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Editor's Corner

This issue marks the start of *The WERA Educational Journal* as an e-publication separate from *The Standard Deviation*, WERA's flagship newsletter of many years. While the newsletter will continue to focus you on the business and events of WERA, the journal will venture a bit farther to explore research, assessment and program evaluation issues of broad (or narrow) interest to Washington colleagues. Tagged as an "occasional professional e-journal," we plan a second issue for April 2010 with a copy deadline March 27.

In the current issue **James Leffler** and Education Northwest colleagues **Steven Nelson** and **Barbara Hansen** report study findings showing that policy makers are often little influenced by research findings. I was reminded of the telling review of the state of medicine, law and education in the late 1800's (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Medicine and law became undisputed (and lucrative) professions, but education continues to repel the active embrace of research as rudder for policy and practice. There are lessons to be learned for our modest journal.

Two book reviews provide background for the upcoming 25th Annual Washington State Winter Assessment Conference December 10-11 in Seattle with keynoters Willard Daggett and Douglas Reeves. Timberline HS Principal **Dave Lehnis** reviews Daggett's *The Rigor and Relevance Handbook* while consultant and blue water sailor **Jill Hearne** reviews Reeves' *Leading Change in Your School: How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results*. Contact Book Review Editor Phil Dommes if you have an important title for the next issue that needs a critical eye. Foods Editor **Karen Banks** lingers near Seattle's Southcenter to review the tempting tastes of Bahama Breeze--Ya, mon!

This issue brings another *Urban Myth?* quick analysis: Is school closure an effective turnaround treatment? While not a current option in Washington, the issue remains a hot national topic. I dedicate this piece to the memory of **Gerald W. Bracey** who died October 20 at his new home in Port Townsend. Bracey was a fearless and aggressive critic of the faulty reporting and analysis of education data. He was 69.

While we continue to examine the generously funded state and national initiatives to dramatically improve the academic fates of struggling students, **Michael Power** explores the link between student mobility and achievement from his new vantage point at the Tacoma Housing Authority. Tacoma School District Assessment Director **Patrick Cummings** offers up another Stupid Tricks for Assessment Folks, this time unraveling the COUNTIF function in Excel. A complete index of technical articles was offered by OSPI's **Andrea Meld** last spring and will be updated in Spring 2010. Andrea has agreed to be the editor of a new ethics section, starting next issue. You are invited to direct research, evaluation and assessment ethical questions to her for consideration.

Editor **Peter Hendrickson**, now an independent consultant, provides an opinion piece on performance pay this issue. He invites others to submit opinion pieces for consideration. Letters to the Editor are also welcome and should include the full name, affiliation and contact information for the writer. Letters may be edited for space.

References

Berliner, D. C., & Biddle, B. J. (1995). *The manufactured crisis*. New York: Addison-Wesley. (Republished by Harper Collins)

--Peter Hendrickson, Ph.D.

Toward a Research Agenda for Understanding and Improving the Use of Research Evidence

By Steven R. Nelson, Ph.D., James C. Leffler, Ed.D., and Barbara Hansen, M.A.

Education Northwest (formerly known as Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory) recently completed a study for the William T. Grant Foundation. The study looked at how research is used in making policy and practice decisions. The goal of the study was to examine ways in which researchers and research funders can influence and inform policymakers and practitioners. The study convened focus groups and interviews with sixty-five teachers, administrators, school board members, state legislators, congressional staffers, and deputy state superintendents. While the sample was small, it did provide some interesting anecdotal material about how research is and is not used in decision making.

This study sought to contribute to that goal by helping to identify when, how, and under what conditions research evidence is used by policymakers and practitioners; what other sources of information these individuals rely on; and what factors serve as barriers or facilitators to using research evidence in making policy and practice decisions.

Some findings from the study:

- Policymakers and practitioners did not mention research evidence as often, nor discuss it as strongly, as other sources of information.
- Study participants expressed skepticism about research evidence (empirical findings derived from systematic methods and analyses) and noted its limitations.
- Almost all participants stated that while research evidence plays a part in policy and practice decisions, they rarely identified it as a primary factor. Most study participants responded that research evidence played a more indirect or secondary role.
- Participants did not mention any “breakthrough research” nor did they cite any findings that they felt had a dramatic effect on practice or policy.
- Study participants believe that there is a gulf between research design and real-world practice, and that research findings have limited applicability to their local contexts.
- Policymakers and practitioners regard evidence as a key factor in decision making, but they take a more pragmatic

approach to acquiring and using it. They define evidence broadly as local research, local data, personal experience, information from personal communications, gut instinct or intuition, and the experience of others, in addition to research evidence.

- Focus group members and interviewees did not draw a distinction between research evidence and general evidence derived from these other sources.
- Participants identified both the research itself and the abilities of research users as barriers to use.
- Our findings suggest that barriers to the use of research evidence are linked to an underlying belief that much research is not to be trusted or is, at least, severely limited in its potential applicability. Even with studies that meet “gold standard” criteria, participants were aware that a narrowly designed study could report a false success or a false failure. It was a common perception of the study participants that research could be shaped to say anything, that one piece of research often conflicts with another, and that much research is not timely for users’ needs.

The focus groups also identified factors that might facilitate research use.

- Both policymakers and practitioners expressed a preference for brief reports (no more than one to two pages), in a larger font, and written in nontechnical language.
- They also identified a need for research that is locally relevant and credible, including case studies, and ones that offer analysis across multiple studies.
- The preference for research evidence that links to their local context was the strongest need identified by all study groups.
- Participants also expressed a desire for research evidence that considers how interventions impact an entire system and whether such interventions are sustainable over the long term, as well as evidence that takes into account the local political environment.

Focus group participants identified specific sources they turn to when acquiring research evidence.

- They use scholarly research journals and published research reports. However, they admitted to relying more heavily on other

sources such as popular publications, conferences, professional and research organizations, and peers.

