Pennsylvania Educational Leadership

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Educators impacting teaching and learning through leadership.

Pennsylvania Educational Leadership

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Pennsylvania Educational Leadership

Foreword

The articles in this issue of *Pennsylvania Education Leadership* promote the stated mission of the organization which is **Educators impacting teaching and learning through leadership.** Specifically, this issue focuses on current and relevant issues facing educators today: improving student achievement in mathematics, leveraging technology for instructional delivery, and promoting multiculturalism and diversity.

In the lead article *Kathryn Stoltzfus* chronicles her efforts to improve both achievement and self-efficacy in mathematics at the middle school level. She describes how the use of pre-teaching strategies prepared students for success with upcoming mathematical content.

The second article, by *John Ziegler,* examines the efforts of a school district to respond to 21st Century needs through planned and coordinated use of educational technologies. The author describes how the faculty, administration, vendors and consultants collaborated to change the infrastructure of the school in support of technology integration.

Approaching the use of technology from another perspective, *Cynthia Fuselier* addresses how the operation of its own cyber (virtual) school can both save district money and meet unique needs of students. She describes how a school district began with a pilot program that has evolved into a virtual "academy" using a blend of face-to-face and on-line instruction.

In the fourth article, the focus shifts to multiculturalism and diversity in schools. As a teacher educator *Gina Morrison* shares how she involves her pre-service teachers in hands-on activities designed to help them confront the issue of white privilege and explore its implications for their future teaching.

The final article, by *Parveen Ali* continues the emphasis on the role of schools in promoting multicultural awareness. The author traces the historical roles of Muslim Americans, argues for the importance of teaching about Islam in the public schools and offers curricular suggestions tied to educational standards.

We hope that you find the articles to be stimulating reading. Feel free to contact the authors about their work and ideas. If you have an idea for an article, please submit it for consideration.

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Effects of Pre-teaching on
Mathematics Achievement and Self-Efficacy

Kathryn Stoltzfus
Lower Dauphin School District

"I'm not good at math." There it was - a confession etched into paper with a pencil so darkly that the paper would surely tear if someone had tried to erase it. The admission, which was lacking in both capitalization and punctuation, displayed no attempt to retract the simple words. Just as harshly as it had been fixed on the paper, so had the belief been impressed upon the author and reinforced by years of negative experiences in math classrooms. On this muggy opening school day, most students had written paragraphs about their summer vacations, athletic accomplishments, or personal troubles and triumphs. However, Jason was warning me not to expect too much from him or I would be disappointed. If I would just be satisfied with his failing grades, we'd both have a great school year.

Student achievement in math education has been a national issue for decades. Policymakers, administrators, and teachers continually strive to raise the achievement level of students to prepare them to compete in a global society. Despite the national attention on mathematics education, the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) results for eighth grade students show that out of 48 participating countries, only Chinese Taipei, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan attained higher average mathematics scores than the United States (Provasnik, Gonzalez, & Miller, 2009). Between 1995 and 2007, eighth-grade students in the United States increased their average scores by 16 points to outperform Australia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Russian Federation, and Sweden, who had previously achieved higher average mathematics scores. Although the United States has made advancements in comparison to these countries, eighth-grade students have not caught up with their Asian peers on the TIMMS, which measures mathematical content knowledge. The 2006 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures students' abilities to apply mathematics to real world problems, reveals that 15-year-olds are performing in the bottom 25% of participating countries (Provasnik et al., 2009).

The pressure is great and the stakes are high for providing a quality education to prepare students for the future. It is even greater for low-achieving students who, over time, tend to fall further behind (Lalley & Miller, 2006). Recently, while remarking on the "Education to Innovate" campaign, an initiative to move the United States to the top in math and science education, President Obama (2009) called for an improvement in education by challenging states to raise standards. He stated that the solutions to our national challenges will be achieved by "reaffirming and strengthening America's role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation" (para. 8). As once again the government calls for a raise in academic standards, particular attention must be given to students who are already performing below present standards.

In an effort to raise the achievement of low-achieving students, the need to identify effective instructional strategies has become progressively more important. Pre-teaching is one form of supplemental instruction that has shown to be effective. Pre-teaching strategies are defined as the use of advance organizers, graphic organizers, and the introduction to key vocabulary words, facts, and concepts - all prior to regular classroom instruction (Lalley &

Miller, 2006; Munk, Gibb, & Caldarella, 2010).   Research has also shown that there is a predictive relationship between achievement and self-efficacy, the belief one is capable of achieving academically (Usher, 2009). The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to examine the effects of pre-teaching on mathematics achievement and self-efficacy of low-achieving students and (2) to explain how I changed my classroom practice.

Literature Review

Ausubel's Theory

Pre-teaching can serve as an instructional strategy to build background knowledge and can therefore establish a framework to support subsequent knowledge (Munk et al., 2010). Ausubel's (1960) theory of learning advocated that the learning and the retention of new concepts can be facilitated by the advanced introduction of concepts. Meaningful learning occurs when students relate new information to what they already know. The advanced introduction of key concepts serves as cognitive anchors for acquiring new knowledge (Ausubel, 1960). Ausubel's (1962) theory also proposed that organizers facilitate the learning and retention of new information for students who have low verbal ability. Students of average or above-average verbal ability are able to organize new information around relevant concepts.

Using this theory, Githua and Nyabwa (2008) compared the mathematics achievement levels of students who were instructed using an advance organizer strategy with students who were taught using conventional teaching practices. The advance organizer strategy was an organizational framework teachers used prior to teaching to prepare students for upcoming new content. They found that students who were taught commercial arithmetic using advance organizers performed significantly better than students taught by traditional methods. Githua and Nyabwa concluded "that advance organisers are meta-cognitive tools that in this study allowed meaningful reception of mathematical content hence leading to higher achievement" (Githua & Nyabwa, 2008, p. 441). This conclusion supports Ausubel's (1962) theory that advance organizers serve as a framework for subsequent learning.

Bandura's Theory

The importance of finding an appropriate level of instructional challenge for students is outlined by Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory. Bandura states that a student's self-efficacy, or belief in his own capabilities, comes from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and his own emotional and physiological states. The most powerful source to create a strong sense of self-efficacy is through mastery experience, which refers to a student's past success. When a student always conquers new experiences with great ease and little challenge, the student is easily discouraged by failure experiences. Conversely, if all new experiences are too difficult for a student then failure becomes the norm.   Hence, a negative self-efficacy is developed. Bandura states, "After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through the tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity" (Bandura, 1994, Sources of Self-Efficacy, para. 2). Clearly, self-efficacy affects academic achievement.

Usher (2009) conducted a qualitative study to examine the manner in which middle school students develop their mathematics self-efficacy from different sources. She based her work on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy in which the perceptions students make of their past successes or failures emerge as sources of self-efficacy. The major

findings of this study link students with high self-efficacy to high achievement. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy described a history of low achievement. In addition to this, the researchers noted that the participants often compared their own performance to that of their peers. Students with high self-efficacy had a drive to surpass their peers, but students with low self-efficacy believed themselves to be inferior in mathematics (Usher, 2009). One implication of this study is that successful experiences are vital to a healthy self-efficacy, which underscores the necessity for teachers to provide instruction and experiences at a challenging yet attainable level.

Raising Achievement

Most research on supplemental instruction that raises math achievement is in the form of tutoring following regular classroom instruction. Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, and Schumaker (2001) conducted a study to determine if one-to-one tutoring in the form of an after-school tutoring program significantly impacted the achievement of at-risk students and students with learning disabilities. The authors hypothesized that the experimental strategic tutoring would give students strategies that could then be used on assignments and assessments which they would encounter in future coursework. The research found that strategic tutoring was effective in improving the academic achievement in all but one student. The students that improved academically also showed great improvement in describing strategies to help them in their coursework even after their tutoring sessions concluded. These improvements indicate that strategic tutoring aids in developing more independent learners (Hock et al., 2001).

Pre-teaching and Mathematics

A study by Lalley and Miller (2006) most closely considered the variables of this literature review. They examined and compared the effectiveness of two supplemental instructional practices, pre-teaching and re-teaching, on mathematics achievement and self-concept of 24 low-achieving third grade students. Within the study, one group of 13 students received supplemental math instruction prior to the material being presented by a classroom teacher. A second group of 11 students received the same supplemental instructional content; however, it was in the form of remediation since it followed the initial classroom exposure. Both groups received two 45-minute sessions of supplemental instruction each week for 18 weeks. Using a pre-test and post-test design, the researchers compared the results and found that both groups increased their math achievement. However, general and math self-concept increased significantly for just the pre-teaching group, yet there was no significant difference between the two groups (Lalley & Miller, 2006).

This research by Lalley and Miller (2006) indicates the possibility for teachers to design pre-teaching interventions to increase student self-concept by reducing failing experiences for low-achieving students. Both groups received the exact same supplemental instruction; however the order in which it was given produced different results. Pre-teaching raised both achievement and self-concept, whereas re-teaching only raised achievement (Lalley & Miller, 2006). The fact that the pre-teaching strategy raised achievement supports Ausubel's (1960) theory that students need cognitive anchors in which new learning can be assimilated. In addition, this study suggests that pre-teaching may be an effective strategy to raise self-concept. Since students are receiving instruction prior to regular classroom instruction, they are experiencing success within the classroom. Failure is being eliminated and mastery experiences are being created.

My Classroom Practice

The current research shows that pre-teaching is an effective strategy for raising achievement and confidence levels. Yet, within my own classroom is where I observed the effects that this strategy can have on low-achieving students. At the start of my sixth year of teaching I decided to focus on my low-achieving students in my Math 8 classes. The experience I had gained while co-teaching an inclusion math class with a learning support teacher, though limited to just one school year, equipped me with a new lens to examine the needs of each individual student. The Math 8 course is an on-level math class, but typically many students are weak in their basic skills, have a poor work ethic, and are convinced that math is their worst subject area. These students do not qualify for special education services; however, they greatly need individual help. I decided to try to raise the achievement and confidence levels of my students by implementing pre-teaching strategies with a small group of students. My goal was to give the students a preview of a lesson's key concepts and vocabulary prior to regular classroom instruction. As a result, I hoped to break the cycle of failure they were experiencing within math classrooms.

To select the students who I thought would most benefit from the extra attention, I made a list based upon my classroom observations from three different Math 8 classes. I then referred to the results of the first district benchmark exam and PVAAS scores. The PVAAS combines multiple data and predicts a student's chance of earning proficiency on the PSSAs. My administration instructed the staff to focus their extra efforts on students in the 40%-70% range. These students, who are addressed by pseudonyms, were the ones who needed the extra nudge to cross the magic line into proficiency and place the school district into the safe harbor of adequate yearly progress. The data reinforced my instincts as a teacher in identifying the needy students. It was no surprise that Jason, my student who proclaimed his weaknesses on the opening day of school, was on the list. However, according to PVAAS, his chance of reaching proficiency was less than 10%. Perhaps statistically Jason didn't have a chance at making it, but I didn't enter education because of statistics. Not including him felt too much like giving up. The inspirational posters in my brightly decorated room would call me a hypocrite.

In my 30-minute commute to work each day, I brainstormed how to logistically make the previewing work. Finding 10-15 minutes several times a week within the regular class time was impossible. I decided to hold the sessions during the end-of-the-day, school-wide study hall time. Even though I had to supervise a classroom of 28 students, I was determined to commit 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to these low-achieving students. To try to give the notion a positive perspective, I gave each of the six students an invitation to a math club meeting with me. It gave the first meeting date and time and ended with "hope to see you there." I think sheer curiosity drew the six students to my room for the first meeting. I had placed a chair for each of them at a table in the front of the classroom. They sat down and compared invitations as they waited for the table to fill up. When they all arrived, I explained that they were all invited to be a member of my math club, which would meet two to three times each week. I promised to only hold meetings for a maximum of fifteen minutes. I told them that they were all selected because they were struggling with math. They all nodded their heads when I said this. During these sessions, I would give them a glimpse of what they would see in upcoming math classes so that they'd have an advantage over their peers. They all exchanged smiling glances at the thought of having the upper hand. "I'm not forcing you to come. If you want some extra help, I'm here. I don't even know if this will work, but I want to give it a try," I said. "So, when do we start?" Jason asked. He held the power that an edgy street-smart kid can hold; the others followed him.

