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A PROBLEM CHILD NO MORE:
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LIMELIGHT ON LITERACY:
Baptist Hill students benefit from a committed team of educators.

THROUGH EDUCATION CAN COME CHANGE:
Talking with College of Charleston Professor Diane Cudahy.
Dean’s Message and Director’s Message

Goals of the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education

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How National Standards Will Change America’s Schools

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Understanding the Value of Fun, Engaging Afterschool Programs:
A conversation with former U.S. Department of Education Chief Counselor Tony Peterson.

Through Education Can Come Change:
Talking with College of Charleston Professor Diane Cudahy
Dear Educator,

This is a time of great excitement and change at the College of Charleston. The School of Education, Health, and Human Performance is pleased to offer two new master’s degree programs – the Master of Arts in Teaching in the Performing Arts and the M.Ed. in Teaching, Learning, and Advocacy. And, the College’s strategic plan has been approved. In part, the plan represents a renewed commitment to diversity, personalized education and international learning opportunities for the students.

In this time of cutbacks and limited funding, we are grateful that some individuals and organizations continue to contribute to our scholarship funds and departmental programs. Our own Center for Partnerships to Improve Education is currently being reinvented to reflect the changing needs of the PreK–12 students, and teachers in the Charleston (S.C.) area. We are fortunate, in the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, to be hiring new professors for the 2010–2011 school year. These new faculty members are vitally important to our future as we continue to build our outstanding teacher education and health and human performance programs. Our professors are conducting research in significant areas of education and health; many of these faculty members include undergraduate and graduate students in research studies.

I am proud to share with you this fourth issue of our Center for Partnerships to Improve Education magazine, with articles that focus on local, state and national school-improvement issues. As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Enjoy reading, and feel free to contact me at welchf@cofc.edu.

Sincerely,

Frances C. Welch
Dean of the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance

about this issue

Each year for the past four, the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education at the College of Charleston has produced a magazine that brings together information about, and a variety of points of view on, a topic that is particularly relevant to educators. The theme this year is the student learner and school achievement.

The following is a partial list of some of the authors and subject matter that appear in this issue.

Dan Kindlon, psychologist and Harvard University professor, explores gender differences between boys and girls, and discusses the ways in which those differences relate to student achievement.

Martha Bireda, a counselor, speech pathologist and professor, reflects on the ways in which the level of social and emotional health of students impacts achievement.

Juanita Middleton, who is a South Carolina school principal, shares her first-person account of turning around low-performing schools and students.

Terry Peterson, an expert on educational policy and afterschool programs, explains how afterschool programs support the learning interests of students.

Diaree Guibah, a professor of education at the College of Charleston, shares her passion for teaching.

Please let us know if our articles are helpful, and feel free to suggest topics of interest that we might explore in the future. You can contact me at egelsonp@cofc.edu.

Sincerely,

Paula E. Egelson
Director, Center for Partnerships to Improve Education

GOALS OF THE CENTER FOR PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

The Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE) is a consortium of educators, school districts, business and civic leaders, and communities collaborating to strengthen the educational outcomes of students in South Carolina. Located in the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance of the College of Charleston, CPIE was established in 2005 to address improvement of PreK–12 education in South Carolina. There are three strands associated with the partnerships – Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Outreach.

CPIE’s goals are to:

• improve performance and reduce the drop-out rates of students.
• increase enrollment of minority and low-income students in institutions of higher learning.
• prepare youth for employment in the 21st century workforce.
• re-engage disaffected students in education.
• educate teacher candidates to work effectively in low-performing schools and motivate them to seek employment in such schools.
• establish expectations, incentives and professional development for teachers to make a long-term commitment to work in low-performing schools.
• improve understanding in higher education and businesses of the issues limiting urban and rural students’ futures and identify ways to address these issues.

Currently we work with Baptist Hill High School, Berkeley Alternative School, Clark Academy and Memminger Elementary School.

We welcome your inquiries. For more information on the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education, call us or visit our website.

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In the late 1990s, there was a backlash to the ‘girl crisis’ as educators began noticing that boys were falling behind girls academically. The new hypothesis was that teachers and administrators were not sensitive to boys’ needs and that, in fact, schools were designed more to accommodate girls’ needs than boys. In this era, books emerged such as Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys and The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men.

Boys Need to Move to Learn

Dan Kindlon (Harvard University) specializes in behavioral problems of children and adolescents, and has written several books about gender and achievement. Two of his more popular books are Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys and Alpha Girls: Understanding the New-American Girl and How She is Changing the World. Kindlon says that boys do develop more slowly than girls, and that is okay. He also says that boys learn best when they are free to move around a bit rather than being forced to sit still at their desks. To teachers who like to have students work quietly at desks, boys’ need for movement may be seen as problematic.

“In general, boys are more active than girls when they are in groups. Teachers need to view extra energy and activity as normal—not as disorder,” says Kindlon, who notes that a teacher’s main thought is usually centered on “crowd control.” So when boys start “to act up,” it is a teacher’s natural tendency to squash the behavior. Therefore, boys are usually more swiftly and more severely disciplined than girls.