- While not originally intended to be a focus of the study, one factor that emerged as a central feature to the research utilization process was the role of intermediaries.
- Throughout our focus group discussions and interviews, participants repeatedly referred to their reliance on intermediaries, who were described as unbiased organizations and individuals that can help locate, sort, and prioritize the available research.
- Intermediaries include research institutions, professional organizations, partners, coalitions, networks, peers, and constituents. Within these intermediary organizations, policymakers and practitioners appear to have a special relationship with small groups of “trusted individuals,” who are valued as credible, objective sources of information.

When comparing the needs of policymakers and practitioners, there appear to be few differences. Both groups use a broad base of evidence that spans a continuum from hearsay to experiments. To fully inform their decision making, users must be able to understand how the evidence applies to a particular local context.

The full report can be found at:

<http://www.nwrel.org/researchuse/report.pdf>

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--Past WERA Board Member Jim Leffler is Director, REL Services to the Field; and

--Barbara Hansen is Project Director, REL Network Collaboration, all at Education Northwest in Portland, <http://educationnorthwest.org>.

Book Review: *Leading Change in Your School -How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results*, by Douglas B. Reeves

Review by Jill Hearne, Ph.D.

Leading Change in Your School provides an overview of change theory and a series of exercises and scales useful to the school or small district administrator in leading change initiatives. Reeves demonstrates through vignettes the many resistant elements, which inevitably lead to cynicism in schools. He provides authentic stories of successful change efforts and notes the essential conditions for change, both for individuals and organizations.

The four sections of the book describe creating conditions for change, planning for change, change implementation, and finally sustaining change.

The first section discusses the importance of reframing change initiatives by helping individuals to see what does not change, by affirming their present useful behaviors. Two useful tools, "The Personal Change Readiness Assessment" and "The Organizational Change Readiness Assessment" lead readers through an analysis of their individual orientations to change and result in a change readiness score for participants.

Attendance to organizational culture is an important part of any change effort and Reeves debunks seven myths of leadership for change. Among the myths rejected are: just a little bit better is good enough, people love to collaborate, and you can plan the way to greatness.

In the second section, Reeves suggests focusing upon factors that influence student achievement most: teacher assignment, professional development, collaboration, and time. He notes that the variables that are most influential are teacher quality and leadership quality and suggests using classroom observations, data analysis, and reviews of student work as assessment tools.

The usefulness of coaching and strategic planning is detailed with guidance regarding effective elements. He cites findings which indicate schools that engaged in frequent monitoring, evaluation and inquiry made the greatest gains in student achievement.

Next, key factors in tackling the "implementation gap" are delineated. Reeves offers clear strategies with examples that link short term wins to long-term change with particular attention to effective grading practices and attendance policies. Further, he asserts that time for Arts vs. Literacy is not a "zero-sum game" and there should be a norm that there is no such thing as a non-academic class. The question of challenge is, Reeves asserts, "What would we do if our students were rich?"

The final section highlights case studies of sustained excellence. Common factors include focused time, proactive interventions, teacher leadership and student involvement. Reeves concludes that in educating students and organizing schools we do not have a choice of perfection; rather, we must choose one of two mistakes: action or inaction.

For the practicing school or small district administrator, this book provides useful tools with which to construct a series of professional development activities for staff members. Reeves includes a useful synthesis of change theory which could be used to jumpstart a seminar or workshop. Following up with

participants' engagement in their own responses and readiness to change could be the next step. Later, staff members could use the focus group questions and change readiness continuums at a department or grade level, and then compare at a faculty or district level.

Leading Change in Your School provides clear assistance for a thoughtful administrator to create a willing environment to tackle encompassing change initiatives, providing one is willing to heed assumptions basic to educational change such as those noted by Fullan. One key assumption quoted by Reeves is, "Assume that changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations."

Publication Data: *Leading Change in Your School: How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment and Get Results*, by Douglas Reeves, 2009. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, VA. Paperback, \$26.95 (US) ISBN: 978:1-4166-0808-0

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Book Review: *The Rigor and Relevance Handbook* from the International Center for Leadership in Education, by Richard D. Jones

Review by Dave Lehnis

With the leadership of Willard Daggett, The International Center for Leadership in Education has published *The Rigor and Relevance Handbook*. The focus of the handbook is to provide “a planning process that focuses on learning so that all students benefit from both rigor and relevance.” The book attempts to help readers sift through and determine the priorities for improved learning and teaching.

The Center has created a Rigor/Relevance Framework that is designed to help classroom teachers develop curriculum and instruction that greatly improves student learning. The handbook is divided into three chapters: Planning Instruction, Selecting and Developing Local Assessments and Improving Instruction. All three chapters emphasize the role of application which is at the heart of the Center’s framework.

The first chapter, Improving Instruction, discusses the Rigor/Relevance Framework. This framework is based on a graph that has the Knowledge Taxonomy (Bloom’s Taxonomy) as one axis and the Application Model as the other. The handbook divides the graph into four quadrants: Acquisition (of knowledge), Assimilation (of knowledge), Application and Adaptation. The goal is to have students operate in the application and adaptation quadrants where students work and process at higher levels of thinking. High levels of application are a critical underpinning for the Center’s model for learning and teaching. Once the stage is set with the Rigor/Relevance Framework, the handbook lays out a process for curriculum and instructional planning. Jay McTighe’s Backward Design model is a part of the Center’s process. Checklists, a list of instructional strategies, and roles technology can play are also included. The handbook does a nice job of keeping complex processes relatively simple. Many useful examples are also included.

In Chapter 2, Selecting and Developing Local Assessments, the emphasis is on the role of assessment in the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The chapter focuses on performance-based assessments with the use of standards and rubrics. There is a brief discussion of analytic and holistic scoring and their strengths and shortcomings. Gold Seal lessons are also introduced. These are activities designed to teach specific standards using performance-based benchmarks and assessments. Two examples of thoroughly developed “Gold Seal” lessons are included in the book, and the Center has a bank of them available for purchase. In general, this chapter on assessment is a review of current thinking and assessment practice.