I quickly realized that committing 15 minutes to previewing was going to be challenging when 28 students all needed to go places and were constantly interrupting the process. Borrowing an idea from a colleague, I laminated a sign that read, "Mrs. S is busy. Please take a number, have a seat, and she'll help you as soon as possible." I laminated numbered cards and put them on a hook beneath the sign. At first, I feared a parent would email me, outraged that I was treating the educational process like a grocery store deli, but the students loved it. I think they waited to ask me a question until I was previewing just so they could take a number. One day, I laughed when a colleague stood up as I called out, "Three." I couldn't stop the phone from ringing, but I did stop the flood of ridiculous questions that prevent a teacher from accomplishing a task.

I held the previewing sessions the day before I taught a new lesson, which typically spans two to three days. Therefore, the sessions were held once or twice a week. I would always show my students the graphic organizer that we'd be using in class. I'd also define important vocabulary words. Whenever possible, I'd also let the students use manipulatives to figure out problems. When previewing for combining like algebraic terms, I started by placing apple and whale die-cuts on the table in front of them. They quickly saw that $2a + 3w + 3a + w$ was equivalent to $5a + 4w$. They couldn't combine $5a$ and $4w$ to $9aw$ because there were five apples and four whales on the table. In later classes, the students would laughingly remark, "There's no such thing as a whapple."

Another element that I included in the previewing sessions was revealing common errors. I'd show them where most kids would make mistakes and tell them their job was not to be like most kids. In one session, I told the students a question that I was going to pose in class the following day. I told them that most kids wouldn't know the answer but now they would. "I want you to raise your hand," I said. "The other kids in the class won't have any idea that I told you the answer." The next day, I asked the question in each class. In one particular class, several hands went up, and I called on several students and received a few incorrect answers. I waited. Callie, a very quiet girl in the club, slowly raised her hand. After giving me the correct answer, another student called out, "Wow, good job, Callie!" She slowly raised her eyes to meet mine, and we shared a sly smile. I felt good. It was such a small moment, but for her it was the first success she'd had in math in a long time.

As the school year went on, I had many small successes like the one with Callie. Many students still struggled, but raised their F's to passing grades. For most of them, A's were still out of reach. Callie got one A on a test all year. I couldn't find a sticker big enough for her test, and I'll never forget the look on her face as I handed it to her. I found it remarkable that these students always showed up on time without me chasing them. They wanted to be there. I kept a log of our meeting times and strictly adhered to the fifteen-minute time slot so the students had time for their other obligations. I recognized that the students started seeking me out for remediation in the areas that they were struggling in. When the hectic schedule of spring made it difficult for me to find the time to hold the math club sessions, several students still came to me at multiple times to ask when we were going to start again.

As I look back at the achievement and confidence gains I witnessed, I question whether or not it was attributed to the previewing strategies that the students received or if it was just the time that I took to help those students. I do believe that the previewing raised the confidence levels of my students more than any other strategy that I have implemented. In the end Jason didn't earn proficiency on the PSSA, but he did have many passing grades on small quizzes and tests. Though he was often in trouble with other teachers for breaking school rules, our

relationship stayed respectful. I'd like to believe that in his next school year he won't feel the most important thing to share about himself is "I'm not good at math."

Conclusion

Research shows that pre-teaching is a supplemental instructional practice that is successful in raising achievement. In mathematics, both pre-teaching and re-teaching have raised achievement; yet, only pre-teaching significantly improved a student's self-concept. Perhaps the most promising aspect of pre-teaching is how easily it can be implemented without exhausting a school's resources.

In my personal experience, I found students who participated in the strategy made small achievement gains and even greater confidence gains. They were more willing to participate and take risks in math class. Also, they started taking responsibility for their own learning and sought help in areas where they needed remediation. There is no easy fix or magic pill in assisting low-achieving students who are accustomed to daily struggles in education. It begins by forming a partnership with the students and then committing to finding what works best to help each student. Students must recognize that we are invested in helping them succeed so that they do not give up, but rather continue to meet the challenges of new experiences.

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Creating a Technology-Driven School
for the Future

John F. Ziegler
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Educational technologies have increasingly become an integral part of contemporary public school education. As students and teachers begin to face the changes that are prevalent in educational systems today, schools designed for the future need to accommodate a variety of learning styles and feature an "a la carte" menu of technologically laden programs. The initial reactions when planning a major educational initiative are to speculate about the future, explore creative educational designs, review curricular enhancements, and ultimately draw associations between promising ideas and improving student achievement. This article features the Classrooms for the Future initiative sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and highlights the group dynamics involved when initiating a future-oriented, technology driven project.

Preparing for Change

During the summer of 2006, the administration, faculty, and staff at the Greenville Junior-Senior High School embarked on a multi-year Classrooms for the Future educational technology initiative totaling $400,000. The Classrooms for the Future competitive grant initiative was a bold step towards large-scale high school reform for the 21st Century sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). The Classrooms for the Future project was designed to improve teaching and learning in Pennsylvania's high schools by creating technology-enriched instructional settings supported with robust professional development. In addition, the project promised to embrace the need for reform and recognize the role of classroom technology as a change agent.

The purpose of the Classrooms for the Future initiative was to provide evidence that blending classroom technology with learning environments can produce positive results in learning when supported by continuous professional development. The goal was simply to bring about change: change in the way teachers teach, change in the way students learn, and change in the way learning is assessed. The Classrooms for the Future initiative was designed to create learning environments that feature inquiry, relevant project-based activities, and differentiated instruction. This initiative attempted to transform education from a traditional listen and learn experience to interactive experiences that utilize computers, the Internet, and enhanced technology.

Furthermore, the Classrooms for the Future initiative was designed to ensure there was a laptop on every student's desk in each English, math, science, and social studies classroom. In the spring of 2006, via the PDE website, Pennsylvania offered an annual competitive grant opportunity for school districts that were willing to create a comprehensive plan and embark on a new era in education: Teaching the 21st Century Learner. Extended over three years, the grant program awarded high schools across the commonwealth laptop computers, interactive whiteboards with digital projectors, video web cameras, upgraded infrastructure, and a robust

professional development program to support high school teachers and administrators integration of these and other educational technologies into action-packed instructional practices.

The plan at Greenville was funded due to the strengths of the proposed goals and objectives. Imagine, the magnitude of a proposal that intends to change the mindset of an entire high school from "acceptable" to "outstanding" and to share the model for others to emulate. The plan fully intended to create a fast-paced learning environment where students and teachers could achieve greater success in the classroom and raise student achievement through extended use of technological integration. The plan enabled educators to gain access to powerful 21st Century teaching tools to personalize their instruction and allow educators to gain a technological advantage when designing lessons that simulate, motivate, and monitor student learning. The tools were coupled with a differentiated approach to professional development that was offered to the staff through on line coursework, blogs, chats, wikis, demonstrations, and face-to-face discussions. The groundwork of Greenville's proposal was supported by current data and research.

In recent years, technology use in educational settings in the United States has become commonplace. Students and teachers report frequent use of computers in classrooms, and nearly all schools are connected to the Internet (Fouts, 2000; Kleiner and Farris, 2002). The importance of educational technology has been emphasized through a dramatic growth in funding for technological initiatives and the emergence of grants supporting educational technology programs (Dickard, 2003).

Unfortunately, today's schools are often designed in ways that fail to respond to the educational needs of the present, let alone the needs of the future. Creating a school that is responsive to the future is a task that involves diverse individuals ranging from school administrators to building level faculty; and from support staff to vendors, contractors, and consultants. These future-oriented pioneers must be willing to carefully examine their beliefs about learning, their knowledge of educational frameworks, and their desire to work cooperatively amidst differing opinions about how to prepare students for a productive high-tech future. The eventual outcome depends upon meaningful conversations and a willingness to help all parties explore answers to guiding questions that will withstand the test of time (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Simple, yet powerful, the following starter questions reveal multiple opinions, hopes, and dreams for the future.

- What standards will guide classroom instruction?

- What should students know and be able to do in the future?

- What knowledge, skills, and applications will be expected from our best teachers and most promising learners?

- What will teaching and learning look like to produce positive results for the students of today and tomorrow?

- What support is needed to produce the kinds of learning outcomes expected by the school and the community?

These questions need to be asked early in the planning process. Therefore, it is important to reach a consensus about educational goals, standards, and instructional outcomes before designing a technologically rich program to achieve the desired results.

Committing to Change

During the last several years, school-wide improvement projects have undergone a shift from primarily being an isolated administrative responsibility to increasing the emphasis toward working within teams and groups (Matthews & Crow, 2003). This shift to group involvement is largely due to factors such as requests for greater transparency, decentralizing, and the need for technological efficiency. As school districts such as Greenville assume challenges of greater magnitude, responsibilities expand and tasks become more complex; therefore, additional expertise and consultants are needed within the school system. Also, the emergence of district teams can effectively address issues including stiff competition from pending school choice issues, particularly in technology-driven disciplines, and the need for a combined effort of expertise to keep the school district as a whole on the cutting edge. Because technology-driven projects require tasks that have become far too complex for one person to handle alone, many schools have created teams to accomplish collective goals.

The entire professional staff at Greenville was informed that innovation in classroom instructional activities were eminent and the staff was invited to participate in a free flow exchange of ideas to help create alternatives in the teaching and learning process that would benefit everyone. As a result a group of interested staff members agreed to become directly involved in the Classroom for the Future project. This group had to quickly learn how to work together and develop an understanding of the responsibilities of other team members, whose skills and roles differed from their own. In addition, the convergence of products, services, and technology forced individuals to work in a multi-functional environment for which the best organizational design included collaboration. This milestone marked the beginning of the Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team.

As a functioning group, the Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team brought out several admirable qualities in its members. It was evident that problem solving skills and creativity increased with mutual support that in turn built morale within the school. The characteristics that made the group effective included complementary skill sets, a sense of accountability, and a synergistic approach to problem solving. It followed that the single most important factor in determining success was the group's sense of teamwork. With this sense of teamwork and the right mix of skills, the Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team had the basis for functioning autonomously with a commitment to accomplish their goals.

Introducing Change

On the first in-service day of the 2006-2007 school year, faculty and staff were challenged to determine what would be needed to renovate the school to meet the needs of students in the 21st century. This discussion led to examining the amount of work that needed to be accomplished and predicting possible outcomes that could result if unity within the school prevailed and the momentum of the project continued.

Obviously, the staff had concerns and questions related to time frames, curriculum priorities, Pennsylvania Academic Standards, and the reasons for change; but these questions served as talking points to further discuss promising ways of teaching and learning. Outside school, interested school faculty and administrators introduced the community to the Classrooms for the Future with presentations at various luncheons held by local service organizations. While these programs left little time for serious retrospection, they did emphasize that for optimal learning to take place, individuals need to incorporate their prior experiences into new knowledge, socially interact with others, and discover a means to personalize learning. Personalizing learning for each student remained a major goal for everyone throughout the process.

