relationship buffers children from the negative effects of stress. Because babies' heart-rate variability is an important marker of infant emotion regulation, electrocardiogram (EKG) wires are attached to the mother and child and tucked into a backpack or vest to not hamper movement during mother-baby interactions. Being able to adapt to stress and regulate emotions is key in later mental health and school readiness.

Staffers also observe behavior in the family home three times over two weeks by videotaping the mother and child during everyday activities. Each session lasts 30 minutes. When the baby is 12 months old, the mother brings him or her back to the lab for another two-hour testing and observation session. That's followed by two at-home observations, each 1.5 to 2 hours in duration, a week apart. CARE staffers are trained in how to videotape and rate the behaviors they observe.

After all the testing is completed, the mothers are offered social services. They are also offered parenting support through a program called "Circle of Security" that Woodhouse considers one of the most promising interventions available. The course uses a video to stimulate learning and discussion about infant needs. By playing a game called "Name that Need," mothers are taught whether a baby needs to be soothed or encouraged to explore. In addition, mothers are supported in exploring how to better meet their babies' needs.

Woodhouse is a part of a community-research partnership called Parents and Children Together (PACT). As a PACT member, she receives guidance and suggestions from a PACT Community Advisory Board, which is made up

"As we figure out what matters most for babies, we can develop interventions that will build on those existing strengths."

of community leaders and grassroots community members, about how to best engage the community. It was the Community Advisory Board's idea, for example, to give the moms some parenting support at the final visit.

"They wanted to make sure each mom would immediately get something positive to support her parenting, in addition to contributing to building knowledge about mothers and babies in the community," said Woodhouse, who also regularly reports back to community members about her findings "so that the results belong to the community, not just to the scientific community."

Denise Sturnes, project coordinator and lab director, said she's seen mothers enter the study not knowing what to expect and leaving with a greater awareness of how to connect with their infants. "It's been rewarding for me to see the transformation," she said of moms who learned that their children were not trying to bother or irritate them, but in need of comfort and love.

Woodhouse said she understands that many other factors can influence a child's development, including behaviors of the father, grandparents and other guardians. However, mothers remain the primary caregivers of children around the world.

"For the first time, we are starting to see some of the hidden strengths that exist in low-income moms," Woodhouse said. "As we figure out what matters most for babies, we can develop interventions that will build on those existing strengths. We can help moms who are struggling look more like the successful moms within their own communities instead of trying to make them look like other moms from other places."

Kristin A. Buss, professor of psychology and director of graduate training at Penn State who directs PACT, considers Woodhouse's work "innovative."

