

## Investing in Results

Educational leaders face a myriad of competing demands for resources and programs to support student learning. While prioritizing needs and scarce resources is never easy, investing in areas with high potential to produce significant gains for large groups of students is sound policy.

Early literacy and aboriginal learning illustrate two areas where researchers, policymakers, and practitioners are already focusing their efforts in order to improve educational outcomes for thousands of Canadian students. This issue of the *Analyst* highlights additional strategic areas for attention suggested by emerging research and recent trends.

While we have an abundance of programs and resources addressing early literacy, scant efforts have been invested in tackling literacy deficits at the

intermediate and secondary level. Because literacy is fundamental to learning in the content areas of the curriculum, effective interventions for adolescent readers will pay dividends. Page 4 outlines steps school districts can take to reduce the literacy gap for adolescents.

Concentrated efforts to build capacity in low-performing schools serving challenging populations also promises to yield long-term benefits. Can additional coaching and resources for school-wide action research trigger collaborative staff learning that lifts student performance? Case studies from six BC schools offer us a window on this question.

Online learning holds the potential to revolutionize teaching and learning in ways we are only beginning to grasp. Policymakers need to keep abreast of rapidly emerging developments, opportunities and pitfalls in this field, too.

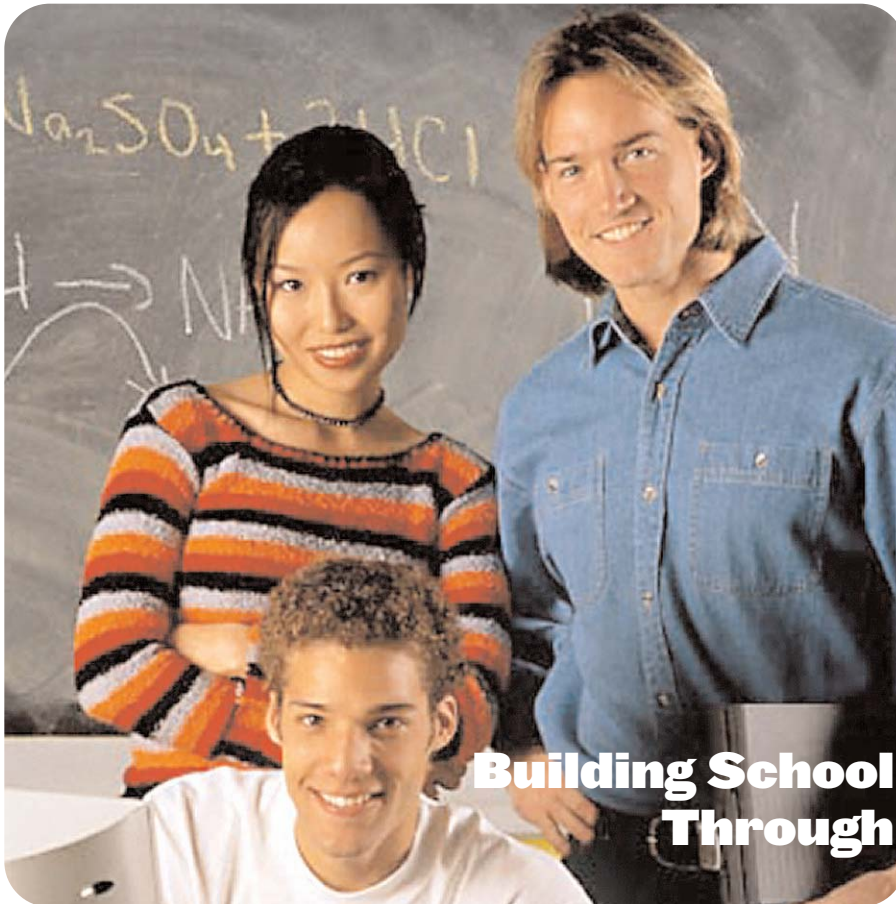
Canada's shrinking school-aged population is another trend having an impact on district policies and resource allocation. New research in *From the Field* illustrates how urban districts can design choice plans to reverse declining enrolment and reinforce school improvement planning and goals for student achievement.

Equipping teachers to meet the challenges of today's classrooms will also generate large-scale gains in student achievement. Canada's Deans of Education have recently articulated some principles for teacher preparation programs, while a groundbreaking US survey of pre-service programs (Levine, 2006) reveals a gap between perceptions of quality and reality. Mike Schmoker's new book on classroom practices that consistently generate higher learning, reviewed on page 10, will be of interest to all school and district leaders seeking to strengthen instruction and its supervision to help schools achieve "Results Now".

Staying ahead of the learning curve is all about investing in powerful results.

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## Building School **Success** Through **Research**

**The Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE)** was founded in 1996 to provide non-partisan education research and information to policy-makers, education partners and the public. Our purpose is to encourage higher performance throughout Canada's public education system. Our mission is to develop new Canadian knowledge on school improvement and foster the understanding of its use. With generous support from Canadian foundations, we have commissioned a range of studies to expand the knowledge base about school change and effectiveness. SAEE studies are rigorously designed and reviewed, conducted independently, and their findings shared widely across Canada.