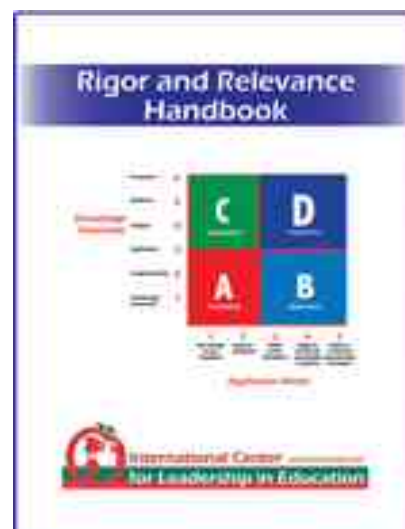
In the final chapter, Improving Instruction, the handbook outlines ways teachers can improve their teaching. Most of it is a summary of the current thinking on school and teaching improvement. The role of collaboration among teachers, the sharing of experiences and ideas, the value of peer observation/review and action research are all listed as paths for continuous improvement. While most of these concepts are not new, the book does offer a clear process for peer review of lessons and teaching. For someone looking for ideas or guidance on peer observation, this could be helpful. The chapter ends with The Professional Growth Plan Process and Form. These offer good ideas for helping teachers reflect on and coordinate plans for their own professional learning growth.

The Rigor and Relevance Handbook achieves its purpose by providing a planning process that focuses on instruction and learning so that all students can access rigor and relevance in their education. While the book does not break new ground, it is a good compilation of some of the recent thinking in K-12 education. Its strong emphasis on application does set it apart from some of the models for educational improvement.

The book can be a resource in and of itself. However, it is intended as one part of the International Center for Leadership in Education’s *Professional Development Resource Kits*. Throughout the book there are references to other resources from the Center. These include the aforementioned Gold Seal lessons and a resource kit for aligning standards. Also included is an endorsement of the Center’s business partner, EdGate, which developed the Copernicus Curriculum Matrix (CCM). The CCM is a database containing lessons, assessments and Internet resources. There is a cost to access EdGate’s materials, but all of the resources are quite good and may be useful. This reviewer senses that part of the intent of the book is commercial and intended to help sell additional products. That said, the book is interesting and informative. Its focus will likely cause readers to assess what role application should play and ask what one can do to further the use of application in K-12 education.

Publication Data: *Rigor and Relevance Handbook*, by Richard D. Jones, International Center for Leadership in Education, 2002. International Center for Leadership in Education, NY. Paperback, 125 pages, \$45.

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Bahama Breeze Restaurant: Island Dining on Mainland Budget

Review by Karen E. Banks, Ph.D.

With the WERA conference approaching, many of us are looking forward to connecting with colleagues. If you are like me, however, you will want to eat dinner together somewhere other than the conference hotels. In a previous issue, I recommended Bai Tong, at 16876 Southcenter Pkwy. This month, I am suggesting you head for Bahama Breeze, located in the same complex as the Southcenter Mall. The atmosphere is definitely "island": from a distance, the place looks like a large beach house. Up close, the windows have large sturdy white shutters ready to fend off a tropical storm; the real (and fake) plants contribute to the lush island feel, and the bouncy island music will put you into a festive mood. It can get rather loud on Friday nights, but during the week, you should be able to carry on a conversation without trouble.

Though the menu is extensive, I like the several ways fish is fixed, including grilled with island spices. I also like the tostones con pollo (fried plantain with chicken). My husband was drawn to the chicken and vegetable quesadillas, corn chowder, and the coconut shrimp. He pronounced them, "Great, mon."

One of the things appealing about the food is the use of island flavors and spices. Coconut, mango, plantain, and pineapple are among the flavors, but the use of the spice known as *Jamaican jerk spice* is one of the ways much of this food is set apart from your usual fare. Jerk is a combination of mostly allspice and Scotch bonnet peppers. Other spices in this combination include cinnamon, cloves, scallions, and garlic. The result produces flavorful meats and chutneys.

The Bahama Breeze offers an extensive menu of tropical drinks, along with a wine list and beer. I find the wine list to be the weakest part of the menu. (Some of you know that I am fond of good chardonnay, which is sadly lacking here.) If you like beer or tropical drinks, however, this place will more than satisfy. My husband always has the Aruba Red, a refreshing amber beer brewed exclusively for the Bahama Breeze restaurant chain.

There are several Bahama Breeze locations in the eastern U.S., but only two west of the Mississippi, and we are lucky enough to have one of them. Just keep in mind that the restaurant must cater to a wide variety of tastes. The above mentioned jerk spice is somewhat toned down, to align more closely with most American palates. And there are many things on the menu that will be appealing to children. The restaurant is conveniently located at the intersection of I-5 and I-405.

Bahama Breeze
15700 Southcenter Parkway
Tukwila, WA 98188
Phone: (206) 241-4448
Fax: (206) 241-4664

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2009 Research Claims #2: Closing Schools Effective Turnaround Option, Urban Myth?

By Peter Hendrickson, Ph.D.

States and districts around the country are exploring a myriad of ways to turn around low performing schools. We examine the experience in two large, urban districts for lessons from the field. And the First Things First founder has developed a simulation to advise superintendents trying to decide if closure or turnaround makes most sense (Connell, 2009).

Chicago. One strategy is to close a school and disburse students across other schools. A recent study (de la Torre & Gwynne, 2009) found that 80% of displaced students were placed in schools ranking in the bottom half of the achievement distribution. Researchers compared the achievement of the more than 5,000 elementary students to those with similar profiles who remained in their home schools. Students transferring to stronger schools exceeded achievement expectations while those moving to lower performing schools did not. Data revealed a drop in performance even before the schools were closed. The effects of the transfers washed out three years after changing schools. Summer school enrollment was depressed. School closings ceased in Chicago with a new emphasis on turnaround strategies however many elementaries remain under enrolled with further closings possible.

Philadelphia. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took over Philadelphia schools and charter schools have become popular. A RAND report (Zimmer et al., 2008) examined the impact on student achievement and other issues. These issues include what types of students charter schools attract and whether charter schools have higher student turnover rates than traditional public schools. The authors found that charter school students' average gains were statistically indistinguishable from the gains they experienced while at traditional public schools. Charter schools are attracting students whose prior achievement levels (when they were in traditional district schools) are slightly below the district-wide average, but higher than the average achievement levels of the traditional public schools they left. They found no evidence that the district schools located in neighborhoods with the greatest charter competition are performing any differently as a result of the competition with charter schools. Several studies are available through the Research for Action foundation (RFA, 2009).