Preparation of the physical facility for the Classrooms for the Future initiative included more than just purchasing equipment. Increasing instructional capabilities was the driving force behind the need to upgrade the infrastructure within the building from a traditional delivery system to a more performance-based program of studies. Intentionally, preparation of the faculty included group processes that evoked potential solutions and generated meaningful plans of action. For example, group processes served as the means to involve faculty members and maintain open avenues of communication with representatives from Apple Computers, local consultants, and PDE. It was through group discussions that staff and community members began to look upon the introduction of the new equipment as a means to improve student performance.

Intervening Factors

Several desired outcomes affected the planning and design process and served as focal points for discussion. These discussions centered upon organizational structures within the building, integration of technology within the curriculum, the professional development of the faculty, and student learning needs within the school. Organizational issues about operating a separate junior high program within the senior high school encouraged the use of interdisciplinary instruction, multi-age grouping, and cross-age tutoring. The infrastructure was upgraded to support a local area network featuring a teacher's laptop, seven computer workstations in every classroom, and six mobile carts holding 25 laptop computers. These provided access to 21st Century software and the World Wide Web.

Pooling the leadership team's collective energies was extremely valuable; however, unexpected events occurred that affected the mood and the timetable for the project. No one expected the wireless access points recently installed to be inadequate. No one expected a drain from the roof to back up into the building flooding five classrooms. No one expected the digital projectors for the newly erected whiteboards to require ceiling mounts, require a series of inspections, or result in deliberations to determine a mutual compromise to solve the problem. These events tested everyone's desire and ability to remain focused and cooperative. At times, school officials served as engineering apprentices, technology coordinators, and instructional assistants by negotiating accommodations with professional personnel and managing wireless Internet usage both within and outside the building.

Preparing for Conflict

A detailed process of selecting reputable sub-contractors, vendors, and consultants occurred in the midst of gathering suggestions from the school community. The stage was set for conflict to cloud the seemingly cordial atmosphere. Behind the scenes, school officials compared stories of schools that permitted shoddy work and condoned cost overruns. Technology directors from neighboring school districts were interviewed to gain a broader perspective; but the directors complained about installers who missed schedules and product vendors who pursued sales awards rather than provide quality service. Teachers implied that classroom technology was just another fad, another expense that would not pass the test of time. Unfortunately, the inclination to find someone to blame was ultimately directed toward school administrators. The school administrators were accused of operating as they pleased without regard to the warnings by the staff members who were resistant to change.

Perhaps, this scenario is familiar. School boards expect good things to happen in relatively short time frames. School administrators want plans to be followed as agreed upon, and school superintendents want to make sure they are not liable for decisions that may turn sour.

Furthermore, efforts to reduce costs can repeatedly drive wedges in communications that subsequently produce adversarial relationships.

Any of these problems can trigger a cascade of additional difficulties. The key to avoid issues from becoming major concerns is to develop a mutual understanding of the goals and expectations. When issues arise, they need to be addressed by individuals committed to clear and consistent communication, rather than allowing them to threaten the successful completion of the project. This attitude was necessary because installers, vendors, and consultants not only expect fair treatment; but they also need a time frame and a clear understanding of the direction of work to be completed, and clarification of the degree of quality expected. Contractors may expect but not always receive instantaneous decisions, comfortable budget restraints, profitable fees, or adequate blueprints from existing building archives. The school must anticipate these conflicts and be proactive in preparing to deal with unexpected problems.

Working as a Team

Group dynamics played a significant role among the parties involved in the Classrooms for the Future project. The Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team, comprised of administrative, coaching, and teaching personnel, was responsible for overseeing the scheduling and budgetary process performed by the equipment installers. The contractors remained primarily concerned with the quality of the work performed and adherence to their overall work schedule. Leadership meetings were always cordial and respectful with participants offering compliments whenever plausible. Delays inherent within the implementation process created times during which disagreements were voiced, but serious dissension was often handled through follow-up letters rather than on-the-spot confrontations. The nature of the social dynamics at play within the team meetings appeared to have a direct effect on overall quality of the decision making process.

If the word passion is used to describe an individual's belief in his work, it is easy to identify people within the Greenville project that exhibited a high degree of passion for what they do. Examples include the technology coach's ownership for creating a school for the future, the equipment installers' pride in the quality of their work, and the school administration's desire to maintain open and positive relationships. "War stories" from other school districts emphasized the disregard various parties had for each other's input. Yet, those stories were not part of the discussions in Greenville. That might be due to the high character of the individuals working on this project. Another reason may lie in the fact that the Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team was actively involved everyday with scheduling the work and with maintaining daily contact with teachers, vendors, installers, and school officials.

One essential component of the building project was the successful interaction of shared roles during the implementation process. The project meetings provided opportunities for everyone to share information, offer comments, and communicate how the work had progressed from week to week. More in-depth communication was exchanged when monitoring included a collective effort from the software engineering consultants, the architectural firm, and the school district. A firm reminder that quality should not suffer when deadlines for completions were delayed produced more positive results than verbal complaints.

When new information came to light, new knowledge had to be constructed that incorporated the information through channels of frequent communication. A keen knowledge of prior experiences was important to maintain a solid base of information. Decisions were made and adjusted based upon the flow of new information and changing circumstances. For those

who understood the patterns of communication, the decision-making process became more manageable.

Sub-contractors expect adherence to proposed budgets, completion of scheduled milestones, and cost effective designs. However, they may actually receive incomplete building documents, requests for additional services, and limited assistance from school building employees. Reasonable expectations from the school district helped prevent dissatisfaction. When things were not going well, all parties needed to assume ownership and to recognize that only by working together could they find mutually acceptable resolutions.

Conclusion

Resolving communication concerns was a routine topic during Classrooms for the Future Leadership Team meetings. The leadership team had to remain confident that if they continued to offer support combined with the gradual implementation of 21st century tools, members would see 21st century teaching occurring amidst a collaborative spirit of students and teachers learning from each other. The team envisioned classrooms where students and teachers utilized technology seamlessly to research, practice, communicate, collaborate, and use data to create informative presentations. What they expected occurred as students and teachers began to use interactive content-specific software with collaborative projects that quickly became the norm rather than the exception.

The greatest success came from moving closer to a ubiquitous computing environment where the power of technology was capitalized and maximized to enrich students' lives. To that end the entire school community enjoyed a renewed excitement about learning and for those involved in the Classrooms for the Future initiative, greater understanding that the way we teach and learn needs to change. Near the end of the third year, it was apparent that efforts to create new technologically driven classrooms had been time well spent.

School-wide initiatives can do more than merely accommodate short-term needs. Schools with a sufficient capacity to look beyond what is to what may be are capable of effectively planning, and investing time and energy in technology-laden initiatives. They are capable of building private sector relationships; strengthening a talented, well-trained staff; and working effectively as a task-oriented group. Each of these activities is essential to sustain technology investments. The group process can become an effective medium for enhancing teaching and learning. To achieve this standard of capitalizing upon the collective energies of group involvement; it is essential that teachers, professional support staff, equipment installers, and school administrators venture into each other's worlds and assume a collective responsibility as a group for every aspect of the implementation process. Creating a technology school for the future will truly fulfill the aspirations of all participants, particularly, those of future students.

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An Invitation to Write
for
Pennsylvania Educational Leadership

Denise G. Meister and Judith L. Zaenglein - Co-Editors
Pennsylvania Educational Leadership

The readership of *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership* consists primarily of classroom teachers, intermediate unit and school district curriculum leaders, building principals, district-wide staff developers, assistant superintendents, superintendents, educational consultants, and college and university professors. Regardless of their roles in education, our readers are seeking guidance for improving educational practices – curriculum, assessment, instruction, professional development, or policy support.

So, if you have something that might help them, we want to hear from you!

As editors of *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership* we try to publish a variety of types of articles: reports of successful practices, stories of teacher inquiries in the classroom, analyses of research and scholarly literature on current issues, critical analyses of educational policies and practices, thoughtful visions for improving education and schooling, and reports of more traditional research projects.

See Page 29 of this issue of *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership* for details regarding submission of manuscripts.

District-Run Virtual School Saves
District Money

Cynthia Fusilier
West Jefferson Hills School District

One of the fastest growing areas of education today, distance education technology, can provide 21st century learners with opportunities at all levels (Miller & King, 2003). The rising star of the educational technology movement, online learning enhances curriculum, draws home-schooled students back to classrooms, decreases drop-out rates, and helps retain teachers (Vail, 2002). It is the elixir that can help deal with all types of problems facing schools today: teacher shortages, limited course offerings, too many drop-outs, escape to home-schooling, lack of Advanced Placement classes in some places, the need for individualized learning, charter school competition, poor teacher quality, and lack of physical space (Russo, 2001). The provision of educational services to students need no longer be constrained to classroom walls (*Guide to Teaching Online Courses*). One of the main objectives of a cyber charter school is to provide parents and students an expanded choice of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system to meet the pupils' educational needs (Clarke, Hurlburt, & Wines, 2007). The major differences between online learning and a traditional classroom are location and accessibility (Hassel & Terrell, 2004). Cyber charter schools differ from traditional "brick-and-mortar" schools in that learning occurs primarily outside of a classroom and often independent of other students and delivery of instruction is through an alternative medium such as a computer (Clark et al., 2007). Many authors use the terms "cyber charter school," "distance learning," "online learning," and "virtual schools/education" interchangeably. While "online learning" could comprise a single course or even a single lesson or project, a virtual school is a comprehensive educational institution that provides its instruction primarily through online means (Hassel & Terrell, 2004).

Virtual schools are educational organizations that offer K-12 courses through Internet- or Web-based methods (Clark, 2001). In order to conduct a virtual school, the classes may be run either synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronous instruction is delivered through the Internet in a real-time, virtual environment by a teacher who leads the students through instructional units: in other words, much like a real classroom setting, where teacher and student can interact in real time. In most cases, the student may participate in interactive discussions and speak directly with the teacher. A good example of synchronous instruction is through interactive video teleconferencing where the teacher and students are in different locations, but they are able to hear and talk with each other. Synchronous instruction requires expensive technology and teacher resources, making it the least used model for providing instruction. On the other hand, asynchronous instructional delivery is more widely used, usually in the form of prerecorded lessons designed by third-party curriculum provider. This model uses prepackaged curriculum delivered via software packages, and students work at their own rate while finishing assigned tasks and assignments (Huerta, Gonzalez, & D'Entremont, 2006). This type of instruction is supplemented with instructor/student meeting time at unspecified times usually occurring weekly.

Students like attending virtual schools because of the flexibility it provides by allowing them to take a wide range of courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or language courses that may not be offered in their home district (Clarke et al., 2007). In a virtual school,

computerized simulations can be substituted for lab experiments, and homework assignments can be sent, graded, and returned via email attachments (Russo, 2001). Virtual schools can serve students who want to accelerate or enhance their education, who want to progress at their own pace or learn at odd hours, or who want programs personalized to particular cultural backgrounds (Bogden, 2003). Furthermore, cyber learners can learn as well as, or better than, traditional learners regardless of characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, academic background, computer skills, or academic aptitude (Navarro & Shoemaker, 2000).

Benefits and Challenges of Virtual Schools

Through this study, many benefits and challenges of a district-run cyber school emerged. One benefit allows students to take a wider range of courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) or language courses that may not be offered in the students' home districts (Clark et al., 2007). Other benefits include a virtual school's ability to organize entire courses according to individual students' learning goals, and students' course selection, activities, and progress can be easily accessible to parents, guardians, and mentors (Tucker, 2007). Online learning allows students to select their rate of interaction, thus being able to fulfill grade or diploma requirements more quickly (Clark & Berge, 2005).