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## Early Literacy

"Incidence and Persistence of Early Literacy Problems: Evidence from the NLSCY, 1994-2000" examines data from the first three Cycles of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth to identify factors associated with early literacy problems and the persistence of early literacy problems. Although the results of the longitudinal analysis support the view that early literacy problems persist to a certain extent into older ages, there is also evidence that early literacy problems are temporary for many children. Regional variations are reported.

<http://www11.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/hrsdc/lp/publications/2006-002830/page00.shtml>

## Accord on Teacher Education

The Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE)'s has reached an *Accord on Teacher Education* which provides a framework for increased investment in teacher education. The document sets out normative principles for initial teacher education programs to which all signatory institutions are expected to aspire. Among the ten goals articulated in the Accord are: to identify and address national issues in teacher education, to promote the funding and dissemination of research on teacher education and practice, to support innovation to improve and strengthen teacher preparation programs, and to affirm the essential collaboration between the university and the school system grounded in the study of teaching and learning. See <http://www.acde-acde.ca/>

## First Nations Education Agreement in BC

B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell and Chief Nathan Matthew and President Deborah Jeffrey of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) have signed a historic agreement on First Nations education. The British Columbia-First Nations Education Agreement establishes a process for the recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over their children's education, and recognizes the importance of students being able to transfer between First Nations and public schools, and their eligibility for post-secondary institutions. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2006/2-02773\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2006/2-02773_e.html)

## Early Childhood Education

Governments are increasingly looking to early intervention as a preventative strategy for closing the achievement gap. This can be seen in the North American trend to universal pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten within the school system, and heavy investment in early childhood programming. *Closing the Gap: Early Childhood Education* (Nelson, 2006) summarizes the evidence on effective programs and what is known about best practice in early childhood intervention (ECI). The research suggests effective ECI programs include these characteristics: certified teachers, small classes (5-6 students), two or more periods of instruction daily, weekly home visits, health and nutrition screening and use of developmentally appropriate instructional activities. Longitudinal large scale research using control groups suggests that such programs can reduce the disparity in academic performance between children from highly challenged families with multiple risk factors for academic failure and children from more advantaged backgrounds. The best prevention is holistic, occurs as early as possible, and involves the family in the developmental training. The brief also outlines policy challenges and recommendations, special education issues, and a role for the private sector, as well as referring the reader to model programs and abstracts of new ECI studies. See [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) and search for *Infobrief*, April 2006.

## Enrolment Trends

The Canadian Council on Learning recently reported declining enrolment in the public school system across Canada. Student numbers dropped by 1.2 % between 1998 and 2004, with rural areas being the hardest hit. Low enrolment presents challenges including hiring freezes, service reductions, teacher layoffs and school closures. With fewer students in classrooms, the cost per student for program delivery increases. However, the difficulties presented lead to opportunities for innovation such as recruiting tuition-paying international students, and developing online learning. Since further declines are expected over the next few years, methods of attracting students are of interest to school boards across the country.

[http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/20060921LinL\\_DecliningEnrolment.htm](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/20060921LinL_DecliningEnrolment.htm)

## Adolescent Literacy

An early, but incorrect, conclusion of reading researchers suggested children taught to read by the end of third grade would be assured future literacy skills. This belief has resulted in concentrated attention to early literacy instruction, with encouraging reading improvement at the lower grades. However, statistics gathered in both Canada and the

From  
18% to  
38% of

Canadian youth, depending upon the region of the country, do not attain minimum levels of literacy proficiency to cope with the demands of everyday life and work

Unites States reveal that the literacy skills of students in secondary grades have remained stubbornly constant for decades.

ABC Canada reports, "though the majority of Canadian youth, age 16 to 25, attain the *minimum* level of literacy skills needed to cope with the demands of everyday life and work, anywhere from 18 per cent to 38 per cent of youth, depending upon the region of the country, do not attain that minimum proficiency" (International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, 2005). South of the border, it is reported that seventy percent of American middle and high school students cannot read proficiently. Because literacy is fundamental to academic improvement across the curriculum and the key to graduation, these results should be a call to action.

*The Next Chapter: A School Board Guide to Improving Adolescent Literacy*<sup>1</sup> is an attempt to address "the daunting challenge of closing the achievement gap for millions of older students who do not have the advanced reading, writing, and critical thinking skills needed to succeed in this highly competitive environment".

It is tempting for school boards to focus their energies on budgets and buildings, leaving learning to the

purview of educators. However, a study by the Iowa Association of School Boards found that "school boards in high-achieving districts are far more knowledgeable about teaching and learning issues than boards in low achievement districts." These school boards were also "much more likely to use data and other information on student needs and results to make decisions."

It is essential for district policymakers to look beyond "learning to read" to ensure their students can "read to learn". School trustees who understand adolescent literacy issues are equipped to take actions which will lead to significant improvement. *The Next Chapter* combines best practices in governance and current research around adolescent literacy in a practical and motivating policy brief for school boards.