Single-Gender Classrooms

According to Kindlon, boys who live in poverty-stricken neighborhoods do not tend to perform as well academically as boys in more affluent neighborhoods. This low-performing group is one that gets targeted as educators continue to strive to close the achievement gap between the poor and the rich. Many school administrators in South Carolina have looked at research that shows that boys and girls demonstrate vastly different learning styles because of hardwired brain differences, a fact that makes teaching the sexes inefficient when they are mixed together. Therefore, some parents, administrators and educators have asked, “Why not just educate boys and girls separately?”

David Chaddow, the nation’s first coordinator for single-gender education at the state level, has worked with more than 300 schools in South Carolina to help administrators design single-gender programs as well as train teachers in gender differences and classroom implications. Some parents love the idea of sending their sons to a school that enables them to grow in a competitive environment since, traditionally, boys inherently like competition. But, of course, this competitive drive does not exist in all boys, so for a boy who dislikes competition, an all-boys school or classroom may spell disaster.

Ultimately, Kindlon says that when parents are deciding which school to send their child to, they should research the faculty’s teaching quality and years of experience. These are the factors that will provide a well-rounded education for a student.

“Sending your child to a school where the teachers know what they’re doing is the most important thing,” says Kindlon. “It’s good school is better than a single-gender school.”

Boys and Girls

Folks who support single-gender schools recognize that boys and girls are different. And while it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the differences between the genders, it is also important to identify and appreciate the similarities between boys and girls. For instance, all children should be encouraged to nurture their creative, compassionate and playful spirits. Unfortunately, however, sexual stereotyping starts very early in life, and it can impact the way in which children develop.

“Think about if you were at a dinner party and your friend’s five-year-old daughter came down the stairs, dressed in her daddy’s clothes. Wouldn’t guests think that was adorable?” asks Kindlon. “But if your friend’s five-year-old son came down, dressed in his mommy’s clothes, I doubt guests would find it cute. The sight may even be discouraging because, as a society, we tend to view dressing up in an opposite sex parent’s clothing as acceptable and normal for a girl but unacceptable and distasteful for a boy.”

This stereotyping extends into other areas as well. For instance, Kindlon said that after one of his lectures, a woman in the audience shared with him a personal story about sexual stereotyping. She said that she and her six-year-old son were in line at a cafeteria and her son was carrying a doll. The cafeteria worker asked her son, “Aren’t you too old to be playing with dolls?” And the mother replied, “He’s just practicing to be a father some day.”

“That was a great response,” says Kindlon. Even those parents who are not homophobic often try to get their children to behave, dress, talk, or play in a certain way because they fear that if their children do not conform to societal stereotypes, then son or daughter may be ridiculed by peers.

Dads and Daughters

While children tend to – and need to – identify with their same-sex parent throughout their adolescence, research shows that the interaction girls have with their fathers in elementary school profoundly affects their self-esteem, academic confidence and personal growth. The good news is that, according to Kindlon, fathers now take their daughters more seriously than they did in generations past. For instance, these days dads are teaching girls sports teams.

“I think that something that has changed a lot in societies,” says Kindlon. “Fathers encourage their daughters in sports and in academics more now. That’s where girls get a lot of their early self-esteem – from their fathers.”

Kindlon says that, especially in the early grades, it is easy for boys to feel doomed to failure as they observe what is going on around them. They see that boys are yelled at more frequently and punished more severely than girls. They see girls learning to read and write more easily. Plus, they may be wondering, “Where are all the male teachers?” Only 15% of all elementary school teachers are men and of those, most are teaching fifth or sixth grades – not the early grades like kindergarten, first or second grade.

“It would be helpful to have more male teachers in the elementary classrooms,” says Kindlon. “That would be great for a lot of boys.”

Expect the Best

“Expectations play a huge part in what our kids will do,” says Kindlon. “If you expect kids to act a certain way, they generally will.”

Kindlon recalls talking to the mother of an African-American student who was really struggling in school.

She told Kindlon, “Until my son’s teacher believes he’s smart, he doesn’t have a chance.”

“She’s right,” says Kindlon, who adds that the expectations teachers and parents hold for a child play a huge role in the child’s future accomplishments.

“Kids with no expectations have no hope,” says Kindlon. With high expectations, however, kids have no limits.

References:


References:


References:


Discipline and Equity

Bireda, a counselor, author and former consultant for the Center for Partnerships to Improve Education (CPIE), provides technical assistance to at-risk schools related to closing the achievement gap and discipline gaps. Last year, as a visiting associate professor for the College of Charleston, Bireda provided assistance to the staff of a predominantly African-American school with under-achieving students. As a research associate for the AsiaResa Research Institute in Tokyo, Japan, Bireda’s duties include researching, consulting and publishing as they related to cultural literacy, cultural preservation, media and values formation. In the past, Bireda has worked as a non-teacher coordinator at the Southeastern Equity Center in Miami, Florida. While there, she provided technical assistance related to race, gender and cultural diversity to local school districts, and state and national educational agencies. Bireda has also spent a great deal of time writing and speaking about equity issues as they relate to gender, race and empowerment in school communities. Bireda says that the disciplining of students remains an area in education that is not adequately addressed, particularly the disciplining of African American males. In fact, student discipline is a symptom of a much greater problem in schools – one that is connected to a student’s self-worth, level of motivation and ultimate success in school.