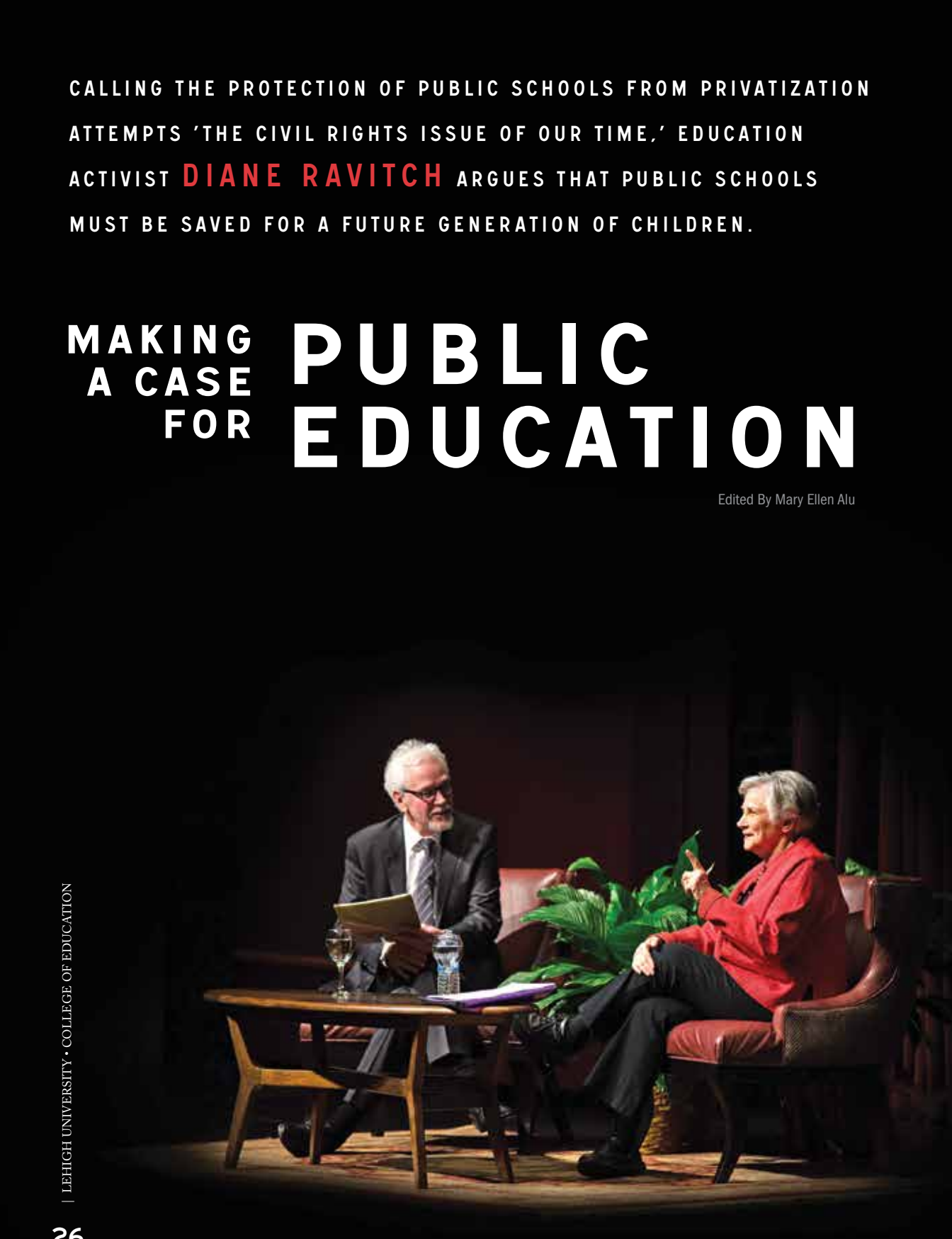
"First, the work is innovative in the focus on specific aspects of mother's behavior that help babies form secure attachment," Buss said. "The conceptual idea is that when mothers, regardless of cultural variations which have historically been viewed as maladaptive or less sensitive, engage in behaviors that help the baby calm, even if that behavior doesn't look pretty, it is effective. The second thing that sets CARE apart is that when families are done with the study they enter an intervention phase."

Buss said the impact is not likely to happen overnight, but hopefully families in the study will see benefits from the lessons, and PACT members can help disseminate the findings in the community.

CALLING THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM PRIVATIZATION ATTEMPTS 'THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE OF OUR TIME,' EDUCATION ACTIVIST **DIANE RAVITCH** ARGUES THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS MUST BE SAVED FOR A FUTURE GENERATION OF CHILDREN.

MAKING A CASE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Edited By Mary Ellen Alu



Once a proponent of charter schools and No Child Left Behind, Diane Ravitch spoke at Lehigh University during Spring 2015 as part of the Distinguished Lecture Series. Following her talk, she sat down with Gary Sasso, dean of the College of Education, to answer questions her critics might ask. Here are edited excerpts of the conversation:

Why should we believe the Diane of today instead of the Diane of 30 years ago?

Because I have more experience. I think I have more wisdom. I think I have more knowledge. Someone asked me the other day on my blog, maybe you'll change your mind again? And I said, Well, I might change if the evidence changes but what I will never change is, I will never sell out children or families or public education. Those are principles. There's a basic consistency in what I believed then and now, which is I've always believed in a liberal education for all children and the best possible education for all children. There's a certain kind of, I think, egalitarianism, which is why we use the term, I guess, all, but that's been consistent.

I think that what happened was that I was deeply engaged in two very conservative think tanks, one at the Hoover Institution and the other at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in Washington. And I came to understand that many people I was working with wanted to see public education destroyed.

And I'm a [product] of public education. I wouldn't be here were there not public schools.

There's a single mother, two kids, living in Harlem, working three jobs. Her kids are in a public school. It's in bad shape. She wants better for her kids, and there's this alternative called The Success Academies [New York City charter schools], where kids respect the educational process. Why shouldn't she take that opportunity for her kids?

Well, I wouldn't tell her not to. I would say, do whatever you think is best for your child. Looking at it macro, the odds are, first of all, that her child would not win the lottery and wouldn't be accepted. And then if her child were enrolled in the Success Academy, there's a good chance that he or she might not even survive to the eighth grade, because they have a very high attrition rate there. If her child has special needs, she wouldn't last long. So take your chances….