High School Simulation. Connell's (2009) simulation using actual data from Texas schools for a single outcome, math proficiency, showed in one scenario that 22 replacement schools (the closure option) would have to run for two years to match a conversion approach (the turnaround in place option). Increasing the number of replacement schools or lowering standards improved outcomes. Connell's conclusion: conversion yields better results.

Discussion

The past decade has seen a wide range of turnaround attempts including the small high school movement promoted by the Gates Foundation (until the data did not support the model). We'll know in several months when Race to the Top states are funded which states have the most promising models, based on peer reviews of the grant applications. Until then, districts will be well served by careful and skeptical review of closure turnaround (or other) promises.

References

- Connell, J. (2009). *Apples to apples: comparing replacement and conversion approaches to high school turnaround*. Institute for Research and Reform in Education retrieved November 23, 2009 http://www.irre.org/pdf_files/Apples_to_Apples_Approach_11-3-09_FINAL.pdf
- de la Torre, M & Gwynne, J. (2009). *When schools close: effects on displaced students in Chicago public schools*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago. Contact Emily Krone, ekrone@uchicago.edu.
- RFA. (2009). Research for Action (RFA) is leading *Learning from Philadelphia's school reform*, a comprehensive, multi-year study of Philadelphia's complex and radical school reform effort. Several publications are available at <http://www.researchforaction.org/project/details/110>.
- Zimmer, R., Blanc, S., Gill, B. P., & Christman, J. B. (2008, Mar). *Evaluating the performance of Philadelphia's charter schools*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Education.

--We invite practitioners to submit their own, short urban myth research briefs.

--Editor



Stupid Excel Tricks for Assessment Folks: EXCEL COUNTIF Function

By Patrick Cummings

Introduction

In our department we often conduct large surveys or assessments where the Excel formula “COUNTIF” comes in very handy. The COUNTIF function counts the number of cells in a range that meet a given criteria. For example, let’s take your WASL score file and show an example of how the “COUNTIF” function might be of some use.

Open Your File

Below is a typical score file that contains WASL (R.I.P.) information such as the Student First Name, Gender, Program Status and various test scores. I am using a split screen to show that there are 116 student records in this file:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	FirstName	Gender	IsSpecialEd	BilingualESL	RDType	RDAttempted	RDScale	RDLevel	RDMetStd
2	BRYCE	F	N	N	WASL	PP			
3	MARIA	F	N	Y	WASL	TS	340	L1	N
4	PHILLIP	M	N	N	WASL	TS	376	L2	N
5	DANESHA	F	N	N	WASL	TS	333	L1	N
115	MICHAEL	M	N	N	WASL	TS	390	L2	N
116	JORDAN	M	N	Y	WASL	TS	407	L3	Y
117	NICHOLAS	M	N	Y	WASL	TS	417	L3	Y
118									

Using COUNTIF:

The syntax of the COUNTIF formula is very straight forward:

COUNTIF(range,criteria)

Range - is the range of cells from which you want to count cells.

Criteria - is the criteria in the form of a number, expression, cell reference, or text that defines which cells will be counted. For example, let’s count the number of Male Students in our data set.

Start by putting your formula in cell B119 (yellow) and Use this formula: **COUNTIF** (range, criteria)

COUNTIF (B2:B117, “M”)

Note:
Make sure you put the text “M”, in quotes

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	FirstName	Gender	IsSp						
2	BRYCE	F	N						
3	MARIA	F	N						
4	PHILLIP	M	N						
5	DANESHA	F	N						
116	JORDAN	M	N						
117	NICHOLAS	M	N						
118									
119	Males =								58

Now let's count Females:

COUNTIF (B2:B117, "F")

	A	B	C	D	
1	FirstName	Gender	IsSpecialEd	BilingualESL	R
2	BRYCE	F	N	N	WASL
3	MARIA	F	N	Y	WASL
4	PHILLIP	M	N	N	WASL
5	DANESHA	F	N	N	WASL
116	JORDAN	M	N	Y	WASL
117	NICHOLAS	M	N	Y	WASL
118					
119	Males =	56			
120	Females =	55			

A variation of the COUNTIF formula is COUNTBLANK. This will count the number of cells in a range that are blank:

COUNTBLANK(range)

	A	B	C	D	
1	FirstName	Gender	IsSpecialEd	BilingualESL	
2	BRYCE	F	N	N	WAS
3	MARIA	F	N	Y	WAS
4	PHILLIP	M	N	N	WAS
5	DANESHA	F	N	N	WAS
116	JORDAN	M	N	Y	WAS
117	NICHOLAS	M	N	Y	WAS
118					
119	Males =	56			
120	Females =	55			
121	Blanks =	5			

Digging Deeper with the COUNTIF formula:

The COUNTIF function not only handles text but can also compute date and number functions. For example, here is a count of students scoring 400 or greater on the WASL Reading:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	FirstName	Gender	IsSpecialEd	BilingualESL	RDType	RDAttempted	RDScale
2	BRYCE	F	N	N	WASL	PP	
3	MARIA	F	N	Y	WASL	TS	340
4	PHILLIP	M	N	N	WASL	TS	376
5	DANESHA	F	N	N	WASL	TS	333
112	CHERISE	F	N	N	WASL	PP	
113	SAMUEL	F	N	N	WASL	TS	436
114	MEGHAN	M	N	N	WASL	TS	333
115	MICHAEL	M	N	N	WASL	TS	390
116	JORDAN	M	N	Y	WASL	TS	407
117	NICHOLAS	M	N	Y	WASL	TS	417
118							
119	Males =	56				Greater Than 400 =	36
120	Females =	55					
121	Blanks =	5					

Conclusion:

The COUNTIF function is a general formula for basic counting. Sometimes a pivot table will work better if you want to dive deeper but don't overlook this basic formula for a quick analysis of your data. Remember that other formula for working with Excel; KISS (Keep It Simple Stanley).