In Bireda’s book Cultures in Conflict, she discusses the current issues associated with student discipline, their sources, and how school administrators, teachers and parents can work together to create a culturally sensitive school. She includes ethical questions for educators to consider, approaches to ensuring that discipline events do not escalate in the classroom, and guidelines for how a school community can work together to take action.

Learn from the Past, Look to the Future

Every positive, meaningful relationship requires trust. Trust between husband and wife. Trust between doctor and patient. Trust between parent and child. Trust between friends. Trust between teacher and student is also crucial. Of course, the development of trust takes time – and it may take even more time for angry students who have endured unpleasant experiences in school in the past. Bireda says that teachers need to work hard to create positive experiences for these frustrated and irritated students.

In order to create positive experiences, it helps to find out what made the student’s experience negative in the first place. What pushed their buttons? Why were they frustrated? Also, teachers should ask about the student’s favorite teachers. Usually a student bonds with a teacher because of the way he or she made the student feel. Typically, students will gravitate towards an instructor who is sensitive, gentle and caring. Not surprisingly, students who feel nurtured, understood and encouraged do not tend to act out in class.

After learning about the student’s past, teachers should focus on how to make the future different.

“Some teachers have the student’s referral slip ready with his name on it when he walks in the door,” says Bireda. “That’s precisely the wrong attitude.”

Each school year – as well as each school day – should be viewed as a new chance to learn.

“A student [might have] had a bad day yesterday. Maybe he didn’t eat breakfast or he stayed up too late or he had a fight with his sister before coming to school,” says Bireda. “There’s no reason to hold the previous day’s actions against the student. Today is a new day.”

Critical Reflection and Cognitive Restructuring

Bireda’s book Cultures in Conflict is about eliminating racial profiling. Even though it is 2010 and we would like to think that this live in an era where all racial problems have been resolved, realistically, we need to acknowledge that problems still exist.

“People are concerned about being labeled a racist if they identify racial disparities in a school system. But it’s important to identify the problem so that it can be addressed,” says Bireda. “If you have a wound, you need to look at it and give attention to it. Otherwise, it’s not going to heal on its own.”

Most of us have developed some outdated assumptions about the world around us. Teachers need to examine their unconscious racial beliefs that may be hindering their ability to foster a positive learning environment for students. Until erroneous beliefs are released, growth cannot occur.

Bireda thinks that all teachers should engage in critical reflection and cognitive restructuring before ever stepping foot into a classroom – especially an inner city classroom. She says that so often “problem students” are seen as kids who cannot learn – or who refuse to learn because they reject help. Bireda maintains that teachers who work with this population of students need to trust in two things:

• The student can learn no matter where he or she lives or what kind of home life he or she has.

• They [the teachers] are capable of teaching these students.

Zero Tolerance

Bireda notes that schools across the nation have adopted a “zero tolerance” policy to manage and control student behavior. Zero tolerance policies are most often applied in schools with predominately African-American and Latino student populations.

The plan has backfired, however, in schools where the administration has extended the policy to include every “intolerance” imaginable. Educators in suburban schools don’t tend to adhere to zero tolerance policies as much, instead, from the very beginning of the school year, they hold higher academic expectations for students. Interestingly, when students are expected to perform in a high capacity, they rise to the challenge. Students in predominantly African-American and Latino schools, however, are not expected to achieve in the same manner. Inevitably, lower expectations are met with poorer academic and behavioral outcomes.

“You can see a real difference in how students respond based on the expectations that are set,” notes Bireda. “At the start of the school year, teachers set the tone. They may say, ‘I won’t tolerate any nonsense. You can’t do this. You can’t do that.’ Or they may say, ‘In this school, we are kind and respectful of one another. This is how we behave.’”

“The first speech fosters low expectations,” says Bireda, “whereas the second speech spells out high expectations in an encouraging way.”

Where is Culturally Responsive Instruction?

In fall 2009, researchers with the non-profit firm Public Agenda and Learning Point Associates conducted a survey of nearly 900 teachers in order to learn about their job satisfaction. The survey found that 40 percent of teachers across the United States are “disheartened” about their jobs and it often has to do with students’ discipline and behavior issues in the classroom.

Bireda notes that teachers are under a tremendous amount of stress these days – especially in light of the federal requirements. Teachers only have so much instructional time and they have to make sure students perform at a certain level.

“In this educational climate, teachers have very little tolerance for even minor offenses,” says Bireda. “A student might just be acting silly, but teachers feel the need to put a lid on anything that takes away from their instructional time.”

Unfortunately, it seems that federal requirements have exaggerated racial disparity in discipline because instructors are not afforded the time to implement learning styles that are conducive to other cultures.

“Because of the pressures teachers feel a crunch to get things done,” says Bireda. “As a result, culturally responsive instruction has gone out the window.”

Why Groups are Great

Bireda says that African-American students really benefit from collaborative group activities because they come from a collective, oral culture. Group activities foster a sense of belonging as students interact with and depend on one another.

“They feel empowered when they are given a project and are asked to come up with a creative solution,” says Bireda. “Students enjoy the freedom of peer coaching and helping one another. Plus, they have fun when they interact with their classmates.”