Challenges also materialized in studying a district-run virtual school. Critics worry that schools will use online classes to free themselves of problematic students or that opportunities for socialization and personal interaction will disappear (Mupinga, 2005). Tucker (2007) agreed that secluded cyber school students fail to develop social skills and real world survival abilities, missing out on important aspects of a traditional education, such as peer interaction and collaboration (p. 9). Other challenges include wide variances in the quality of K-12 virtual programs, and even basic statistics on student performance and course enrollments are difficult to obtain (Tucker, 2007). Some parents who have their children in cyber school may be unable to provide the necessary support due to work schedules, single parenthood, or other extenuating circumstances (Clark et al., 2007). Finally, Sellers (2005) pointed out that the "administrative challenge will be to continue to take advantage of the cost-effectiveness of technology, which retaining a quality of education and the proper 'fit' of pedagogy" (p. 371).

Historical Context: Virtual Schools in Pennsylvania

With the passage of the Pennsylvania Public School Code Act (1997), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania became the 27th state to authorize charter school legislation, and now possesses the highest concentration of cyber charters in the nation (Huerta et al., 2006). During the 12-month 2004-2005 school year, 37% of public school districts, and 10% of all public schools nationwide had students enrolled in technology-based distance education classes, representing an estimated 5,670 public school districts and 9,050 public schools. The number of enrollments in technology-based distance education courses increased from an estimated 317,000 enrollments in 2002-03 to 506,950 enrollments in 2004-05 (Zandberg & Lewis, 2008), and a majority of students were predicted to have taken an online course before graduating high school (Clarke et al., 2007).

Roughly 98% of Pennsylvania cyber charters' revenue comes from Pennsylvania public school systems (Clarke et al., 2007). Because virtual schools are designated as public schools, Pennsylvania state law requires school districts to pay cyber schools for students who are educated through them, which equals the amount the district spends per pupil (Keller, 2008). Each student's district of residence is required to send per-pupil funding allocations to the student's new school of choice. It is the responsibility of the student's resident school district to

make payments to the cyber charter (virtual) school (Huerta et al., 2006). Pennsylvania adopted legislation that reimburses public school districts up to 30%, subject to the availability of state funding, of the per-pupil funding lost when district students enroll in cyber charters (virtual schools), and requires the state department of education to hold cyber charters (virtual schools) accountable for curriculum standards, special education plans, school attendance, and personal instruction (Bogden, 2003). In 2003-2004, the seven cyber charter (virtual) schools in Pennsylvania received roughly $48.7 million in total general revenue from public school districts, which is an average of $7,177 per pupil. In contrast, the total spending of the seven operating cyber charter (virtual) schools in the 2003-2004 school year was $41,465,000, and the average spending per pupil was $6,106.

District-Run Virtual Schools

In the 2008-2009 school year, some Pennsylvania public schools and school districts planned their own virtual schools, mainly to fulfill their own educational needs as well as save district money (Clark, 2001). The potential savings are quite significant. At the West Greene School District (Greene County, Pennsylvania), thirty-five students attended cyber (virtual) school during 2008-2009, and the district paid approximately $12,131 tuition for each child. McGuffey School District (Washington County, Pennsylvania) spent a total of $273,803 on cyber (virtual) schools during the 2007-2008 school year. Central Greene School District (Greene County, Pennsylvania) paid approximately $8,100 for each cyber (virtual) school student and more for special education students (Keller & Host, 2008). In the 2006-2007 school year, Solanco School District (Lancaster County, Pennsylvania) had sixty-five students enrolled in cyber charter schools at a cost to Solanco of more than $600,000. In the 2008-2009 school year, the New Brighton Area School District (Beaver County, Pennsylvania) had forty-eight students enrolled in cyber (virtual) schools at a cost of $422,646. Forty-one regular education students cost the district $7,823 each, and seven special education students cost the district $14,553 each. These district-run virtual schools hope to generate their own revenue by drawing back home-schooled students or drop-outs who are then counted as students in the district's state-aid formula (Vail, 2002). In the 2008-2009 school year, Solanco School District had about forty students enrolled in their district-run virtual school, Solanco Virtual Academy (SVA).

Since some school districts often spend between $9,000 and $16,000 per student to attend cyber charter (virtual) schools, districts are creating their own virtual schools. Charleroi Area School District (Washington County, Pennsylvania) created its own virtual school and provided a laptop and textbooks for the students who worked with cyber teachers in the library or in the student's home. This program cost the district about $4,500 per student, and the program is aligned with the district curriculum (Keller & Host, 2008). This program was supported by Bogden (2003) who believed that most cyber schools provided students with a computer and instructional materials and paid the telecommunications costs. Students were able to work at their own rate as long as they met predetermined requirements. Some district-run cyber schools were originally designed to assist struggling students but have expanded to assist all learners (Clark, 2001). Solanco Virtual Academy (SVA) began in 2006 for students in kindergarten through grade 6. It was later expanded to include grades 7 and 8. During the 2007-2008 school year, the SVA included grades kindergarten through grade 9. Each consecutive year, SVA will increase by one grade level. Vail (2002) said that if you start out small, the program could become self-sustaining. The National Center for Education Statistics said in 2005 that sixteen percent of districts had students enrolled in distance education courses delivered centrally from their own district (Setzer & Lewis).

Development of Lions Online Academy (LOLA)

The New Brighton Area School District began a program four years ago called Lions Online, originally developed for low-achieving students who needed to make up credits for graduation. The low-achieving students could gain credit for classes they failed through online courses that were monitored by New Brighton teachers. Tucker (2007) pointed out that to prevent drop-outs schools could use virtual classes to offer rapid remediation and credit recovery. Lions Online expanded to include programs for homebound students who participated in a blended approach to learning, which combined both online and face-to-face learning (Tucker, 2007). The homebound students took some classes virtually, and they took other classes physically at the high school. Homebound students included those students who had a medical reason for not being able to attend the traditional "brick and mortar" school all day every day, and these sick or hospitalized children preferred distance education (Mupinga, 2005). During the 2008-2009 school year, Lions Online was further developed and renamed Lions Online Academy (LOLA), an author-created model. When LOLA was introduced, the program included a third facet, which was a district-run virtual school that promised to offer more personalization and support that students do not often receive in a virtual learning environment. A benefit of LOLA was that it was a hybrid model: a face-to-face course augmented with assignments, readings, discussion groups, and tests that were completed online (Mupinga, 2005). When LOLA was introduced, the following objectives were developed:

- To save the district money by keeping students in-house instead of their attending out-of-district cyber/charter schools
- To offer a district-run cyber/charter school to keep the students from withdrawing to attend out-of-district cyber/charter schools
- To offer students from other districts the opportunity to attend a district-run virtual school
- To enable homebound students to keep the rigor of the classroom and to be able to enter right back into class
- To offer students a vehicle to earn academic credits for graduation if they are lacking credits (credit recovery) hence increasing graduation rate and decreasing student drop-out rate (Fuselier & Velto, 2009).

From the LOLA objectives, the following research questions emerged:
1. Will LOLA save the school district money?
2. Will fewer district students attend out-of-district cyber/charter schools?
3. Will the high school graduation rate increase?
4. Will the district drop-out rate decrease?

Lions Online Academy included many functions. In 2008-2009, forty-eight New Brighton Area School District students enrolled in cyber/charter schools with a tuition cost of $422,646.94. The district spent $7,823.73 for the forty-one regular education students and $14,553.43 for the seven special education students. In 2009-2010 in contrast, thirty-one district students enrolled in cyber/charter schools with a projected total tuition cost of $310,436.62. The district spent $8,584.32 for the twenty-five regular education students and $15,972.77 for the six special education students. That represented a decrease of twelve students attending out-of-district cyber/charter schools and a projected tuition savings of $112,210.32 in one year due to the LOLA program. LOLA was intended to be an answer to high drop-out rates because students attended brick-and-mortar schools and got to see the teacher while incorporating an online component of the course, which prevented students from getting lost in cyberspace from absence of direct contact with the instructor (Mupinga, 2005). The courses that the students took were set up as independent courses, not intended to be taught live in a classroom but with the

primary sources of learning being computer software and third-party curriculum (Huerta et al., 2006). Since all LOLA students needed varying degrees of student/teacher interaction, an individual program was designed for each individual student that provided a great deal of interaction between instructor and student (Vail, 2002). LOLA was not intended to be a "cookie cutter" program. Customization of each student's online program was important (Vail, 2002). Interaction between teacher and learner was mirrored in the design of the program, its courses, and in the technical facilities and services it supplied (Miller & King, 2003). Tucker (2007) said this type of personalized learning would benefit students at all levels. Interaction between teacher and learner were reflected in the design of LOLA and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided (Miller & King, 2003). In LOLA, teachers were available for student contact during the school day with approximately three to five contacts per student per marking period (New Brighton Area School District operates on four, nine-week marking periods in a school year). LOLA students were given an individualized program of study that included *A+nywhere Learning Systems* through Point, Click, Learn, Study Island, Apangea Learning, and Florida Virtual courses, which were all aligned with the district's curriculum, standards, and skills (Russo, 2001). In 2007-2008, thirty-eight students dropped out of New Brighton Area High School, and in 2008-2009, twelve students dropped out due to their participation in Lions Online Academy.

LOLA Curriculum

A+nywhere Learning Systems from Point, Click, Learn is a K-12 network-based e-learning instruction courseware. Courses included research and objective-based, problem-solving software plus assessment, alignment, and curriculum management tools. New Brighton Area School District purchased sixty-three titles from *A+nywhere Learning Systems* that included English, science, social studies, mathematics, fine arts, and health for students in grades 9-12. The courseware could be delivered to any student any time via LAN, WAN, or the Internet. Study Island, a web-based instruction, practice, assessment, and reporting built to the Pennsylvania State Standards, included rigorous academic content that engaged students with research-based proven results. Study Island was available for students to use in the classroom, lab, library, or at home. Apangea Learning provided personalized, one-to-one tutoring that went beyond homework help in both mathematics and writing. Its proven approach to learning, coupled with a cutting edge motivation system, means that students want to learn. Internationally recognized Calvert Partners' curriculum is offered to students in grades K-8. Research showed that online students found their instructors easier to approach than traditional classroom teachers (Miller & King, 2003).

LOLA Staff

In addition to the individualized curriculum provided for each LOLA student, the district sent a technology representative to the student's home to provide the laptop set-up, Internet connection, and instruction on using the equipment when needed by the LOLA student. The district supplied the laptop to the student as well as paid for the student's Internet connection for ten months. Participants of the LOLA also received and are required to sign a Family Agreement and School Property Usage Agreement (Fuselier & Velto, 2009).

Lions Online Academy (LOLA) employed both a director and a coordinator who oversee the program's student participants. The Lions Online Academy Director works part time for approximately five hours per week for fifty-two weeks not to exceed $4,680.00 per annum (July 1 – June 30). The Director's job responsibilities include but are not limited to the following: contact for students already enrolled in out-of-district cyber school; act as liaison

between students, their families, and district coordinator; compile data and file reports; schedule trainings, labs, and terminals; monitor student attendance; conduct site visits with technology representative for training and maintenance; communicate grades/attendance to participants' families.

The LOLA Coordinator is paid at a rate of four hours per week for thirty-six weeks not to exceed $2,592.00 per school year. Job responsibilities include but are not limited to the following: coordinate with guidance office to analyze transcripts to develop course needs; coordinate teacher-of-record to assign students per their needs; textbook acquisition; develop individual academic program for each student; send initial registration letter; orientation for full credit courses; revise forms; send data to permanent record file and to Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU), who warehouses district data; maintain grade book for teachers by warehousing paper copies of grade book; support teachers-of-record including training and software maintenance; maintain communication between technology support and teachers-of-record; schedule district testing with guidance; maintain grades and attendance of participants. Vail (2002) explained that successful programs include a contact person at each school where an online course is being used.