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Mobility and Student Achievement: A Literature Review

By Michael A. Power

Background

... educational problems in poor inner-city neighborhoods cannot be addressed without also responding to the social and economic conditions in the communities where schools are located. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect schools to raise test scores and focus narrowly on the task of educating children when a broad array of unmet non-academic needs (e.g., food, housing and health care) invariably affect their ability to learn. Put more simply, we cannot address educational issues in a social vacuum, and we cannot treat all schools or children the same when we know that life is much harder for some children than for others. --Pedro Noguera, *City Schools and the American Dream*, (2003).

Since the 1960's, educational and social researchers have been exploring the impact of a range of variables which are beyond the influence of public schools, but which have a profound effect on the educational outcomes of children, especially children of poverty and children of color. One of the variables which has received considerable attention is the relationship between academic outcomes and stability in housing. Given the interplay of demographic variables and housing stability, it is difficult to parse out the exact contribution of housing to learning outcomes, but the sheer number of students of poverty (12.1 million people under age 18 nationwide in 2002 [National Center for Educational Statistics]) creates a database which researchers have used to conduct a wide variety of studies from which reliable conclusions can be drawn.

Rumberger, et al. (1999) identified three aspects of student mobility – incidence (the rate at which students move), consequences, and causes. Students change schools or leave school for a wide variety of reasons, and the schools which they leave do not always know why they left. This makes it difficult to determine exactly which of mobility's many causes has the greatest impact on student outcomes. A longitudinal study of student mobility in the Chicago Public Schools (Kerbow, 1995, cited in Reynolds, Chen, and Hebers, 2009) found that 28% of mobility was due to change in housing, and an additional 30% was due to a combination of housing and school-related circumstances such as dissatisfaction with the school.

Whatever the root causes of mobility, the perceived causal effect of instability in school enrollment on decreased student outcomes has led to a substantial amount of research, a representative sample of which is reviewed in this report.

Data Sources

Data for this report were collected from a search of national databases of educational statistics, the US Department of Education's Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), an internet search for related studies, and data available from the Tacoma Public Schools. All of the studies reviewed in this report which impute causality between housing stability and student outcomes are multivariate studies which control for a variety of factors also related to student outcomes. The variables included differ depending on the study. Many of the studies are meta-analyses which draw conclusions based on compiling statistical results from a number of related studies.

Extent of Mobility

For the purpose of this review, school mobility is defined as a child changing school for reasons other than promotion to another grade level. This includes students who change due to choosing to attend another school for a more desirable program, transportation issues, and a wide variety of other causes. School mobility does not necessarily imply a change in residence, although that is often a contributing factor. "Over their entire elementary and secondary careers, most students (in the United States) make at least one non-promotional school change" (Rumberger, 2002).

The United States has one of the highest rates of residential and school mobility in the industrialized world (Long, 1992). Between 2007 and 2008, one in eight Americans changed residences, which is over 35 million people. While annual mobility rates have typically exceeded 14% over the past two decades, cumulative rates over multi-year periods exceed 20%. Among school-age children, 8.8 million – 14% of 5-to 19-year-olds – changed residences between 2002 and 2003, the most recent data available. (All data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2009.)

"With roughly two-thirds of residential moves requiring a change of schools, and many other school transfers occurring

without residential mobility, the rate of school mobility over a 2-to 3-year period commonly exceeds 30%. The U. S. General Accounting Office . . . reported that 41% of a national sample of third graders changed schools between the beginning of first grade and the end of third grade. The National Center for Education Statistics (*in 2001*) reported that one third of fourth graders in the National Assessment of Educational Progress changed schools in the previous two years due to a residential move . . . Among a complete cohort of Chicago first graders in 2000 . . . only 25% remained in the same school until eighth grade" (Reynolds, Chen, and Hebers, 2009).

Public school students who drop out are more likely to be low-income, inner city residents. They are more likely to be non-native speakers of English, to already have poor academic success, and to have repeated a grade (Wright, 1999).

Table 1

MOBILITY WITHIN TACOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS School Year 2007-2008 (Most recent available data)	
Elementary	69.6%
Middle School	54.0%
High School	72.6%
Total District Mobility	67.1%

Source: www.tacoma.k12.wa.us/information/departments/assessment/Pages/EnrollmentStatistics.aspx

Based on the most recent data available (2007-2008), mobility within Tacoma Public Schools varies considerably, from a low of 25.1% at Meeker Middle School to a high of 121.2% at McCarver Elementary. (McCarver has been as high as 179%, in 2005-2006). It is possible for a school to be over 100% mobility due to multiple student moves within a year. There is a “stable core” of students who stay, while other students move in and out including some students who will come and go multiple times during a school year. The school district estimates that only 36% of third graders at McCarver remained with the school from first through third grade.

<http://tinyurl.com/TPSMcCarverDemographics> The district is currently conducting further analysis of the McCarver mobility statistics.

Impact on Achievement

• **Academic Indicators**

The results of the analyses show a nearly uniformly negative impact of geographic mobility on student achievement; the most negative effects of geographic mobility were found at earlier grade levels (Ingersoll, 1989).

Unfortunately, there is a substantial amount of data to support Ingersoll’s claim. In a study of students in the Denver school system in which other factors were controlled, twelfth grade students who had moved more than once performed almost two grade levels below their stable peers on the composite scores of a national test of reading and mathematics. Even first graders, by the end of the year, were already four months behind other first graders who had not changed schools (Ingersoll, et al., 1988). In a more recent study of 1087 low income Black students in Chicago, 73% of whom had changed schools at least once, Temple and Reynolds (2000) found that by seventh grade the mobile students lagged approximately one year behind their non-mobile peers in reading and mathematics, and half of this difference was attributed to frequent mobility.

Because students change or leave schools for

a wide variety of reasons, there is not a simple one-to-one correspondence between mobility and school achievement.

Rumberger (2002) cites studies pointing to factors that existed prior to the child moving which may play an even greater role in low school performance, including nutrition and health problems, already low academic skills, and retention in grade. “. . . mobile students came from poorer families and had lower academic performance before they were mobile.” Also, the structure of the family can mitigate the effect of changing schools. Children from two parent families and families of affluence show significantly less academic impact. See also Wright (1991) and Tucker, et al. (1998). Other studies however (e.g., Ingersoll, et al., 1988), have found that controlling for socioeconomic variables did not alter the negative relationship between mobility and achievement.