Reference

In terms of academic achievement, America’s children are not progressing well when compared with other nations. This is a problem, given that all students must be prepared to compete not only with their American peers, but also with students from around the world. Whether or not America retains its competitive edge will depend on our first nationally coordinated attempt to make sure all students are college and workplace ready,” says Marco Muñoz, evaluation specialist with Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. “As long as there is true quality on the national standards, it will move our educational reform efforts forward and make (America’s students) internationally competitive. There is no work more important than preparing our students to succeed in a global economy.”

Keeping Expectations High
Porcher Kirkland, a sixth-grade teacher at Springfield Elementary School in Charleston, South Carolina, believes that there is a critical need for a higher level of streamlined curriculum accountability. “Education today needs to maintain high standards for all students,” says Kirkland. “We cannot lower the bar because we feel some students have some type of emotional or cognitive factor that may prevent them from reaching that standard.”

Kirkland also maintains that leaders and participants in education should decide what knowledge and skills college and high school graduates need in order to be successful and productive world citizens. “We need to have an honest discussion about what it takes to be considered a productive and successful world citizen,” says Kirkland.

Pros and Cons to Implementing National Standards
Dot Harper, associate superintendent of Asheboro City Schools in Asheboro, North Carolina, notes the positives and negatives to implementing national standards. “On the ‘pro’ side, national standards can increase expectations for all our students, point the direction for raising rigor and relevance in all our classrooms, and provide continuity in educational content for students and teachers who are increasingly mobile,” says Harper. “The process of developing national standards could motivate educators to analyze the skills and conceptual understandings that our students will need in order to be successful in yet undetermined professions using undiscovered technologies. They could help us ensure that students are given the support necessary to master these skills and understandings.”

Harper points out, however, that national standards could become rigid and unyielding if they are not treated as “living” entities that would be revised and revised as needed.

“If, for any reason, the standards were developed at a level of low expectations, skills, or understandings, they would be difficult for even gifted teachers to overcome,” says Harper. “This would condemn students to classes with less rigor and relevance than we currently expect.”

Additionally, with the implementation of national content standards, Arlen Gullickson, a retired professor of educational research and evaluation at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, is concerned we will lose much of our diversity and reduce the heterogeneity of students. “I think the reduction in variance will be due primarily by ‘dumbing down’ learning of brighter students, and focusing on those most in need for basic content,” says Gullickson. “Probably the biggest loss will be in student interest, not because the standards are bad but because there will be little incentive to achieve them.”

Guidelines as Opposed to Achievement Mandates
Gullickson says that he thinks a strength of education in the U.S. is its diversity with different schools and teachers contributing in different ways. “For instance, I grew up in an agriculture-centered town. If I were teaching chemistry today it would touch on the wide use of herbicides and pesticides used regularly by farmers. I don’t know of any urban districts that would find such linkages to be helpful,” says Gullickson. “My point is that local teachers need to emphasize what is relevant to students in that locale.”

National standards could motivate educators to analyze the skills and understandings. “The process of developing national standards will vary. The hope is that national standards will be framed by varying levels of goal clarification, alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment, and/or the workplace? he asks. “If the answer is no, the national standards will be another good idea that never landed on solid terrain.”

Harper points out that national standards should raise the bar for states in need of quality improvement. “The Student Evaluation Standards (2003) in terms of streamlined curriculum accountability. “Education today needs to maintain high standards for all students,” says Kirkland. “We cannot lower the bar because we feel some students have some type of emotional or cognitive factor that may prevent them from reaching that standard.”

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Raising Expectations and Instructional Quality

“The national standards will give us an opportunity to raise expectations and instructional quality at all levels of the educational system,” says Muñoz. “Our students deserve the opportunity to graduate from high school with the set of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the increasingly demanding college and/or workplace environment. As long as we keep the local level decentralization in the teaching and learning process, we can expect more benefits than risks when implementing national standards in the nation. We need to keep a healthy day-to-day decision-making process to where it matters the most – the local school level!”

Muñoz thinks it would be wise for the national movement to advocate including other essential areas of schooling, such as social-emotional learning and civic engagement. He says that it is critical that the national standards and corresponding assessments promote a whole-child approach to education that extends beyond academics. The broader framework suggests by Muñoz weaves together the threads that connect not only reading and mathematics, but also the important social-emotional, civic and moral connections that tend to be fragmented in a more test-based, accountability-oriented approach.

Muñoz acknowledges that he can see how educators might oppose federal efforts to make state adoption of any standards mandatory or as a condition for federal aid. Therefore, he says that adoption of these proposed national standards by the states should be voluntary.

“Stakeholder involvement is so critical in all stages of this process,” says Muñoz. “Without true ownership and buy in, the national standards will be another compliance issue for districts and schools.”

Giving All Children the Same Quality Education

Richard Gentry, author, national reading consultant, and former professor of reading from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, says that he is in favor of “higher, clearer, and more common core state standards by the states should be voluntary. Any standards mandatory or as a condition for federal aid.”

Gentry maintains that there should not be huge discrepancies in standards in wealthy versus poor districts or schools, nor should there be huge differences in standards from one state to the next. He says that every child in America should have access to the same quality education.