Teachers of record are employed for the elementary level and the secondary level courses: science, mathematics, English, social studies, art, music, and physical education. A teacher of record is a highly qualified teacher in his/her specialized area, meaning the teacher is currently certified in Pennsylvania to teach a specific subject. These teachers are paid for four hours per marking period per student at the current district rate of hourly supplemental pay. The school year is divided into four marking periods of nine weeks each. The teachers of record's responsibilities include but are not limited to the following: setting weekly goals for the student; maintaining mid-term and nine weeks' grades; weekly or more as needed communication with student and the family.

Technology department resources are utilized for in-home site visits to set up the computer, maintain the system, and provide technical support for the student when needed. These individuals are paid at the teacher's current district rate of hourly supplemental pay plus mileage.

The same district administrators and guidance counselors are in place for the "brick and mortar" students in the New Brighton Area High School. They are involved in all decision-making for the Lions Online Academy as well as maintaining the same expectations for behavior, discipline, and progress.

LOLA Students

Since LOLA individualizes a program for each student's needs, many types of children are enrolled in LOLA. Blended students combine a course schedule of both traditional classroom and online classes with a typical attendance day of 7:30 a.m. - 2:20 p.m. These blended students may come on campus to take a mathematics or science course, for example, then, they take the remainder of their courses online. The blended students are encouraged to work on their online courses in a teacher-staffed LOLA lab, which is located in the high school. Hybrid students combine a course schedule of both traditional classroom and online classes but do not work online at school in LOLA lab on regular basis. Hybrid students' attendance is kept through academic progress and log in date/time stamps, and this individualized time frame accommodates physical and/or emotional needs. Fully cyber students enroll exclusively in online classes to fulfill graduation credit requirements.. In the credit recovery program, students

who fail in a core class will take failed curricular components concurrent with the next marking periods' work. This work must earn a maximum of 80% to be averaged with the failing grade to change the report card to 70% minimum passing grade. The remediation program uses LOLA software to re-teach key components of curriculum in an 8-week summer school class.

As the program expands, additional staffing enhancements will be required. The LOLA program began in November 2008 with students in grades 9-12. Vail (2002) said that if you start small, the program could become self-sustaining, and LOLA is nearing that juncture. A district-run cyber/charter school could be of interest to students because they would receive more teacher feedback and personalized attention. The students would be held more accountable, and the district-required graduation project would be defined and required as per specific class. Students would also be able to participate in all district-run activities, extra-curricular interests, and sports as a participant in New Brighton's Lions Online Academy. A district-run virtual school is also of interest to homebound students. These are students who for medical reasons cannot attend brick-and-mortar school during the day. By participating in Lions Online Academy, the homebound student would be able to step right back into classes upon return to school. Finally, students who did not earn enough credits for graduation will benefit from LOLA because it is a vehicle for them to earn enough credits for graduation.

The immediate goal of LOLA was to bring students back to the New Brighton Area School District who were enrolled in out-of-district cyber/charter/virtual schools. The outcome of this goal will be an increase of funds for the district due to the fact that the district will not have to pay the cyber school for the students' attendance.

A long-term goal of LOLA, which would be more than one year after the project's inception, is to have most or all of the students who previously attended out-of-district cyber/charter/virtual schools now enrolled in Lions Online Academy. This will reserve a great deal of the district's current cyber school expenditures of the 2008-2009 rate of $422,646.94. Another long term goal is an increase of the graduation rate and a decrease of the drop-out rate. These goals will be indicated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

Observations of Behavior/Findings

LOLA has seen benefits for the students and the district. One student graduated from LOLA in January 2009. The student was scheduled to graduate in May 2008 but did not earn enough credits at that time. The student was given an individualized program and received teacher feedback and encouragement and completed all requirements for graduation.

LOLA began with nineteen students and currently has over sixty. Some students call the district wishing to participate in Lions Online Academy, and both the director and the coordinator call district students who are currently enrolled in cyber/charter school asking if they are interested in participating in LOLA. Some former drop-outs of the school have called and want to get their diploma from New Brighton Area High School, and current cyber/charter school students like the ability to participate in district-run activities and sports that the local online academy provides. It is known that legally students are permitted to participate in district activities as a cyber school student. However, some of the state-run cyber/charter schools are unable to provide required attendance data in a timely fashion to the student's home school for the cyber student to be eligible to participate in the home district's functions.

Lions Online Academy's blended, individualized learning model removed school construct and geographic constraints on growth, allowing the schools to replicate quickly, a key

to large-scale reform (Tucker, 2007). The LOLA program provided the students with enough flexibility to be successful (*Visions of Choice*).

Conclusion

In conclusion, virtual education is a promising and inevitable part of any future education system (*Forum Guide to Elementary/Secondary Virtual Education*). The U.S. Department of Education regards virtual education as an impressive technology innovation expanding opportunities for learning at any time and in any place (Hassel & Terrell, 2004). With the district-run virtual school, students will be able to have all the benefits associated with their home district such as participation in sports or extra curricular activities as well as the benefit of online learning.

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About the Author

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Manuscript Submission Guidelines

Content
Pennsylvania Educational Leadership provides for the sharing of formal and informal research related to the improvement of curriculum and supervision. Some issues may be thematic as determined by the editors in response to topics of timely interest. Submitted manuscripts should be responsive to this purpose and reflect research or analyses that inform practices in these areas.

Format
All submissions must be prepared using word processing software and saved in *Microsoft Word* (DOC) or rich text format (RTF). Manuscripts must comply with the guidelines in the *Publication Manual* of the American Psychological Association, sixth edition, 2009. Double-space all text, including quotations and references, use 1-inch margins for top and bottom, and use 1.25-inch right and left margins. All text should be Times New Roman 11-point font. Complete references should be placed at the end of the manuscript, using the "hanging indent" function. Additional article publication formatting details are listed on the *PEL* web site (http://citl.hbg.psu.edu/pel).

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Submissions should be sent via e-mail to pascdpel@psu.edu. Submissions must include three separate files saved in *Microsoft Word* (DOC) or rich text format (RTF) as follows:
Cover Page – Include the information listed below in a separate file
       Manuscript Title
       Thematic Topic (if appropriate)
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Abstract – In a separate file describe the major elements of the manuscript in 100-150 words. Do not include your name or any other identifying information in the abstract.
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Manuscripts are peer reviewed as they are received. Manuscripts must be received by the second Friday in September for consideration for the fall issue and by the first Friday in February for the spring issue. It is the policy of *PEL* not to return manuscripts. Authors will be notified of the receipt of the manuscript. After an initial review by the editors, those manuscripts that meet the specifications will be sent to peer reviewers. Authors will be notified if the manuscript is judged to be not appropriate for review. Following peer review and editor review, the author(s) will be notified as to the status of the manuscript. The journal editors reserve the right to make editorial changes in the manuscript.

Tough Issues In The Classroom: One Teacher's Perspective On Tackling White Privilege

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Wilkes University

Introduction

In 1982 I was hired for my first full-time teaching job. Due to an excess of teacher education graduates at that time, I was unable to secure a secondary education teaching position within the public schools. Thus, both by default and by luck, I began my professional career at Job Corps, a residential vocational training program for disadvantaged youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Job Corps is a federally funded program regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor but operated by private contractors. I was hired at one of the oldest Job Corps centers in the nation, which has been in existence for 45 years. Ten of those years belong to me.

The students at my Job Corps center were predominately inner-city youth from the eastern region of the United States. Mostly black and Hispanic students, they came from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Washington and Baltimore, Norfolk and Richmond, and Wheeling, West Virginia. They studied for the GED while acquiring trade training, and they were given a stipend for staying in the program. I began my decade there by teaching a life skills course entitled World of Work, eventually settling into teaching GED essay classes and English as a Second Language. Most of my time at Job Corps was spent teaching ESL to immigrants and refugees from about thirty countries, who had experienced very different lives from the inner-city U.S. youth, yet had suffered some of the similar effects that the trauma of poverty and violence can bring to inner-city residents (Anderson, 1999; Polakow, 2000). Both groups were bright, lively, and tough. Both groups were survivors.

During that decade, I had the good fortune to teach those incredibly resilient and hardy youngsters who were determined to improve their lives through education. They had overcome the worst possible odds to get to that point in their lives, and they had a deep sense of purpose. I learned much from them when, in time, they came to trust me enough to share with me their beliefs, traditions, and personal histories. They were a constant source of information, insight, and inspiration, and they gave me a wonderful view of worlds that I had never known existed. As a white woman from a middle-class white community, I came to realize that if I wanted to connect with these students of color, I needed to keep my eyes and ears open, as well as my mind and heart. And I came to see what hard work that was.

Frankly, I fell in love with these students of mine, and because of them I also fell in love with multiculturalism. I even fell in love with teaching. These students set my feet on the path that I have traveled these past twenty-eight years, a path that synthesizes my thirst for diversity with my desire to teach. Today, knowing that one-third of America's students are children of color (Delpit, 2006), I prepare future teachers for the world of diversity that they will encounter within their own classrooms by teaching a Multicultural Education class. Since almost all of these future teachers are white, like me, they too have the obligation to keep eyes, ears, hearts, and minds open to the different worlds of the new and very diverse generation of children. One of

the most difficult but most important tasks that they will face is the acknowledgement of the unearned privileges that they hold but that others do not. This, then, is the pivotal issue in my course of Multicultural Education: white privilege.

Rationale for the Lesson

"Teaching," writes Stephen Brookfield (1990, p. 18), "is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft." This is why I teach, and this is what I challenge my students to do: to connect with their students and build a better world. But the world of my white future teachers is very different from the world of my Job Corps students, whose diversity is more consistent with the children of today's classrooms. Between those two worlds exists a gap that presents a dilemma for the teachers of today. Meyers and Jones (1993, p.8) describe the gap in the following way:

> When the assertive posture of adults is combined with the expectations of women, African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, and other student groups that their concerns and experiences be included in higher education, powerful incentives for change result. Most of these students see the world through different lenses than those customarily used to construct the college curriculum. Though it is trite to say that a white, male, hierarchical system has dominated higher education, teaching too often has reflected an authoritarian, detached, and competitive style that leaves little room for the views of women and other cultures…. Such an environment robs teachers of the opportunity to learn what women and students of color have to offer and disregards the fact that their intellectual development can take different forms as a function of their gender and culture.

The fact that there are "different forms" of knowing and learning is painfully apparent to those whose backgrounds do not reflect the cultural mainstream, but, ironically, this fact can be absolutely invisible to members of the mainstream. Majority members, after all, were schooled in the ways that are congruent with their cultural values. "All of the approaches to teaching that have dominated our literature for the last 25 years have had their origins in Western societies…the cultural mainstream" (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004, p. 344). They've always had plenty of reinforcement for their cultural beliefs, unlike many students of color in classrooms today.

My white future teachers are members of the cultural mainstream. If they want to build productive connections to their own students, they must become knowledgeable about the cultural differences that exist within the American society. They must begin by examining the powerful lenses created by their own background as part of the dominant culture. To ignore their own cultural influence—to remain invisible to their own lenses—is to undermine their ability to teach effectively. "Without an awareness of the power and legitimacy of culture, it is very difficult to assist, care for, teach, or learn from anyone whose cultural experience is different from one's own" (Anderson, Carter & Lowe, 1990). Too many members of the cultural mainstream deny the influence of culture and mistakenly maintain that their choices are based solely on their own individual preferences, rather than determined by their cultural context—a denial that drives a wedge between whites and people of color.

In my Multicultural Education class, a requirement for teacher certification for our graduates, I try to chip away at that wedge and replace it with a bridge of awareness. I have found excellent textbooks by Spring (2004), Noel (2006), Nieto and Bode (2005), and Banks and Banks (2010), but I augment the course text with other readings. The most important of these extra

readings is the article on white privilege by Peggy McIntosh (1990/1995), a pivotal article in the understanding of the deeper issues that reside in that gap between whites and people of color in this country.