It is clear from the many studies on this issue, however, that mobility in itself creates barriers to school success, both on the part of the student and the school staff. “Problems related to student mobility are inconsistent curricula, difficulty of student needs assessment, and the primary assignment of responsibility to teachers. . . . With the exception of migrant students, there are no

special educational services or school programs for students who move. The major responsibility for working with these students rests with teachers” (Lash and Kirkpatrick, 1990).

In addition, highly mobile students are much less likely even to show up for assessments. Wasserman (2001) found students who had moved twice in their educational career are three times less likely to participate in (Canadian) provincial exams, and those who moved four or more times are up to ten times less likely to show up for the test, depending on their grade level.

When they do show up for assessments, there is a clear, strong, negative correlation between test performance and mobility as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2

Correlation of School Achievement with School Mobility Index			
	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6	Junior High
	Acceptable Standard*	Acceptable Standard	Acceptable Standard
English Language Arts	-0.43	-0.54	-0.42
Mathematics	-0.42	-0.50	-0.49
All correlations statistically significant.			
* Acceptable Standard on Alberta Provincial exams = minimum passing score			

Source: Wasserman (2001)

A negative correlation in the order of 0.4 to 0.5 is a powerful predictor that a student who is mobile is much less likely to do well on assessments. Of course, correlation is not determination – many mobile students do well, and many stable students do poorly. However, the strong correlations show that within the population of mobile students, the more changes of school a child makes, the less likely she/he is to do well on assessments.

• Dropout Rate

Another indicator of the impact of any social variable on students is the rate at which they graduate from high school. Research conducted by Reynolds, et al. (2009) demonstrated that each instance of school change increases the likelihood of dropping out by 8.4%. This should be interpreted in the context of an already alarming dropout rate nationally and locally. In 2007, the most recent available data, 77.6% of Tacoma Public Schools students graduated on or after their expected graduation year compared to 77.0% statewide. (See the Appendix for two year [Figure 1] and extended [Figure 2] graduation rates from Tacoma Public Schools over time. Figure 3 shows graduation rates by race/ethnicity.)

Rumberger and Larson (1998), based on an analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal Survey which includes tens of thousands of a representative cohort of students across the United States, reported, “. . . students who made even one nonpromotional school change between the eighth and twelfth grades were twice as likely to not complete high school as students who did not change schools.” (*Emphasis added*) Astone and McLanahan’s (1994) findings support this. In their study of family conditions, “. . . as much as 30% of the difference in the risk of dropping out between children from stepfamilies and children from intact families can be explained by differences in residential mobility.”

• Non-Academic Indicators

Besides test scores and dropout rates, many less measurable features of education are also impacted by high student mobility, not the least of which is the interaction of the teacher with her/his students, and the ability of the student to maximize the

learning opportunities in the classroom. Engce (2006) also found that suspension rates were significantly higher for students who had changed schools within a school year.

When a child leaves or a new child arrives during the school year, it can be very disruptive. “Teachers have the challenge of integrating newcomers into established classes. New students need to become part of a class that has already built a history, including a common understanding of rules and routines and a shared knowledge base. Complicating this is the fact that a newcomer’s educational history may not match that of the class” (Lash and Kirkpatrick, 1990).

In his review of the impact of mobility on schooling, Wasserman (2001) includes the following:

- ▶ Teachers are forced to spend more time on review, and favor shorter term, less integrated teaching strategies.
- ▶ Attempts to monitor student performance may become meaningless if the population tested one year has largely changed by the next year. [*Note: Wasserman wrote this prior to the implementation of the NCLB accountability model which requires year-to-year grade level comparisons, not tracking of the same students over time.--M.P.*]
- ▶ Staffing decisions are more difficult because of changing and unpredictable enrollment.
- ▶ Teachers face a feeling of loss of accomplishment when a student in whom they have invested considerable effort leaves when the efforts are just beginning to show benefits.
- ▶ The lack of prompt transfer of student records can result in inappropriate placement of students.

While it is difficult to quantify these concerns, it is clear that for some students the non-academic factors can have a substantial impact on their social as well as academic success.

Research on Stabilizing Housing

Although stabilizing housing has been a major concern in the United States for some time, it became even more critical since the fall of 2008. This is due to the effects of the recession and the tremendous impact of the credit crisis and

declining wealth on home ownership. There are consequently a great many initiatives from the local to the federal level (U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi prominently features housing on her website -- *Stabilizing Housing Is Key to America’s Economic Recovery* [<http://speaker.house.gov/newsroom/reports?id=0037>])

– but in conducting this review I was unable to find any studies on mobility in which efforts to stabilize housing were associated with attempts to improve school outcomes. This by no means indicates no such work has been done. It is just that any such studies or reports were easily accessible through a search of the sources cited above. In his meta-analysis of mobility studies, Rumberger (2002) writes, “. . . much can and should be done to prevent some types of mobility, especially those caused by school factors, and to mitigate some of the harmful effects from mobility,” but he did not cite any studies in which this had been tried and evaluated.

There are indirect indicators of the difficulty of the challenge to affect student outcomes through housing. Liebman, Tenney, & Saegert (2009) in a study of 30 years of urban development in Brooklyn, concluded that, “With MGV (*Marcus Garvey Village*), UDC (*the Urban Development Corporation*) had mixed success in meeting the goals of its social experiment. It contributed to stabilizing housing conditions in the neighborhood but not to stabilizing the community at-large. Education statistics have not changed that much over thirty years. In 1970, 20 percent of residents in the area graduated from high school and in 2000 only 33 percent had done so.”

Geoffrey Canada, founder of The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), a community based charter school which has been recognized as a best practice by President Obama and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, argues for the need for stable housing (and cites strong partnerships with housing in supporting the HCZ academic program). But the HCZ report of student outcomes does not indicate an attempt to manipulate housing stability as a variable in increasing student success.