“National and common core state standards are intended to help put states on the road to quality educational reform and achieve equity. If implemented properly, I believe nationally backed common core state standards could help states develop and implement high-quality curricular improvements,” says Gentry. “Standards are good when they are not politicized. They are good if they are backed by funding - resources such as textbooks for schools and opportunities for quality staff development to assist teachers in implementing the standards. National and state standards and assessments are not good, however, when they stifle creativity and individuality and when they create bad practices such as teaching to the test. I'm optimistic that the state lead effort to create common core state standards is a step in the right direction.”

Changing the Way Schools Work

If the national standards and assessments are passed, Harper predicts that the effect will be felt differently across states, districts, schools and classrooms. In states or districts that have begun the work of evaluating the core curriculum, developing essential standards, and developing appropriate assessment prototypes, the process of adapting to new standards will be familiar.

“In this case, the obvious difficulty in adjusting to national standards will depend upon the degree of similarity between national and local/state curriculum and assessments,” says Harper. “If the content, relevance, and rigor of the local/state curriculum varies greatly from national standards, dramatic changes will need to be made in areas such as professional development for teachers and administrators, textbook/resource use for students, and course requirements for graduation.” Harper also notes that record keeping at all levels will need to be updated to meet new standards.

“States and/or districts will need to develop crosswalk or ‘bridging’ curriculum and assessment instruments so that students won’t get caught in a knowledge gap when moving from one curriculum to another,” says Harper. “The cost of transition from one set of standards to another could be felt from the state to the classroom level, depending upon the degree of change that will need to be implemented. That said, if these changes result in more appropriate, more relevant instruction that better prepares students for global competition, the effort will be worth it.”

Kirkland says that the impact of national standards and assessments is dependent on the implementation of administrators and the buy-in of educators. “National standards: can be our first step towards a global education philosophy,” says Kirkland. “It is all dependent on implementation, financial burdens, high levels of realistic curriculum achievement, and educator buy-in.”

Dramatically Improving Teaching and Learning

Common standards will provide educators at the state, district and school level with clarity and direction about what children need to know and should be able to do. In particular, the national standards will align the curriculum to what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in college and the workplace.

An important outcome, based on the commonality of standards, is that the process will allow states to more readily share best practices that significantly improve teaching and learning.

“Effective collaboration in teaching is one of the most important in school drivers of student achievement,” says Muñoz, who notes that the best schools in the world focus tirelessly on increasing the quality of teaching practices by using professional learning communities of teachers.

“As a result, the levels of collaboration and common learning will increase as never before since we will now have an authentic national discussion about improving teaching and learning,” notes Muñoz. “I know that rigorous standards are critical to student achievement, but standards alone do not transform teaching and learning as we originally believed when the standard-based reform began in the 1990s. In that regard, it will continue to be true that only at the local school level - with administrators, teachers, students, and parents working together - will real educational progress be made.”

The Proper Implementation of Standards

If the national standards and assessment are approved, agreeing on common core standards and being adopted by states or passing a bill - even a good bipartisan bill - is just the first step. States, districts and schools will need resources and funding to implement national standards. There also has to be some flexibility and local autonomy. Districts and schools will need flexibility in order to respond to standards in ways that reflect their particular realities. Finally, any standards document will need to undergo vast review and feedback regarding soundness and practicality.

Gentry says that he knows of a student in Florida who read on grade level and made all A’s in reading throughout his third grade year but was slated to fail third grade because he failed the state reading test. “The student had a mild learning disability and was not a good test taker, and the test was administered improperly for his particular circumstances. Although his reading was fine, the state test did not measure it. His parents have since enrolled their son in a private school where he is succeeding.

“Without a map, we may get lost. But good teaching is what gets us to the destination,” says Gentry. “National standards should help all children go where they want to go and fulfill the American dream.”

“Without a Map, We May Get Lost, But Good Teaching is What Gets Us to the Destination,” says Gentry.
How Juanita Middleton has made a career out of transforming schools with low-performing students into high-reaching achievers.

by Kelly Bowers

Juanita Middleton has worked diligently for more than 40 years in the field of education. She has been a classroom teacher, a principal and a principal coach in rural, urban and inner city school districts in New York and South Carolina.

“I love my job. I love being in school. I love how school is a community of learners,” declares Middleton.

Middleton grew up in McCollenville, South Carolina, during a time when African Americans did not receive the same state dollars for school as the whites did. She attended first and second grade in a Masonic Lodge - a building used by the Freemasonry organization - and a white boarding schools house for the rest of her primary education. Middleton knew at a young age that she wanted to become a teacher.

From Student to Teacher to Principal

Middleton graduated from Benedict College in South Carolina with a degree in business education. Her major in business education was followed by her graduation from the College of Charleston with a degree in business education. She then went on to get her master’s degree in business education.

In 2009, Middleton left CPIE and accepted the principalship at struggling North Charleston High School where she finds it challenging to work with a large number of new faculty (new teachers made up more than 70 percent of the North Charleston staff).

Middleton encourages teachers to develop a personal relationship with their students in order to better understand each student’s individual needs. When Middleton conducts teacher evaluations, she checks to see that the teaching methods they are using match the students’ needs.

Despite varying levels of classroom experience, Middleton suggests that teachers do all they can to continue growing professionally throughout their careers. She thinks that it is important that they drop old lesson plans and adopt new ones each year so that the material evolves with the ever changing student body.