I think that this picture of schools in Harlem that are in chaos is an overblown picture to begin with. I think it's a caricature.

There may be some [charter schools] that are doing very well. Wasn't that the original intent of charter schools, that they would act as laboratories that could be taken into the public schools?

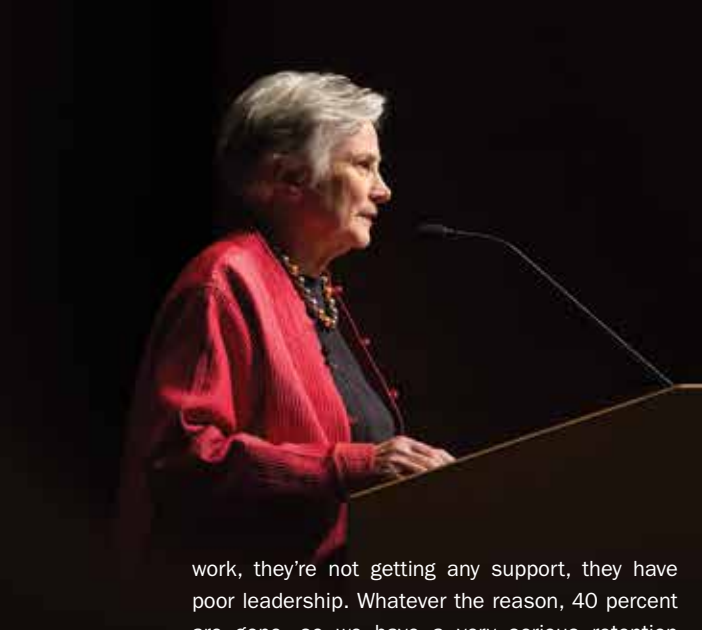
Well, the original idea, going back to the late 1980s, was that they would be laboratories to help the neediest kids, not that they would be judged by their test scores. You might say that the charter schools with the lowest test scores might actually be the best charter schools because they're taking the kids who really tuned out and need the help the most. Some charter schools have been closed because of their test scores, and their supporters say that they're doing exactly what charter schools were supposed to do. Yet we have become so test-score obsessed that we're encouraging charters to be test prep factories and to abandon the original purpose. I think the original purpose is very laudable.

There are some places in Philadelphia and other urban settings where kids are not getting a very good education. Certainly some of the reason is because of their home life, because of SES (socioeconomic status), which we know is the largest predictor of how well you're going to do.

I don't blame it on the kids. I actually blame it on the state. And every place where you find dysfunctional schools, they're under-resourced. There's been an underinvestment in the schools. And then the kids are blamed, the families are blamed, the teachers are blamed, but it's the state that's to blame, because the state has an obligation.

You have some strong feelings about tenure. Doesn't the criticism that the main function of teacher-tenure is to help bad teachers keep their jobs at least have a little validity?

No, I actually think that the problem we have with teachers is not getting rid of them but holding on to them. First of all, if we have too many bad teachers, we have an administrator problem. Secondly, about 40 percent of people who enter teaching will leave teaching within five years. So we're wasting a lot of money training people, helping people become teachers and then they find they can't handle the



work, they're not getting any support, they have poor leadership. Whatever the reason, 40 percent are gone, so we have a very serious retention problem. And instead of focusing on how do we fire bad teachers, we should be focused on how do we raise our standards to bring in the people who want to make a career of teaching and who have the preparation to be good at it.

In Los Angeles, there was a report in 2003, union representative said,* If I'm representing them, it's impossible to get them out unless they committed a lewd act. *One union representative said,* I've gone in and defended teachers who shouldn't even be pumping gas. *People are asking a valid question: Do teachers unions act in the best interest of children?

Well, it's hard to answer a blanket question like that… because I don't know the facts of what the union cases were, whether what was said was true. I would say that that was 2003. This is 2015. Unions are now so much on the defensive. Who would have believed that the state of Michigan, where teacher unionism was so strong, is now a right-to-work state? Indiana is now a right-to-work state. Tennessee is a right-to-work state. So unions are very much in retreat. The percentage of American workers that are unionized is somewhere around 11 percent now, may be 11.3. And most of those are public sector workers. They're under assault. You would think that the unions had bankrupted our economy in 2008. I think it was the banks. (To laughter.)

