



ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE
THE GOOD SCHOOLS SEMINARS

III. SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

TOWARD SKILLED PARENTING & TRANSFORMED SCHOOLS: INSIDE A NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE WITH EQUITY

Ronald F. Ferguson, paper presented at the Teachers College Symposium on The Social Costs of Inadequate Education, October 21, 2005

This paper argues for a kind of transformative school reform – including attention to the development of skillful parenting and deep community involvement – as a means of achieving the broader national goal of educational excellence and equity. The first section expands briefly upon the “movement” idea and introduces some basic principles. The second reviews evidence on socioeconomic inequalities, disparities in parenting practices (some of which help predict achievement gaps) and the effectiveness of parenting interventions. The third section concerns improving schools by transforming whole school systems, from within. Whole-school reform models and other types of research-validated programs have a role, says the author, “but if achievement gaps are to close dramatically across the nation, school systems will need their own internal capacities and supportive political constituencies for long-term excellence.”

IT CAN BE DONE, IT'S BEING DONE, AND HERE'S HOW

Karin Chenoweth, *Kappan*, September 2009

Many schools have broken through the pattern of low achievement for poor, black, and Hispanic students. Schools that have been successful with high poverty, high-minority populations share many common qualities. Those successful schools have built a positive, collaborative school climate, reducing teacher isolation by providing time for teachers to work and learn together. Collaborative teams of teachers help bolster the quality of teaching in those schools and ensure greater consistency across grade levels. Teachers in those schools assume responsibility for teaching what they want students to know and not assuming that parents will fill in the gaps for them.

THE ECONOMICS OF INEQUALITY: THE VALUE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

James J. Heckman, *American Educator*, Spring 2011

Educational equity is often discussed as a moral value, but it is also an economic issue. Traditionally, equity and efficiency are viewed as competing goals. But there are some policies that both are fair – i.e., promote equity – and promote economic efficiency. Investing in the early years of disadvantaged children's lives is one such policy. A large body of data from economics, biology, and psychology shows that educational equity is more than a social justice imperative; it is an economic imperative that has far-reaching implications for the nation. Taking a hard look at the economic value of efforts to create human capital helps people see where best to invest their resources in education to achieve its ideal--equalizing opportunity to build greater and enduring value for all. The evidence is quite clear that inequality in the development of human capabilities produces negative social and economic outcomes that can and should be prevented with investments in early childhood education, particularly targeted toward disadvantaged children and their families.

ACHIEVEMENT PLUS: A PARTNERSHIP TO TRANSFORM UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOLS

Wilder Foundation, February 2010

This brief describes Achievement Plus, a partnership between St. Paul Public Schools and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation to improve the academic achievement of low-income children. Developed in 1997, Achievement Plus integrates the school community, families, and the resources of public and private organizations to support improved student achievement. Dayton's Bluff, the partnership's flagship school, has achieved remarkable success through this community schools approach – but it has also suffered setbacks brought on by cutbacks in services and changes in leadership. For some, this has brought the realization that, not only is it extremely difficult to turn around a low-performing school, but schools must work equally hard to sustain this improvement.