“Teachers need to find the nucleus of possibilities,” remarks Middleton. “Then they need to expand it.”

A Unique Student Body

The students in North Charleston live different lives than do their peers in more affluent communities. For instance, North Charleston students hold down jobs to help support their families. They babysit for their brothers and sisters after school, and they cook dinner for their families. Some are responsible for getting themselves to school each morning. The students are of different ethnicities and represent a variety of socio-economic levels - from low to moderate - which means that a high percentage of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Some students are the sole income for their households, one-third of them are classified as special education students, and housing and transportation to and from school often are issues for them. Teachers who are new to the area are not accustomed to working in this type of setting.

New teachers need to understand the pressures and responsibilities these students face outside of school so that they can better appreciate their achievements in school. Middleton offers seminars based on the various needs of the students in the area as well as on their diverse backgrounds.

Connecting with Students

There are several unique programs available at North Charleston that have been designed to address the needs of their diverse student body. An example is the B.S. 9.5.10.5 concept, which gives students who are falling behind and are at risk of dropping out an opportunity to complete two grades in one year. So, for instance, if I would give the at-risk students in eighth grade an accelerated eighth and ninth grade in one year, making them tenth graders the following year. The program offers two English classes and two math classes. It allows students who suffer academically, behaviorally or socially the opportunity to excel. The program has two parent advocates, its own counselor and a social worker who work together to keep at-risk students in school.

Middleton has also helped develop more successful students in North Charleston through her connectedness with the student population. She reviews the curriculum and lesson plans of her teachers. She visits classrooms on a regular basis and looks at teacher evaluations, assessments and data in order to suggest student placements.

In addition, Middleton has instituted a few new programs this year. One is called the Cougar Academic Camp, which was created for athletes. It is coordinated by the literacy specialist and math department chairperson. She has a strict “no pass, no play” policy in her high school. Students are required to be punctual and complete all of their homework assignments on time. The camp is run by eight teachers and one teacher-coordinator, and meets for an hour, three times a week. College-bound seniors receive SAT prep work and participation in youth service activities help the athletes become well rounded, which helps them on their college applications. An academic camp is also offered for any student who needs help.

To highlight her students’ numerous successes, Middleton’s parent advocates publish a newsletter every nine weeks and send the reports to local churches. To help motivate students, she also helps a “student of the week” for each grade level. These students are recognized for academic achievement, citizenship and strength of character.

Changes on the Horizon

Middleton has many big plans for both the students and the faculty at North Charleston High School. Because she believes all teachers need to continue to learn, Middleton plans to require professional development of the teachers in her school. She also wants to close the achievement gap by increasing literacy and math levels.

As for the student body, Middleton envisions a school that is free from disruption and behavior problems, and that means implementing a set of rules that the student body will follow. She is also a big proponent of using language such as “us, we, team” rather than “me, myself.” It helps foster a sense of community and school cohesiveness.

“After all,” says Middleton, “we’re in this together.”

Middleton has made a career out of turning around schools for the betterment of the students as well as the surrounding communities. As a child growing up in the 1950s, Middleton was denied opportunities to receive or participate in a high quality education. Because of her experiences, she has dedicated herself to giving back and sharing.

“I do it for those who deserve the love and care that most of us never got,” says Middleton simply. “For the students.”
Improving literacy means you get a better quality student,” says Winbush. “Students are able to participate and give feedback. Student interest increases.”

Coming Together

Students at Baptist Hill High School share their campus with middle school students, who attend classes in the Middle School/Academy (MBA), which is comprised of modern, modular units located just outside the main building. One of the most conspicuous aspects of the academy is its teacher-learner structure, which is almost entirely either male or a female instructor, or all female with a female co-instructor. In an effort to form a more cohesive school community, during the 2010-2011 school year, the middle school staff and students will move into a new wing attached to the high school. This juxtaposition

Baptist Hill students benefit from a committed team of educators.

by Alexandra Sullivan

Choosing to succeed rather than hiding

success to chance is the battle cry of James Winbush, principal of Baptist Hill Middle/High School (BHMHS), located in Hollywood, South Carolina. Convincing his staff and students to not only embrace this notion, but also to take steps to realize that success is an evolution, has finally started to take hold. Now that Winbush has student achievement and development as the central focus, and has teachers on board to take steps to accomplish that, the rest of staff support is strong.

The students at Baptist Hill Middle/High School watch their teachers and administrators raise the bar on a daily basis, and they are meeting the new expectations with a strong, steady movement toward the top. Winbush’s spotlight on literacy, the teacher’s commitment and the partners’ support make a successful combination. As Winbush continues to work with Baptist Hill, his battle cry of, “Success happens by choice, not by chance” will, no doubt, continue.

Who are the Partners?

CPE staff work to improve students’ level of education achievement by streamlining correspondence and focusing on responses during regularly held meetings. CPE staff also continue to develop and strengthen new, quality partnerships in the community.

Communities in Schools (CIS), located at Baptist Hill, is a non-profit dropout prevention/stay in school program. Its mission is to encourage all youth to stay in school by connecting the best community resources with the needs of students, their families and schools.