But my own view is that people should have a speedy due process. I don't think that it should be something that's dragged out over years. For instance, in New York City there was a lot of publicity to the rubber room.…The way to resolve issues was to have a hearing, but it was up to the administration to provide the hearing, and the administration could keep people [in reassignment centers] for years without a hearing. If people thought they were innocent, why should they accept being fired without a hearing? But that was up to the administration, and it somehow became a union problem.

Unions, first of all, exist so teachers have a voice at the table so when the governor says, *we're going to cut the budget by a billion dollars,* there has to be somebody representing teachers, saying, *don't do it, look what's going to happen*….

Unions are fully supportive of [teacher] peer assistance and review. They're fully involved in the process, and they recognize that if somebody is not a good teacher, and they're tenured, they have to go.

Help me out here, because I've been saying we need to find common ground. Where can compromises be made by you or by all of us in order to move the debate away from some of the vitriol that characterizes a lot of the arguments today?

I know some of the people who are supporting and funding reform efforts. They're not doing it for monetary gain. They're not doing it for political reasons. They see a bureaucracy in the public schools that often thwarts meaningful change. They are putting their money and their time into these efforts because they want to help kids. Have you got a little bit of an olive branch to extend?

I remember many years ago when I was on the other side, and I went to see a very wealthy banker who was supporting the Manhattan Institute, a conservative institute, and I was all hot for choice and charters and wherever this would go, and he said, *look, the United States is always going to have 80 percent of its kids in public schools*, and I think now back to that conversation. That's a reasonable ground to begin. If we're always going to have at least 80 percent of our kids in public schools, and 10 percent in religious and independent schools and 10 percent in charter schools, then we can begin to have a conversation to find common ground.

But so many in the charter sector say, we're better than you, and we're going to drive you into the sea.…

If the so-called reformers would give up their triumphalist winner-takes-all attitude, which is not grounded in evidence, then there would be common ground, but they have to give that up. ○

Watch the full conversation at **lehigh.edu/ravitch**

Teacher Tenure: Vergara v. State of California

On Aug. 27, 2014, a trial court in California issued a decision that invalidated three statutory employment protections for public school teachers as violations of the state constitution.

National media characterized this decision, Vergara v. State of California, as abolishing tenure. The school reform organization that sponsored the suit touted the decision as "a historic victory." This impartial examination analyzes the decision in terms of its likely effect in California and elsewhere.

The suit was filed on behalf of high-poverty and high-minority schools in California. The trial court judge ruled that each of the statutory requirements violated the state's constitution: the two-year probationary period of the teacher tenure statute; the "super" due process of three related teacher-dismissal statutes, and the last-in-first-out provision of the teacher reduction-in-force statute.

Gov. Jerry Brown has appealed the decision to the appellate level. Meanwhile, it is in abeyance. The three primary options in California are: the legislature amending the laws to meet the trial judge's implicit revisions, which is not to abolish tenure; the appellate court reversing the trial judge's decision, which is subject to criticism for being unusually activist, or the appellate court affirming or modifying the decision, which is possible in light of the tradition of deference to the trial judge's factual findings that are the foundation of his decision. The final choice is likely to take years, including possible appeal to California's supreme court.

The Vergara decision is likely to have a ripple effect in terms of litigation in other states, but its leverage is limited. It is only a trial court decision, thus carrying negligible legal weight. Its importability is restricted to the few states with similarly solid state constitutional foundations.

Even if the ruling is upheld, forcing the California legislature to revise the challenged statutes, the Vergara decision is not likely to come close to resolving the substantial educational disparity faced by low-income and minority students. The revisions the opinion signaled were: extending teachers' probationary period, adopting dismissal procedures for those accused of egregious misconduct, and introducing merit into reduction-in-force criteria. Yet, the victory for the students would be as hollow as it is historic for several reasons:

• Limited role of law. The state constitutional minimum is far from the educational optimum. For example, the number of grossly ineffective teachers may not be significantly reduced because of the considerable and unchanged cost and length of proceedings.

• Practices of school culture. For example, the evidence is considerable that in the rest of the country, administrators do not resort to teacher termination based on incompetence. The National Center on Education Statistics found the average number of tenured teachers terminated for poor performance per school district was less than .1 percent in 2010-2011.

• Unofficial responses to incompetent teachers. This end-run gamesmanship includes pass the turkey (inflated ratings), dance of the lemons (transfers), and passing the trash (resignation deals).