(www.hcz.org/images/white_paper_edit_exsum12_12_08.pdf)

Rogers, et al. (2009) in the most comprehensive review of the research on mobility and achievement in school that I

was able to find, did not include any measure of the stability of housing; their sole indicator for mobility was the number of times the children changed schools. They concluded, "Another limitation of the reviewed studies was the lack of investigation of the mediators or mechanisms through which mobility led to lower academic success."

Conclusion

Wasserman (2001) summarizes his review of the literature on student non-promotional mobility in this way, "The conceptual relationship between student movement and achievement is clear: moving disrupts the student's education, which in turn lowers achievement."

It is clear from the research reviewed here that school mobility, whether singly or in combination with other factors in a child's life, can have a significant negative effect on success in school. When students stay in the same school they do better in academics and also in their ability to build a positive relationship with teachers and classmates. Teachers have a much easier time working with their students when the class is stable, to the benefit of all students.

While no research was discovered in which housing was stabilized in a direct attempt to improve student school outcomes, the strengths of the correlations between these two variables suggests that should such an intervention be carried out, it could significantly improve outcomes for all students.

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Appendix: Graduation Rates for Tacoma Schools

Figure 1

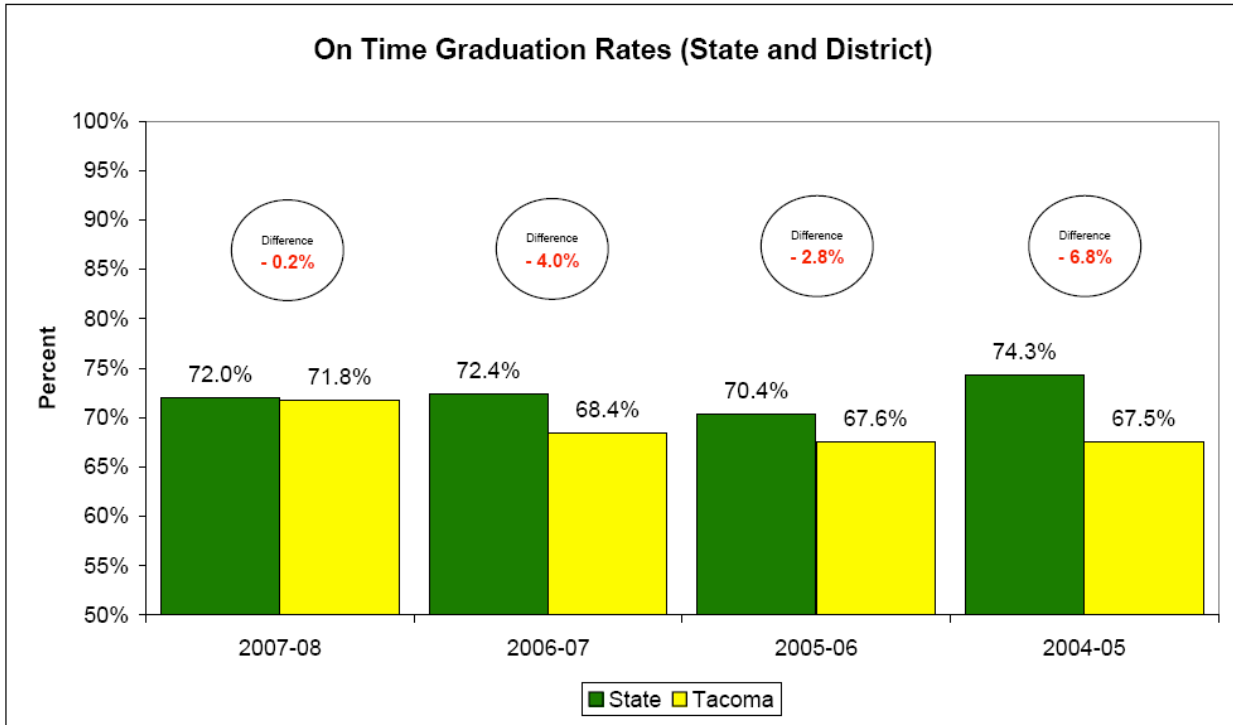
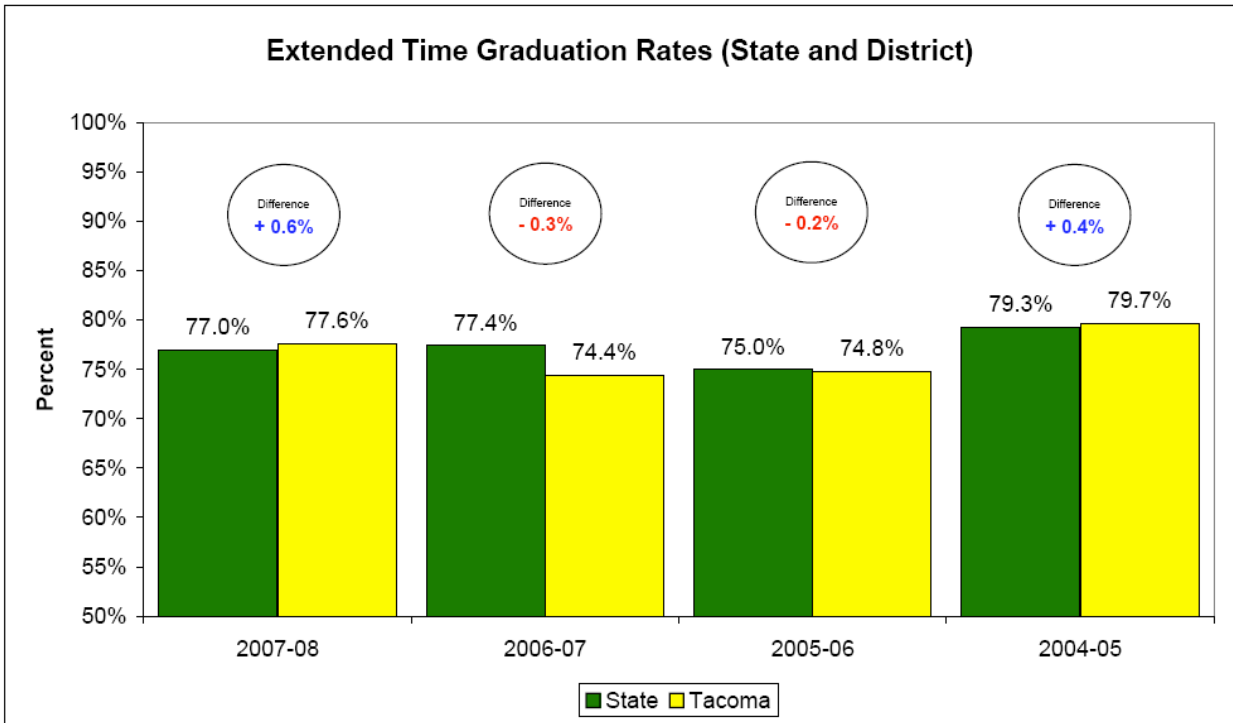