Katrina Wright, CIS’s BHMHS representative, collaborates daily with community partners, teachers, students and administration. Currently, Wright is working with Stephanie Smalls (counselor) and the guidance department to coordinate a spring career fair.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), which has been located on The Citadel campus since 1999, is a federally funded grant program designed to prepare middle school students and their parents for the process of planning for college, admission to college and academic success in college. The academic portion of this partnership was designed to build on a concept developed and implemented by the University of South Carolina, which included Saturday Academies and a summer institute.

A dual credit program at Trident Technical College (TTC) allows high school students to take college courses for which the student can earn both college and high school credits simultaneously. Tuition is free for eligible students, and free books and materials are provided. Further, the test to determine academic skills for enrollment is now being offered in both pen and paper and computer-based format. With the permission of their high schools or home school associations, qualified students may enroll in college courses at TTC that will be applied to the 24 units of credit required for a state high school diploma. Successful completion of these courses also allows high school students the opportunity to make progress toward their college education before finishing high school.

Addleston Library, located at the College of Charleston, is the newest Baptist Hill community partner. The library staff has worked with honor students at another school in the community, helping them to successfully pass the Advanced Placement

choosing school is to have a committed team of educators.

LIMELIGHT ON LITERACY

Baptist Hill students benefit from a committed team of educators.
The way students spend their time after school dismissal varies across communities. While some students stay after school to participate in a sports team or an extracurricular school-sponsored activity, others head to a job or go home. Years ago, many students went home to a parent who might have helped them start on their homework. For the past 20 years, however, with a growing number of full-time working mothers and fathers, as well as single parent households, the house is often empty until 5:00 p.m. or later, and children are left unsupervised for several hours.

The Afterschool Alliance commissioned a 2009 study called “America After 3 p.m.” and found that each afternoon across the U.S., 15 million children are left unsupervised after school. Research has shown that American children are most prone to engage in deviant behavior between the hours of 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. These are also the peak hours for youth crime and victimization. Students who have nowhere to go and nothing to do, and who lack adult supervision after school, are the ones who are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, engage in sexual activity and perform poorly in school.

21st-Century Community Learning Centers

In the mid-1990s, the government took action in the hopes of keeping students safe, healthy and intellectually engaged. Congress established the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers in 1995 as a demonstration project. The centers provided academic enrichment opportunities for children during non-school hours – particularly for those students who attended high-poverty and low-performing schools. The primary goals of these afterschool initiatives were to:

• provide supervision to children of working families.
• support child development.
• provide enrichment and extra learning opportunities.
• promote youth development.
• prevent risky behaviors.
• improve academic achievement.
• decrease gaps in academic achievement.

“Up until 1997, the small demonstration project included only 10 schools funded by a $1 million federal appropriation, and yet there were approximately 90,000 public schools nationwide, 40-50,000 of which were serving fairly large percentages of low-income students,” explains Terry Peterson, a College of Charleston senior fellow and chair of the board of the National Afterschool Alliance. Peterson was the person who led the expansion and growth of 21st Century Community Learning Centers during his tenure as chief counselor of the U.S. Department of Education under Education Secretary Richard Riley. “We wondered how we would put a dent in providing expanded learning opportunities after school and build community learning partnerships,” says Peterson, who is director of the National Afterschool Community Learning Network at the College of Charleston.

The Demand for Afterschool Programs

It was a task that seemed daunting, but the administration felt that it was crucial to develop quality afterschool programs for three reasons.

1. Offering students afterschool programs enabled them to expand their horizons and “give them a chance to learn something that they were interested in,” says Peterson.

2. With the growing prevalence of working family households and single working parents, parents were left scurrying around trying to figure out what they could do with their children for those several hours of the day.

3. The statistics regarding afterschool crime and victimization in children was startling. Because these three areas affected more than just educators, parents and community members also weighed in on the matter.

“We held meetings all over the country to explain the importance of this initiative best practice from research,” says Peterson. “We spoke to educators, youth groups, parent groups and community organizations. The response was astounding. Applications kept coming in. We always had far more quality applications than money, which showed that the demand was real, the need was imminent and higher federal appropriations were justified.”

In 1997, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers began a dramatic expansion and became one of the nation’s fastest scale-up of nationwide education initiatives in America. Astonishingly, according to Peterson, between 1997 and 2002, 10 schools grew to 10,000 schools, each with two to six community

Understanding the Value of Fun, Engaging Afterschool Programs

BY CHRYSTY HEITGER EWING
**Why Afterschool Programs Fail**

Peterson says that there is a definite sequence of results that occur when students attend quality afterschool programs.

1. **Attendance increases.**
2. **Students receive extra help in core skill areas so their grades improve.**
3. **Because students become more engaged in the school day, their work habits improve as do their attitudes about school.** Consequently, students are less likely to get into trouble both during the school day and after school.
4. **Test scores go up.**

Just as the “demand was real and the need imminent” for afterschool programs in 1995, the same holds true today. Although the “America After 3 p.m.” study found that there are more than a million more young people involved in afterschool programs in 2009 as opposed to 2004, still not nearly enough afterschool programs exist. Moreover, as a result of the economic downturn, more than a quarter of our nation’s children are left alone and unsupervised after school.