• Systemic factors. The revisions do not extend to interrelated problems, such as the remaining teachers who are moderately ineffective, recruitment and retention, equitable resources, and security protection in teacher contracts in collective bargaining jurisdictions.

In conclusion, the Vergara decision is more significant symbolically than legally. Analyzed objectively, its real meaning is not to abolish tenure. Rather, the decision serves as a stimulus for "rebalancing" tenure to its original meaning of reasonable due process and as a reminder of the overriding need for more comprehensive reform. The fulcrum for such policymaking ultimately is in the legislative, not judicial, branch, requiring powerful and collaborative educational leadership and broad-based political will.

—Perry A. Zirkel, Lehigh University professor of Educational Leadership (Excerpted from Public Interest Law Reporter, where this first appeared.)

Arts Education in Public Schools

When public schools face financial challenges, arts and music programs often are the first casualties. Do distressed schools have much of an option? What's the effect on education?

Joseph J. Roy
Superintendent of Schools, Bethlehem Area School District
Dean's Advisory Council, College of Education

When school success is measured by standardized test scores and inequitable state funding leaves poor districts desperate for dollars, arts education is often a victim of the budget ax. While few dispute the positive effects of arts education—from creative thinking to problem solving to greater empathy for others to improved school climate—legislative mandates and financial shortcomings reveal a lack of true commitment to arts education at the state policy level. On the other hand, the Bethlehem Area School District's commitment to educating the whole child values arts education as much as those academic disciplines subject to state standardized testing. The district's "Roadmap to Educational Excellence," based on the International Center for Leadership in Education's four learning criteria (core learning, stretch learning, student engagement and personal skill development), provides the rationale for protecting arts education even in difficult budget times.

While our district made painful budget cuts several years ago, losing key student supports around tutoring and extended school day remediation, we continued to protect and support arts education as a key part of a child's education. In fact, for many students coming from impoverished backgrounds, the arts provide creative opportunities that engage the students in school, helping them to find greater success in core academic subjects.

In the end, misplaced state accountability measures, inequitable state funding and unfunded state mandates often leave arts education on the outside looking in. Policy choices rather than money are the real cause of the loss of arts education in many schools.

Jon Drescher
Professor of Practice, Center for Developing Urban Educational Leaders
*Director, Urban Principals Academy @ Lehigh (U*PAL)*

Marcel Proust said, "Only through art can we get outside of ourselves and know another's view of the universe."

Maxine Greene has written, "I want to urge you to go back in your own life narratives and try to recover those moments when imagination, released through certain encounters with the arts, opened worlds for you,

disclosed new vistas, helped you look at things as if they could be otherwise.

Elliot Eisner compiled a list of 10 Lessons the Arts Teach:

1. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.
2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution.
3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving, purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity.
5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.
6. The arts teach students to think through and within a material.
7. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.
8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.
9. The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source.
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults think is important.

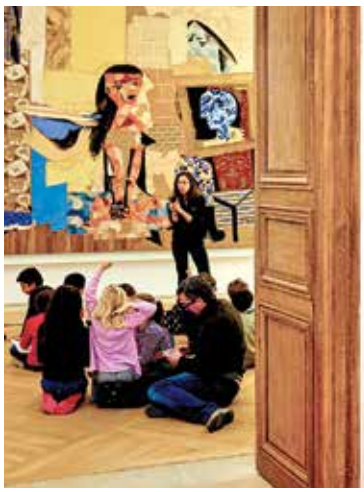
I would argue that these same lessons have equally powerful messages for adults as well.

So, with just the three examples above, which are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the importance of the arts, why are the arts either minimized or the first to go when there are fiscal issues in play in so many of our nation's schools? Aren't the best schools you've ever visited places that seem to come alive when the adults and children have an opportunity to teach with and express themselves through the arts?

J. Andrew Cassano
Administrative Director
Zoellner Arts Center

Cuts to the arts in education are nothing new but they are always a mistake, affecting generations of students. The rising interest in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines is built to provide global businesses and economies with students trained for promising careers waiting after graduation. But increasingly, major think tanks and foundations are coming out with more proof that eliminating the arts from well-rounded education greatly reduces the chance of preparing our young people for careers in any field, to communicate as global citizens, and to ask questions of why they are doing what they're practicing. Even proponents of STEM argue that the arts, in some degree, are necessary in approaches to creativity and failure, expression and communication, as well as applied design. But beyond practical application, the arts are one of the single highest success stories in engaging youth in poverty and inspiring them to be successful, stay in school and graduate.