Figure 2



24. Percent of Tacoma Students Graduating Extended Time from High

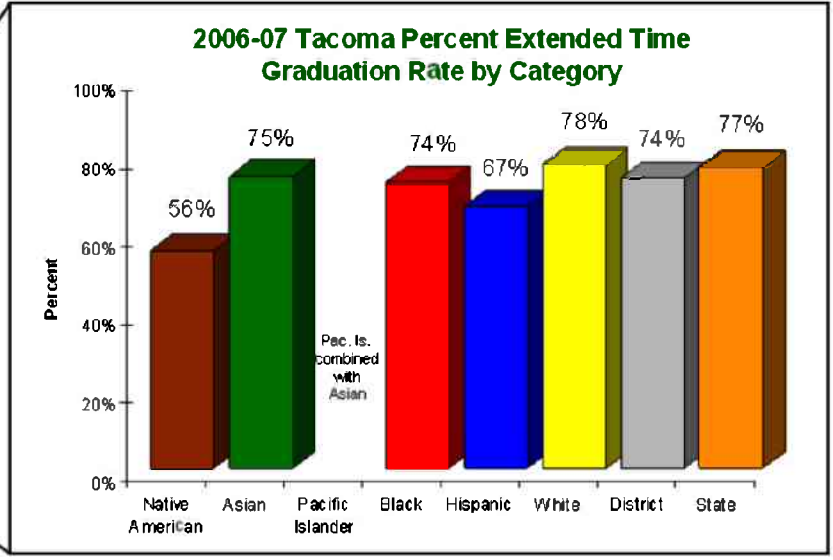
Figure 3



**% of Extended Time Graduation
2 Year Trend**

	2006	2007
Native American	68.8%	56.0%
Asian/Pac Islander	78.5%	75.0%
Black	75.8%	73.5%
Hispanic	64.3%	67.4%
White	75.3%	78.2%
District	74.8%	74.4%
State	75.1%	77.5%

Extended Graduation Rate - This rate includes students who graduated after their expected graduation year.



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Opinion: More Pressure on Assessment System --Pay for Performance

By Peter Hendrickson, Ph.D.

It's springtime again for teacher (and administrator) performance pay. A hallmark of the Obama educational policy is to tie \$4 billion in Race to the Top funding to performance pay. This is a continuation, in part, of Bush administration Teacher Incentive funding. Look for more pressure on stressed assessment systems.

The final guidelines (Federal Register, November 12, 2009) require states to remove barriers to district use of student test scores in influencing teacher pay and evaluation. An emphasis point is, "Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most." But the notice calls for multiple measures, not a single test score. And student growth, not a single achievement score, is to be the significant factor. For a comprehensive review of merit pay initiatives The Economic Policy Institute (Johnson & Papy, 2009) provide a walk through the origins some 100 years ago and a closer look at several recent initiatives in Houston, Hillsborough Co (FL), Minneapolis (MN), and Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC). Further, the authors propose a four-tier system to classify teacher pay grades:

- Tier 1 Pre tenure
- Tier 2 Tenure
- Tier 3 Mentor less skilled colleagues, other roles
- Tier 4 Greater leadership, e.g. coach, peer evaluate, analysis

In Washington, some teacher contracts have explicitly prohibited the use of student performance data in teacher evaluation (e.g. Everett) and others are silent. Centralia SD used math and reading growth scores from NWEA Levels testing in the 1990s, looking for evidence that teachers used the information to help shape their instruction.

The National Education Association (NEA) (Rosales, 2009) points out several pitfalls in using performance to determine teacher pay:

- Student scores represent only a narrow slice of teacher work.
- Merit pay may fracture collegial work, pitting teachers against each other.
- How reward teachers whose students are not tested?
- Is there adequate funding to sustain the system? Have all costs been considered?
- Is the system transparent and easily understood?
- Are evaluations subjective or objective? [Are they reliable measures?—Ed.]
- Will the incentives be large enough to change behavior?

Rosales points to two districts, Portland, ME and Helena, MT, which emphasize professional development aligning with NEA's position supporting career paths. New Haven, a National Federation of Teachers district, recently ratified a contract which considers test scores as well as other measures of achievement to impact teacher evaluation (Sawchuk, 2009).

A related federal initiative calls for districts receiving Title I funds to report teacher pay by school to help determine if teacher resources are truly comparable across schools. Historically, higher poverty schools have staffed with lower paid (and experienced) teachers. Sawchuk (2009) quotes University of Washington Research Associate Prof. Marguerite Roza, an expert in pay inequities, "We've never had a moment before when public officials have asked questions about these inequities...Many districts swear that they don't have them. But they haven't looked."

Research Findings

A cited Texas study (Goldhaber, et al, 2009) found that teacher involvement in bonus allocations resulted in many modest awards to colleagues, but no significant student performance gains followed. A Tennessee study suggested higher performing teachers maintained their high performance when lured to lower performing schools by higher pay. Pay for performance was opposed by 83% of teacher respondents in a teacher attitude survey. Two related studies found that less effective teachers were likely to leave their schools while those who qualified for bonuses stayed on.

Pressure to Perform

The pressure to provide growth measures of student performance will ramp up again. Experience has taught us that test score reliability falls as the stakes attached to testing rise (AERA, 2000). The National Center on Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University hosted a 2008 conference focused on these issues. Papers on Pay for Performance are invited for the spring WERA Journal issue. See www.performanceincentives.org

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