Introducing White Privilege

The concept of white privilege must be introduced early on to the college students in my Multicultural Education course because of its importance in getting them to dig beneath the surface of diversity issues and get beyond the "superficial sprinkling" of diversity issues too commonly found in schools (Hilliard, 1991/92). My students read the white privilege article during the second week of the semester. From several years of teaching this course, I have learned to proceed slowly with this important concept and to revisit it several times during the course, as it is a difficult idea for many whites to process. Frankly, the topic often spurs either heated discussions or, worse, silence. Either reaction must be well managed by the teacher, particularly the silence, which is a sign that the students are resisting processing the concept. Therefore, I expect and even attempt to precipitate conflict – or "cognitive dissonance," as Piaget would call it – through discussions, humorous stories, videos, journal questions, games, visual aids, and other instructional strategies.

That is not to say that I am confrontational when facilitating the white privilege discussion; on the contrary, I believe the issue is best handled calmly, slowly, and with appropriate and strategically placed humor. Still, the main objective is to cause a certain amount of discomfort in the students. "Making discomfort productive takes students to new levels of competence" (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004, p. 337). Unless they are made to feel uncomfortable about this idea of white privilege and the possibility that they have benefitted from it (and perhaps even unwittingly perpetuated it), they will not work to resolve the issue cognitively. Thus, I use both the *affective* and *cognitive* domains—the heart as well as the head—to build awareness.

Managing Students' Resistance

A central issue in the processing of white privilege article is *resistance*. Resistance is a natural reaction to threat, and new ideas are sometimes threatening. Brookfield (1990) reminds educators that learning involves change, and that change itself is threatening. In the case of my high-achieving college students, who have been empowered by years of success within the current educational system, embracing the notion of white privilege involves weighing the possibility that they have received benefits that they did not earn, while others who have worked just as hard might not have achieved similar results. They must consider the idea that light skin means power (Spring, 2004) and that those with power have certain responsibilities to those without power. They must think about abandoning the "truths" of their own education, such as the American ideal that all are treated equally and fairly in this country. It is not an easy task to let go of one's cherished beliefs. The more empowered and successful they are, the more the students seem to resist the notion we have *not* all been treated equally in this country. They truly resist the idea that they hold privilege, the very thing that McIntosh tells them they are socialized *not* to see. Abandoning a belief so central to their identity as an American is seldom done lightly. They resist. Negotiating this resistance takes time and skill, and I have learned from my past failures just how important this step is. I offer, therefore, a description of the steps that I usually take to deal resistance and approach the sensitive topic of white privilege.

Advancing the Discussion on White Privilege

I begin the second week of class by asking the students to get into small groups and discuss their journal reactions to the white privilege article, which they wrote the previous week. Bouncing ideas off their peers in small groups gives them a low-risk way to try out their ideas and courage to speak out in the general class discussion. Usually, they do this rather quickly and quietly, although this can get animated. I then ask for examples of white privilege from their own experiences, to be shared in a general discussion, since I'd have asked them to think about this over the weekend. In the past, I have heard some excellent examples from the students' own lives, such as this actual comment from a white student who had been thinking over the topic: "The ref, who was white, made a bad call in the game this weekend. It was against one of our black players. We all felt it was because of his color—anyway, you know, we wondered about it."

After each example given, I restate and clarify, sometimes taking it a bit further: "So, even though you can't be sure it was because of color, you have a question mark in your mind. But if both the player and the ref were white, you wouldn't have that question mark. You could just say it was a bad call; you wouldn't have to wonder about racism being involved. That's white privilege—not always having a question mark about color in the back of your mind." Then, after the clarification, I award the speaker a sticker (stickers always get laughs and ease the tension, especially among pre-service teachers), each sticker representing an extra credit point. This sticker serves as a very effective reinforcement for a student's willingness to share concrete examples of white privilege after being introduced to the abstract concept.

When I handle this part of the class, I have to maintain a calm, positive, and nonjudgmental demeanor while responding to the students. After all, I am modeling for them a sensible way to approach a very emotional idea. I must listen well to them, to ask for clarification if I need it, to restate with accuracy, and to expand in meaningful ways. Often, but not always, the result is a very dynamic, student-centered discussion. Usually, through the reinforcement of the sticker, students find the courage to try and dig into their own experiences, which makes it much more effective than any explanation I might offer, and it seems from their peers that many are able to grasp the concept. Some, however, remain quiet—perhaps resistant—and I remind myself that the consideration of white privilege is a concept that cannot be forced, only coaxed out. I must be patient and plan to revisit it in weeks to come. Hopefully, the quiet ones will speak up then.

Sometimes, during this first discussion, a student will risk saying something that might be thought of as politically incorrect. For example, one student said, "I don't really believe all this stuff about white privilege and, frankly, I think it's just reverse discrimination." In that case, my first response is always to thank the student for being brave enough to say what many others are probably thinking and for saying it respectfully. I remind the students that I'm glad the class is a safe place to discuss the issues that need to be discussed, and to say the things that need to be said, because we won't get beneath the surface without honesty. I then give the student a sticker for the comment and invite remarks from other students. Once everyone sees that I'm not going to force my opinion on this student, the discussion usually deepens. Students talking to each other and reacting to each other is the way this issue will sink in. I can honestly say that after thirteen years teaching this course, I have never had a dangerously inappropriate remark. That might be due to the fact that I spend plenty of time setting down ground rules for discussions during the first week of the semester. It might also be due to the fact that future teachers are simply grateful for a safe place to talk about such sensitive issues.

Wrapping Up the Discussion with Personal Stories

When my future teachers complete their first short discussion on white privilege, I usually finish this section of the class with two short personal stories. I tell these stories in a light-hearted way to reduce resistance. The first is my "Brown Tights" story, in which I give the account of being told to buy my four-year old African American daughter pale beige tights to accessorize her tap dance recital "Flintstones" costume, how I protested, and how the dance instructor who discussed it with me came to realize that her requiring this was unintentionally alienating the African American students in her classes. With the actual brown tights and dance costume in hand, I make the point that because white privilege is so hard for whites to see, racism is often unintentional. I admit that I too struggle to see privilege, and I that before we adopted our African American daughter, I was almost blind to white privilege. This relieves many students who, too, might have been feeling uneasy about their own unintentionally racist past behaviors. To end the story, I show a photo of my four-year-old smiling broadly in her "Flintstones" costume with brown tights that match her brown skin, next to her white dance partners in beige tights, and my students always enjoy seeing the happy result.

A second story I often use to close the first discussion of white privilege is the "Dark-Skinned Angel" tale about the difficult time I had finding an angel for our Christmas tree. I wanted a dark-skinned angel with which my dark-skinned daughter would be able to identify. First, I ask the students to describe an angel, which elicits the usual "blond hair," "blue eyes," light skin," "rosy cheeks" responses. Then, I pull from a bag the dark-skinned angel that tops our tree. It provides a strong visual reminder of the concept of white privilege. I close by reminding them *not* to feel guilty if they have light-skinned angels on their Christmas trees, since they too need role models. The point is made that our culture has systematically excluded people of color from the positive images, and teachers need to be aware of that tragedy if they hope to develop inclusive and welcoming classrooms.

Reinforcing Content with Video

Next, I ask my students to watch a video entitled *The Shadow of Hate* and reflect on its relevance to what they have been reading in their textbooks. I want to teach the concepts in different ways, as any course in diversity should. *The Shadow of Hate* (Teaching Tolerance, 1995, available free for teachers from www.teachingtolerance.org) is a powerful tool. Put out by Morris Dees' Southern Poverty Law Center, it captures the history of intolerance in America in victims' own words accompanied by poignant still photo images of Japanese Americans being forced into internment camps, blacks being lynched, Chinese immigrants working on the railroads, and Native Americans dying on the "Trail of Tears." This is a tasteful but moving video that usually gets through to the most resistant students by confronting them with evidence of what their history books have omitted. In doing so, it reinforces the notion of white privilege and shows excellent examples of dominated cultures, the topic of their assigned chapter. I ask them to write a reflection on that video and relate it to their readings before leaving that class.

The next time I meet my students, later that second week, I have read their responses to *The Shadow of Hate,* which are usually very emotional. They almost always come to class ready to talk about the video. On the board, I usually have written a quote by William Faulkner: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." This quote captures the main point of the lesson and anchors the various activities that they move through that week. When they come in to class, I split the students up into different groups, something I try to do often during those first few weeks to promote interactivity and interdependence. Also, knowing each other makes the interactive activities much more successful. Learning, after all, is a communal act (Meyers & Jones, 1993).

After giving them a few moments to collect their journals, find their tables, and chat with their tablemates, I ask them to discuss the video in their groups and, after about fifteen minutes, I ask them to turn their attention to the entire group and continue the discussion. I am usually pleased with the comments, particularly those from students brave enough to admit that they had never known about so much of what the video covered. Many are angry, asking why hadn't they read about all this in their history books? After processing the general discussion, I refer to the quote and then quickly move to their assigned reading from the text (chapters on dominated cultures and teaching about racism), taking a stance as if I am ready to deliver lecture notes on the text. Then, abruptly, I stop and ask them if, instead of simply going over chapter notes, they would like to try an activity that might be a better way to learn about the past and its effect on current day racism. When I tell them that it involves playing *Monopoly*, they enthusiastically agree!

Playing *Monopoly* with a Purpose

I split the class into *Monopoly* teams and pass out the *Monopoly* boards. Eagerly, they select their tokens and identified the bankers, getting ready to play. But then I caution them that there are special rules to this game, and I explain how much money each token will receive (see *Monopoly Lesson Plan*). Students are usually delighted with the added twist of starting the game with different amounts of money, and they begin the game with much noise and enthusiasm. We play by "short game" rules. Periodically throughout the half-hour of play, to build excitement and the sense of competition, I will announce how much time is left and emphasize that extra points will be given to the winners. I encourage them to build alliances and trade properties quickly. I also tell them to think of each trip around the *Monopoly* board as one generation's passage of time. It is usually the fastest thirty minutes of the semester!

When the thirty-minute *Monopoly* game is over, students count their assets and report the sums to me. I record every student's final assets, according to token, on an overhead transparency and average the results for each category. The statistics clearly show that the more money they were allotted at the start, the more they acquire throughout the game. It has never failed that, when I list the names of the high dollar extra point winners, someone brings up a classmate who started with very little and did very well, although not as well as the winners. The plea is then made to give that classmate an extra point, too, which I do, after getting the consensus of the class. I seize that moment to remind the class that they have now demonstrated the basic premise of Affirmative Action: to reward those who have done well even though they had disadvantages to overcome. I ask them to keep this in mind when we cover that concept in a later chapter.

I then refer to the quote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past," and I remind them how important they seemed to think it was to start off with some assets in *Monopoly*. I ask them to remember what they had felt during that thirty-minute experience and to apply it to real life. Then, I solicit their feedback on the experience, particularly ways to improve it, and they have always declared it a "keeper," unanimously voting for me to keep it as part of the course.

Conclusion

When I think of the whirlwind of activity that occurs during that second week, and which occurs often in my Multicultural Education classroom, I am reminded that teaching and learning are often messy, noisy, non-linear processes, much like the dialectic that Kuhn describes in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1996). Teaching is an ever-changing, spiraling process of thinking and doing, listening and re-doing, and starting again. It is constant movement, a continual interplay of reflection and action (Shon, 1983) that involves as much of a

"sixth sense" as strategy or skill. The magic of the process, however, lies in the connection that is made between the people who are immersed in the process together jointly, both teacher and students together. It is the *dialogue* among those involved that forms the "epistemological relationship," according to Paulo Freire, that is so much more than "mere technique….Dialogue is a way of knowing…an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing" (Freire, 2003, p. 17). The dialogue is the magic, the process, the heart and soul of education. We teachers simply need to pose the questions and stand ready to join our students for the journey.