The good news is that parents are big supporters of afterschool programs. In fact, the parents of 18 million students indicated that they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available (The Afterschool Alliance).

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**The Future of Afterschool Programs**

Because demographics change (more working families and single parents, for example) and more expectations are placed on students to succeed in school, Peterson predicts that school administrators and community leaders will feel pressure to provide more afterschool learning time. By transforming schools into community learning centers, children will be safer and more motivated to learn. How that all comes to fruition, however, can be greatly enhanced by increased financial and policy support from each state with the help of the federal government. For example, new federal recovery monies for Title I, Title I School Improvement, Race to the Top, and Local Innovation Fund can be used, in part, to expand learning time after school, on weekends and during summers. In addition, the monies can be used to get families and communities involved in the business of turning schools around and accelerating their rate of improvement. Local educators, and parent and community leaders should use some of these monies for afterschool and summer learning, thus transforming schools into community learning centers.

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The good news is that parents are big supporters of afterschool programs. In fact, the parents of 18 million students indicated that they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available (The Afterschool Alliance). Parents want to feel assured that their children are safe, and if their children are improving socially and academically—and having fun to boot—that is every parent’s dream.

One fine example of a successful afterschool program in Charleston, South Carolina, is Wings, a non-profit educational organization that helps children develop social and emotional intelligence through fresh, fun afterschool programs.

**References**


Note: Visit the Afterschool Alliance website (www.afterschoolalliance.org) for examples of outstanding afterschool programs across the country. For interactive state-by-state results, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm

**Exciting and Inviting Afterschool Programs**

The focus of afterschool programs is continually evolving. These days, middle and high school students have a chance to engage in work study programs, internships, and service learning projects. Plus, students come into contact with a variety of people—ranging from college students to adult professionals to senior citizens. In addition, in some communities, after school, and community learning center opportunities have expanded to include students’ low-income families, and also parents who have limited education and/or are struggling to learn English. These programs also provide pathways to GEDs, and technical and college courses.

“It can be tough to be excited about school when you’re working two jobs and you come home whipped,” Peterson says.
College of Charleston faculty members lead fascinating and purposeful lives. Diane Cudahy, an assistant professor in the School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, is no exception. Her mantra is, “Through education can come change.” As a child of the 1960s, a participant in the Civil Rights Movement and a believer in equal opportunity for all children, Cudahy has lived her beliefs in a variety of ways.

Originally from New Jersey, Cudahy received a B.S. degree in early childhood education from the College of New Jersey, a master’s degree in leadership in higher education from the University of Tennessee–Knoxville, and a Ph.D. in cultural studies from the University of Tennessee–Knoxville. Cudahy has worked as a primary teacher in mostly high-poverty schools in New Jersey and Michigan, and a coordinator of international programming at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville. Currently, she serves as an associate professor of education, the director of the Teaching Fellows Program (a scholarship program for top high school seniors who plan to become teachers), and the director of the M.Ed. program in teaching, learning, and advocacy at the College of Charleston.

Throughout her career, Cudahy has been driven by the belief that all children—regardless of race—are capable of advanced learning. Today, in her many roles at the College of Charleston, she states that her educational research is a reflection of her collected interests. They include the improvement of teachers through teacher education, not only what we teach prospective teachers but also how we teach them and what we ask of them. She believes—her belief is supported by research—that the teacher is the single most critical component in a child’s education. Currently, she is searching for ways to make prospective teachers more able and willing to choose to teach in difficult and challenging areas and schools.

Social justice is a term that Cudahy takes very seriously. Social justice in education, she believes, means promising all children the opportunities to reach their full potential. A commitment to social justice at the core of any teacher education program reveals its soul. She remarks that there is such a commitment at the College of Charleston.

Another term Cudahy strongly advocates for is educational accountability. She thinks that teachers should be able to show how their students learn and grow. If teachers are not able to demonstrate student growth, she says they should be relieved of their jobs. The problem with accountability, she adds, is that it tends to be interpreted through high-stakes testing, the ranking of schools and students, and the application of business- and assembly-line models to education. This has had a negative effect on students, making school sheer drudgery for some.

Cudahy admits that she is concerned about the plight of public education over the next ten years. She states that teachers are expected to fill far too many roles. In difficult economic times, education takes the hit financially, and the result can be seen in diminished resources and fewer teachers being assigned to schools. In addition, educators are held accountable for not just what happens in the classroom, but for society’s failures as well. She notes this undermines the very fabric of public education.

Currently, Cudahy devotes much of her time to the Teaching Fellows Program. These bright undergraduates are highly dedicated to their future careers in education and see themselves as leaders in their chosen profession. Cudahy views these students as motivated to learn more and do more, and proud to identify themselves as future teachers. As Cudahy reflects on the way in which future teachers are developed, she says that she sees two critical components to any successful program. First, the program must allow teacher candidates to have ample opportunities to examine their own beliefs and assumptions in light of their goal of effectively teaching all children. Second, it must encourage multiple opportunities to teach children and families in all their splendid and wonderful differences.

Diane Cudahy—master teacher, advocate for students and believer in social justice—can easily sum up what has driven her entire career. “There is an absolute feeling of joy I receive,” she says, “when I lead someone to learning.”