The arts and humanities have always been hard to codify through testing as subjects. However, what is increasingly well documented is that schools that have more access to the arts have higher graduation rates. The options for schools to provide access to the arts for students have also grown in recent decades, as arts organizations across the country have increased their efforts to provide programs to schools in an effort to fill the void.



Educational Technology

Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson called apps-plus-handheld-devices "a watershed moment in civilization." The most powerful tools ever imagined, he said, "are in the hand of essentially everyone." Scott Garrigan, professor of practice of Teaching, Learning, and Technology at Lehigh, explains how technology is empowering students.

Mobile Devices

Many schools provide a laptop or iPad for each child to use at home and school. Uruguay was the first nation to give each student a laptop. (Lehigh professor Scott Garrigan is helping Malta plan to be the first one-to-one iPad nation in Europe.)

Closer to Lehigh, most suburban school districts have one-to-one schools. Even a low-income district like Allentown (Pa.) will give a mobile device to each ninth-grader in its newest school. Mobile apps and e-books become portable laboratories and libraries for each child.

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

Open Educational Resources from CK12.org include free e-textbooks for California, Virginia and Texas. The 12-state K-12 OER Collaborative develops free e-texts supporting state Math and English Language Arts Standards.

The White House announced a $250 million initiative to provide 10,000 educational eBook titles for ages 4-18 free to low-income families. Students using OER apps and websites can now take full courses for free.

Online

Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) from major universities serve over 10 million students, and some top scorers are teens. Schools use KhanAcademy.org to "flip" the classroom, teaching new material through online homework videos, allowing more teacher-student interaction in class. Khan has delivered over a billion K-12 lessons. Its motto: "You can learn anything. For free. For everyone. Forever." Five states require an online course for graduation, and seven ask schools to give credit for online courses to cover subjects not offered (25 percent of schools serving neediest minorities lack Algebra II and 33 percent lack chemistry).

Interactivity

Children as young as 8 months engage in interactive experiences through touch control of phones and tablets. Interactive and adaptive children's books and educational videos support independent learning.

Creative Productivity

Technology-empowered students design and produce creative works. Tools like multimedia story builders and video editors support text, audio, animation and video production. Some schools and libraries create "maker spaces" to promote hands-on learning, using new technologies like 3D printers. Students learn by making and doing in the best John Dewey tradition.

Healthy School Lunches

When President Barack Obama signed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 into law, it was the first time in 30 years that nutrition standards had been improved for the school meals program.

First Lady Michelle Obama and her Let's Move! campaign to end childhood obesity were strong advocates of getting it passed. Under the law, which had bipartisan support, all food sold in schools, including vending machines, must comply with national nutrition standards that incorporate more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and less sodium and saturated fats, among other new guidelines.

While many hailed the $4.5 billion law as a major step toward improving childhood health and nutrition and reducing childhood hunger and obesity, it has not been without its detractors. In the five years since it was passed, stories surfaced that some school districts were struggling to implement the new standards and that food and money were being wasted because kids were throwing out the mandatory fruits and vegetables.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act originated in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs signed into law during the Truman and Johnson administrations.

As it comes up for renewal this fall under the Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization, critics are calling for more flexibility and for the standards to be relaxed on whole grains and sodium levels.

U. S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said he is "deeply concerned" about attempts to roll back progress that has been made. The USDA said 95 percent of schools have met the updated nutrition standards and cited several national studies that concluded children are eating healthier food at school because of the law. The National Education Association strongly supports the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

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School Reform: Is There Common Ground?

Geoffrey Canada, a passionate advocate for education reform, has been selected for the 2015 Distinguished Lecture Series of Lehigh University's College of Education. Canada, a nationally recognized figure for his pioneering work in helping children and families in Harlem, will address "The Promise of Charter Schools" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2015, in Baker Hall in the Zoellner Arts Center.

Canada is prominently featured in the 2010 documentary *Waiting for 'Superman,'* which explores the state of public education and reform efforts.

For 25 years, Canada was president of Harlem Children's Zone, which *The New York Times Magazine* called "one of the most ambitious social experiments of our time." In 1997, the agency launched the Harlem Children's Zone Project, which provides educational, social and medical services to children in a targeted area of central Harlem. Drawing upon his own childhood experiences and those at the Zone, Canada wrote *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America* and *Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America.*

Tickets are on sale at the Zoellner Box Office. For more information, visit lehigh.edu/canada