Education, according to Freire, is a place where our students "come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation" (Freire, 2003, p. 12). Through hard work, good will, and the power of true dialogue, the world can also be transformed by education. This is the challenge for the future teachers, and this is the ultimate goal of Multicultural Education.

My Lesson Plan on White Privilege

Identifying Information
- Course: Multicultural Education
- Students: 26 undergraduate teacher education candidates, mostly juniors and seniors
- Dates: Two classes, one week: Tuesday & Thursday, 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Materials & Equipment
- Text: Spring, J. (2004). *The intersection of cultures: Multicultural education in the United States and the global economy* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Article: McIntosh, P. (1995). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. In Anderson, M. L., & Collins, P. H. (Eds.). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Video: *Shadow of Hate* from Teaching Tolerance (1995).
- Student activity materials: *Monopoly* game sets (3 or 4), student journals, stickers
- Visual aids: Brown tights, child's dance costume, photos, dark-skinned angel, photos

Student Learning Outcomes. During this two-day lesson on *White Privilege*, students will:
- Discuss main points about and personal reactions to the article on *White Privilege,* first in small groups and then during in an informal general discussion session.
- Cite specific examples of white privilege, drawing upon personal experience, in a teacher-directed discussion activity reinforced by the awarding of a sticker for each privilege cited.
- Watch *The Shadow of Hate* video and write a reaction in their journals, itemizing any overlaps between video images and the chapter content on dominated cultures—particularly, any historical information contained in both that surprised or shocked them.
- Discuss their reactions to the video in small groups, followed by a general class discussion focusing on how the past affects the present.
- Participate in a modified game of *Monopoly* (short version) in groups of 6-8, in which players are allotted different amounts of starting money, while knowing that high-earning winners will be awarded extra points.
- State, in a concluding group discussion, any connections between their own personal experiences as *Monopoly* players and the major concepts of the reading material (*Dominated Cultures* and *Teaching about Racism*), particularly any insights that they have gained into the experiences of those without privilege.

- Analyze the effectiveness of playing *Monopoly* as a teaching strategy in a class discussion and a vote on whether or not this strategy should be used in future classes.

Instructional Sequence for Day I
- Motivation/Preparation
  1. Write objectives on board:
     - o Today we will:
       - - Recap article on White privilege and discuss examples
       - - Briefly review Chapter 2: *Dominated Cultures*
       - - Watch a video: *Shadow of Hate*
       - - Reflect on the video and connect it to our readings in a journal writing
     - o On Thursday we will:
       - - Discuss the video
       - - Review Chapter 8: *Teaching Racism*
       - - Play *Monopoly*
  2. Have ready: Tights, dance costume, dark-skinned angel (for top of Christmas tree)

- Process
  1. Recap *White Privilege*:
     a. Open with a quick review (question-and-answer) of Peggy McIntosh's article on *White Privilege*, which they read and processed last week.
     b. Ask for their own examples of white privilege, which they were told to think about over the weekend.
     c. For every example of white privilege given, reward with a sticker on the student's journal, which counts as an extra point towards the final grade.
     d. Restate/clarify as necessary; encourage discussion; solidify/clarify their comments with statements from article and text.
     e. Conclude with a personal story about unintentional racism (daughter's dance class - the "Brown Tights" story), using photos and tights as visual aids, and/or with discussion of dark-skinned angel, asking - is this what they have been taught that angels look like? Or, have they been taught angels are blonde and blue-eyed? And if so, how do students of color strive to be angelic?
  2. Introduce Chapter 2: *Dominated Cultures*.
     a. Begin with quick question-and-answer review of chapter.
     b. Play video by Teaching Tolerance Project: *Shadow of Hate.*

- Closure:
  1. Journal writing: "React to the video you have just seen, *Shadow of Hate.* How does it relate to any of our class readings? In particular, were you surprised or shocked by any information contained in it?"
  2. Remind them of Thursday's class - Chapter 8 and *Monopoly*.

Instructional Sequence for Day II
- Motivation/Preparation
  1. Write quote on the board (to anchor the lesson): "The past is never dead. It's not even past." – William Faulkner.
  2. Write objectives on board:
     - o Today we will:
       - - Discuss the video, *Shadow of Hate,* and relate it to Chapter 2
       - - Review the main points of Chapter 8
       - - Play *Monopoly* with a point about the past

- Process
    1. Revisit *Shadow of Hate*
        a. Put students into groups at tables to discuss their reactions to the video
        b. Open the general discussion on the video. Ask them if they knew all this information? Is this how their history books portrayed it?
    2. Introduce Chapter 8: *Teaching about Racism*.
        a. Stop, and ask if they would rather play *Monopoly* to illustrate one way of teaching about racism and to make a point about the past & privilege
        b. Play *Monopoly* "Short Game" version with revised rules (see *Monopoly Lesson Plan*)
- Closure:
    1. Record student winnings. Award extra credit points to the winners. Average the scores for each category to make the point that, overall, the more you start with the greater gains you will make. Relate this to the concept of privilege.
    2. Ask them to discuss the *Monopoly* game. How did they feel about starting out with different sums of money? Is it fair that those who start out with more had an advantage to win the extra points? What adjustments should be made, if any, for those who started out with very little money? Relate their responses to Affirmative Action.
    3. Conclude by bringing it back to the quote on the board: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Ask them to consider that, even if they think there is a level playing field now, teachers must not forget that the past still has a profound effect on the present lives of their students and their families.

Evaluation & Assessment
- The journal writing assignments will serve as the evaluation and assessment of how well the students were able to connect the activities to their readings. The video is a powerful learning aid that usually has an eye-opening effect that reinforces the readings, and the *Monopoly* game lets students "let their guard down." Activities that target the affect allow students to make connections to course material through reflection on their own, personal, affective reactions.
- Students' verbal comments during discussions after all activities, taken together their written responses in the journal, will provide the instructor with an assessment of the depth of their understanding about power, privilege, and the effect of the past on both.
- In midterm essay questions, students will be assessed on their ability to connect the concepts of privilege, power, and the effects of the past to various aspects of education.

Monopoly **Lesson Plan for Multicultural Education**

Goal: To demonstrate, through the students' active participation in a modified game of *Monopoly*, the interpersonal dynamics involved in coping with the inequities of American society and the lasting benefits of privilege.

Objectives: By the end of this lesson, the students will be able to:
    1. Relate the interpersonal dynamics experienced in the game to the cultural dynamics discussed in previous class activities, and express those connections in a general class discussion.
    2. Recognize the appeal of "The American Dream" of striking it rich in America while realizing that, statistically, those who begin with less accrue less, and articulate that awareness in a general discussion after the game has been completed.

3. Identify ways in which financial hardship due to cultural history might limit access to property and power in the present, and express this knowledge in subsequent group discussions.
4. Reflect upon the effect of their own cultural history on their current potential for success, and write about this topic in subsequent papers and reflective journal writings.
5. Write with clarity about the implications of limited access to power on multicultural education in a midterm essay question.

Materials:
1. 3 or 4 *Monopoly* games
2. overhead transparency on which to record winnings
3. transparency markers
4. calculator
5. list of modified rules to be read by the instructor before the game begins (see below)
6. scrap paper for each student to use in totaling assets at the end of the game

Procedure:
1. Announce that we are going to play *Monopoly* but that students may opt to observe rather than participate if their beliefs forbid playing such games.
2. Distribute *Monopoly* games.
3. Allow students to choose their teams: up to 8 people on a team, with one banker (each table must be able to seat up to 9 people)
4. Allow students to choose their tokens.
5. Caution the bankers not to distribute the money until instructed to do so.
6. Give the students time to review the rules of the game, included in the box.
7. Announce that extra credit points will be given to the high earners. This sets up the competitive spirit that thrives in American society.
8. Once all tokens have been chosen, instruct the bankers to distribute money according to the following restrictions:
   a. <u>To those who have chosen Top Hats, Horses, Cars, and Money Bags</u>: "You are rich white male property owners whose ancestors have been here for generations. Your family has helped you develop a good business sense. You have an excellent education, a supportive family, and friends with influence in the community. You will begin the game with $1500, which represents a small inheritance from one of your aunties."
   b. <u>To those who have chosen Thimbles or Irons</u>: "You are white women who have stayed out of the workforce for many years to raise your children and help support your husband's advancement in his career. You are well educated and well connected in the community. You will begin the game with $1000, which is a gift from your husband."
   c. <u>To those who have chosen Boats</u>: "You are a recent immigrant from Asia or Europe with strong ties to a supportive family that has always stressed the value of a good education and good business sense. You are well educated. You will begin the game with $1000, which represents some of the savings from your father's business."
   d. <u>To those who have chosen Shoes</u>: "You are an immigrant from Mexico, Central America, or South America with no assets and a weak education due to limited opportunities in your native country. You are a laborer who is willing to work hard. You have strong ties to your extended family back home and large financial responsibilities for them as well. You will begin the game with $500, which represents your entire savings from your labor."

e. <u>To those who have chosen Wheelbarrows or Cannons</u>: "You are a member of an American minority group whose grandfather was not allowed to vote or to own property. Your family has never developed a good business sense but they have passed on to you a strong sense of hope and perseverance. You have a fair education. You will begin the game with $500, which you borrowed from a bank at a high interest rate due to your somewhat less than perfect credit rating."

f. <u>To those who have chosen Dogs</u>: "You are a poor white person or a poor person of color whose family has never owned property. You have never had access to good medical care or a good education; thus, you have several health problems, poor education, and little family support. You were raised in a welfare-dependent family, and you have lost touch with many of your family members. You will begin the game with $200, which represents your entire welfare allowance."

9. Set a time limit of 30 minutes, and begin the game, using rules for "Short Game."

10. Monitor game, but do not intervene if alliances are formed or bargains are struck. This is part of the game. Often, promises made to the less fortunate at the beginning of the game are broken by the end of the game, when competition intensifies. These interactions often serve as a source of rich dialogue after the game is over.

11. During the game, ask the players to think of each trip around the board as the passage of one generation. It will help them begin to understand the impact of history and realize that time does not erase all inequities. In fact, just as the rich get richer, the privileged gain more privileges as time goes on.

12. To build excitement, announce the time left to play, beginning at ten minutes to go. This will encourage the teams to step up their pace and begin to improve on property that has been purchased.

13. When the game is over, have all participants determine and record the net worth of their assets according to *Monopoly* rules. Hand out scrap paper for calculations.

14. On the transparency, list each player's final assets under the appropriate column. (For example, report all players chose the Top Hats, Horses, Cars, or Money Bags in the same column, regardless of team.) When all reports have been made, find the average amount per category. This can be done quickly with the help of a calculator, or better yet, a few student helpers with calculators.

15. Compare the findings. Almost always, those who began with the most money ended up with the most money, and those who began with the least ended up with the least. Sometimes, a person will "strike it rich" against all odds; however, the statistics should support the fact that divisions tend to remain over time.

<u>Closure</u>: When the game is over, ask the students to discuss what they felt during the game. The more fortunate will often confess that although they felt sorry for the less fortunate, they were unwilling to help them when the competitive spirit of the game intensified. Guide this dialogue into discussions about power and privilege. The less fortunate will often discuss feelings of anger, frustration, and eventual apathy or withdrawal. Guide this dialogue into discussions of disenfranchisement and learned helplessness. Sometimes, one student will "beat the odds" and end up with much more than everyone else in his/her category. Discuss the relevance of this experience to the "American Dream" of hoping to find a better life in America, the land of opportunity. Discuss the appeal of this phenomenon. Most importantly, ask the students to reflect upon the results and how the passage of time does not erase inequities, nor the feelings associated with them. Assist students in making connections to readings about power, privilege, and oppression and the relevance of these issues to teachers and students in our multicultural society. Small group discussions or journal writings may offer students a non-threatening way of drawing connections to their own lives and future careers as educators.

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Promoting Awareness About Islam
in Public Schools

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Religion is important to the vast majority of Americans, and it plays a major role in our political and social life. In the United States, 90% of Americans identify themselves as belonging to the faith of Christianity, 1% Judaism, 2% Islam, and 1% Orthodox.   As such, educators must understand the importance that most Americans place on religion in their daily lives (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and requires separation between church and state. While schools cannot favor a particular religion, they can however teach about various religions, respect the religious liberties of students, and engage students in critical thinking about the pivotal role of religion in history and contemporary world affairs (Nord & Haynes, 1998).

Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, and it is the fastest growing religion in the United States, visible not only in large metropolitan areas but also in smaller towns (Henderson, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Smith, 1999). However, despite its growth, the religion is frequently associated with threatening images of terrorism and fundamentalism, especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Mohammad-Arif, 2002). Muslims in the United States have been viewed with increased suspicion since 9/11 (Zehr, 2004). International terrorism, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, conflict between Israel and Palestine, and our hostile relationship with Iran and other Muslim countries dominate current events and cannot be ignored (Gallant, 2005; Moore, 2006). Moreover, the extensive coverage on extremist groups and Islamic terrorism by the media has increased over the past years. Muslim images in the media are often limited to media coverage on suicide bombings and Middle Eastern violence (Abbas, 2001; Henderson, 2010; Hussain, 2005; Zaidi, 2009).

The purpose of this article is to examine the growing presence of Islam in the United States public discourse and the resulting necessity of teaching about Islam in U.S. public schools. The article begins by briefly exploring the role of Muslims in the history of the United States and the growing role of Islam as a catalyst in world events. The article goes on to extol the importance of teaching about Islam in public schools in order to prevent discrimination, intolerance, and prejudice and to quell the spread of false myths and stereotypes about Islam. Finally, the article describes a suggested curriculum for teaching Islam in public schools, exposing students to an overview of Islamic history, culture, and civilization as well as a broad range of opinions and interpretations of the religion. The goal of the article is to encourage educators to teach Islam in public schools and to provide a starting point for teachers to develop their own curricula and teaching methods.

Immigration of Muslims to the United States

Muslims have played a role in the United States almost from the beginning of this nation's history. Historians estimate that more than 30 percent of the 10 million people sold into slavery were Muslim, mostly from West Africa (Jenkins, 2006). Immigrant Muslims came to the United States in three different waves. The first wave started at the end of the nineteenth century

and continued to 1925. Most of those Muslims came from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. The second group began to arrive after World War II. The main reasons for their arrival were political and social conflicts such as the partition of India and the creation of Israel. The third wave, which continues to the present, came as a result of immigration reform. Many of the Muslims from this third wave are from Egypt, North Africa, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Albania (Bennett, 2003). Yet U.S. history books focus overwhelmingly on European Americans, often ignoring the contributions of American Indians, African Americans, and millions of immigrants whose ethnic and religious beliefs helped shape this country, including Muslim Americans (Jenkins, 2006).

The Importance of Teaching Islam in Public Schools

Negative attitudes or prejudice towards any religion or ethnic group have severe consequences to our democracy and can destroy civic life (Meacham, 2009). Schools have an important role in shaping such attitudes and therefore need to understand Islam, its history, and its role in world events. What schools choose to teach about Islam and how Islam is presented in the classroom have pronounced effects in fostering positive group relationships, producing competent citizens, improving the United States' relationship with the Islamic world, and protecting the civil and political rights of all citizens (Moore, 2006). Moreover, the world's major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism always have and will continue to play a vital role in domestic and world politics. To become well-rounded citizens, U.S. students must have some knowledge of these religions in order to understand and critically analyze various perspectives on history and current affairs at home and abroad. Schools are obligated to provide education to all students that encourage them to fairly examine the impact of different religions on the humanities, history, and the social sciences (Moore, 2005). Teaching Islam provides students with opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world, helps them to develop tolerance for religious and cultural diversity, and encourages them to take an active and informed role in United States politics. These informed citizens, in turn, could generate viable solutions to religious, political, and cultural conflicts (Moore, 2005; Nord & Haynes, 1998).

The importance of promoting religious and cultural tolerance in U.S. public schools cannot be emphasized enough. The increasing presence of Muslims in public schools in the United States is a great opportunity and also a great challenge for our nation's educators. These Muslims sometimes experience anxieties, hostilities, prejudices, and racist behaviors from those who do not understand them, as political turbulence in the world influences perceptions and attitudes (Ali, 2007). This discrimination is mainly rooted in misunderstandings about Islam and those who practice it. During World War II, such fears led this nation to discriminate against people of Japanese descent, many of whom were born in the United States. If schools do not produce informed citizens, this nation could repeat the same mistakes (Jenkins, 2006).

The ongoing harassment and racial profiling of Muslims can only be prevented through adequate knowledge of this religion. Educational institutions need to recognize this, and educate students about Islam and Muslims. Schools must understand that teaching about world religions is as important as teaching about race, gender, ethnicity, and other areas of diversity (Moore, 2005).

Furthermore, educators should feel comfortable talking with students not only about 9/11, but also about other religiously motivated conflicts in recent history, such as Northern Ireland, Kashmir, and Bosnia, and should not shy away from informed debate and discussion of these controversial topics. Through knowledge and discussion, students should come away with the

core lesson that blind hatred and fanaticism lead to marginalization and dehumanization (Ornstein, 2003).

How to Teach Islam in Public Schools

Given the importance of Islam in current events, it is crucial that students learn about Islam and be exposed to a variety of opinions and interpretations of this religion. However, the teaching of Islam in the United States has been characterized by numerous stereotypes, distortions, textbook inaccuracies, and biases of Western narratives (Hasan, 2000). Moreover, scholars disagree as to what aspects of the religion should be included in secondary school curriculum. Nonetheless, certain core theological beliefs of Islam and major events in Islamic history should be a part of any basic secondary school curriculum. For example, students can learn that the five pillars of Islam are the belief in one God, prayer five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms to the poor, and making a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca (Armstrong, 2006). The role of Muhammad in the spread of Islam, the various populations of Muslims throughout the world, the importance of the Qu'ran to Muslims, the contribution of Islam and Muslims to world civilization, and an overview of Islamic science, art, and architecture should also be included in the curriculum (Gallant, 2005; Moore, 2005). These topics can be addressed not only in high school, but also beginning in elementary school onward, in subjects such as history, civics, language arts, and science.

National standards for history encourage teaching religion, but textbooks and classrooms have been slow to embrace religion as part of the curriculum. Part of the problem comes from the lack of professional development and pre-service education about religion for teachers. Also, teachers may feel uncomfortable addressing religious topics, especially Islam, given the many misconceptions or negative stereotypes attached to this religion. Teaching about Islam requires that teachers adopt multiple perspectives and a wide variety of activities that foster understanding (Moore, 2005). Teachers should be encouraged to compare and contrast world religions without appearing to favor one over the other. Teachers can discuss similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity. For example, students can learn that both religions are monotheistic and that the Bible and the Qu'ran share many narratives. Additionally, teachers can develop a standard method for teaching all world religions. They may introduce each religion with a common set of questions; for example, "When and how did the core texts first emerge in written form (Meacham, 2009, p. 14)?" Teachers may begin teaching about Islam by addressing common questions. For example, Where do Muslims live and what do they believe (Meacham, 2009)? Kenan, (2005) suggested that English or civics classroom teachers may encourage their students to work on a project entitled "Muslims in the United States: Understanding and Embracing Diversity." Teachers also may bring a Muslim guest speaker to speak about how he or she feels about being a Muslim in the United States or encourage students to debate about civil rights and homeland security.

Teachers can also develop a curriculum comparing and contrasting the many ways Islam is interpreted and practiced throughout the world, in different cultures and countries. For example, they can ask students to research and compare Islamic practices in countries such as Egypt, Afghanistan, Turkey, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. How do they differ in their views on men and women and in the practice of Islamic law, or Shariah? Students will gain an understanding that Islam is subject to a great diversity of interpretations, shaped by the native cultures and environments of the societies that practice it. Moreover, teachers may discuss that killing in the name of Islam or God is not supported by a majority interpretation of the Qur'an or the vast majority of Muslims throughout the world by pointing students to moderate Islamic texts and opinions.

In addition to teaching about the religion of Islam itself, teachers should also develop a curriculum around the cultures and regions that practice Islam, such as the Middle East. Doing so provides students with context for better understanding the historical development of the religion as well as the interplay between culture and religion. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) recommends that English teachers select quality literature from and about the Middle East to allow students to explore these countries' histories, ethnic identities, classes, and religions. Such literature will provide students with opportunities to understand how people's beliefs are similar or different and make intertextual comparisons and contrasts. This exposure to the texts from the Middle East can help students to understand the influence of language in different religious, social, and political contexts. Another reason American youth should become more aware of Middle Eastern literature and culture is that the United States demographic is changing and the Muslim and Arab populations in our public schools are increasing (Finkle & Lilly, 2008). NCTE's theory and research into practice series *Middle Ground: Exploring selected literature from and about the Middle East* provides a rich collection of selected literature from and about the Middle East and appropriate lesson plans for classroom teachers. Similarly, teachers may select literatures from South Asia and Southeast Asia, where the populations are also predominantly Muslim, as recommended reading for their students.

Another good resource to use in geography or social studies classrooms is the PBS documentary entitled "Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet" (Kaya, 2007). This documentary presents the biography of Muhammad and interesting discussions of the geographical and historical context into which Islam was born and spread throughout the world. It also looks at the September 11, 2001 attacks and how Muslims of the United States responded to this tragic event. Furthermore, this documentary showcases how Muslim Americans interpret Muhammad's message in their daily lives in the context of contemporary society. Moreover, the lesson plans developed from this documentary by Kaya (2007) for geography and social studies classrooms and the national standards covered from these lesson plans are excellent resources for public school teachers.

It is important to remember that integrating Islam and Islamic cultures into the curriculum need not be limited to history, literature and social studies classrooms. For example, science or mathematics classes may explore the significant contribution of Muslims and Arabs to these fields of study as an integrated curriculum approach and discuss how these contributions shaped modern mathematics and science (Alexakos & Antoine, 2005). Teachers of all subjects should not be afraid to take a creative approach to integrating the study of Islam into their lesson plans.

Developing a curriculum for teaching world religions requires collaboration among scholars of religion, educators, and members of faith communities. Together they can develop curriculum for multidisciplinary skill-based courses at the appropriate grade levels (Douglass, 2002). The Council of Islamic Education (CIE) is a national scholar-based organization that helps K-12 textbook publishers to design unbiased and wide-ranging textbooks with respect to world religions. CIE also offers high-quality teaching units related to Islam and in-service workshops about religions for teachers. Moreover, their research-based reports provide valuable information into education reform and the national and state standards. CIE research also provides guidelines for educators about civil society, interfaith matters, constitutional principles and core American values of freedom, fairness and equality of all under the law.

Conclusion

The increase in religious diversity in the United States, especially the rapid expansion of Islam, demands that public schools discuss world religions in order to produce informed and competent citizens in an ever-shrinking technological world. In a world where religion has an overwhelming effect on people and politics, knowledge about world religions is essential to function effectively in a democratic society, make informed decisions, foster religious diversity, and advocate social justice. Educators play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and attitudes about religious diversity and should take an active role in creating curriculum that exposes students to the role of religion in world history and encourages open dialogue and discussion.

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