*The Next Chapter* outlines eight strategies school boards can employ to improve older student's proficiency in literacy, and provides practical examples of these strategies:

**Identify students' literacy needs:** All school districts have problems with literacy in Grades 4 to 12. However, not all districts have taken steps to measure the extent of their local literacy issues. This is an important first strategy. In this age range, there are two sets of students with literacy issues. Individuals within the largest group generally meet minimum literacy targets, but have problems with comprehension and fluency. Those in the second group struggle with simple reading tasks and require intensive intervention.

Existing state and provincial literacy tests identify students who are reading below expectations, "but they don't reveal *why* they're such poor readers." *The Next Chapter* suggests it is essential for school boards to invest time and money in diagnostic assessments to obtain a clear picture of local student needs.

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<sup>1</sup> National School Boards Association. (2006). [www.nsba.org/site/docs/38800/38703.pdf](http://www.nsba.org/site/docs/38800/38703.pdf)



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**Make adolescent literacy a priority in your district:**

One school board achieving success made "increasing the reading comprehension of all students" its only strategic goal for the last four years. The school board does not tell educators *how* to meet the goal but it insists on regular updates and information about *what* they are doing.

**Make time for literacy:** The guide suggests embedding literacy across subject areas. In addition, students reading two or more grades below grade level must receive intensive reading instruction for at least ninety minutes a day. Some districts are offering this additional reading instruction outside of the regular timetable and in the summer.

**Support strong professional development:** Generally, secondary school teachers are not trained to teach reading or content vocabulary. Literacy coaches are a popular strategy but the research on their effectiveness is not conclusive. The guide cautions that training and standards for coaches are essential.

**Look for and support literacy leaders:** School board policies and direction can align hiring practices for school and district administrators with literacy goals. School board support for bottom-up literacy initiatives is generally more effective than mandated, top-down programs.

**Align your district's resources to support what works:** Resources should only be redirected to programs that are supported by true scientific effectiveness studies.

**Keep track of what's happening:** School districts require on-going data about the progress of students and the implementation of programs.

**Bring in the community:** Parental involvement and family literacy programs are beneficial to students. Reaching out to the families of struggling readers yields positive results.

Effective school boards and trustees ask questions, including the difficult and uncomfortable ones. Rather than relying on "recommendations", effective school boards need to always ask "What data do you have to support this?" *The Next Chapter* includes thirty-eight guiding questions for school boards to ask as they seek to understand, implement and support critically important local efforts to improve adolescent literacy.

It should be required reading for all school trustees.



# TRACKING THE TRENDS

## E-learning in Canada: Directions for Research

by Kirsten Bennett

In the last decade, e-learning has rapidly moved to the forefront of distance education. While it has been readily embraced at the post-secondary level, many in the K-12 system question whether online instruction is feasible and effective for younger learners. It presents a unique set of challenges due to the specialized needs of students at different levels, the sheer number of institutions that could potentially be involved, and the substantial investment required for technology platforms and professional development to support it.

Despite such obstacles, the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) predicts a growth rate of 20-25% over the next 4 to 5 years for e-learning in the K-12 sector.<sup>1</sup> In view of this, policy makers in Canada are investing in research, pilot projects and development of online learning programs. Discussions around when, where and how to use computer and internet technology to support education will shape policy in the coming years.

### What is e-learning?

The term e-learning is used to describe distance education that is conducted through the Internet, but it is also used more generally to describe the wider use of information technology to support teaching and learning. Recent developments in technology allow for online discussions, audio/video conferencing, adaptive testing, and virtual simulations. E-learning can be both synchronous and asynchronous and has been described as learning 'anywhere at anytime'.

Virtual schools deliver K-12 courses entirely through the use of computer technology. However, a blended approach is more common, in which students take some courses online and others through a face-to-face environment. As early as 2001, a study of virtual schooling in Canada predicted increasing integration of online and conventional schooling.<sup>2</sup>

### What do we know about e-learning?

A systematic review of the research on e-learning was recently conducted through the Centre for the Study of

Learning and Performance (CSLP) at Concordia University.<sup>3</sup> The evidence from a wide range of studies reviewed pointed to the following benefits and drawbacks of this learning mode:

### Benefits

- increased enrolment
- broader educational opportunities for students especially in rural areas
- access to resources and instructors not locally available
- increased student to teacher communication
- ability for students to work at their own pace and review often
- development of student motivation, autonomy and critical thinking skills
- increased opportunity for parent involvement

### Drawbacks

- relative isolation of students
- lack of social development through face-to-face interaction
- emphasis on reading and writing over listening and speaking
- difficulty in delivering highly technical subjects or those that require physical demonstration
- greater difficulty in offering courses to students with certain disabilities
- assumption of computer literacy and competence
- need for scaffolded instruction and more support for younger learners
- cost of implementing technology and support staff

### Trends

E-learning in Canadian schools is developing on a broken front, being most actively pursued in Ontario, BC and Alberta. Many school districts are offering e-learning as a way to provide choice, improve access, and ensure high quality especially for rural students.

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1 North American Council for Online Learning. Information retrieved Oct. 6, 2006 from: [www.nacol.org](http://www.nacol.org)

2 Barker, K., Wendel, T., (2001). *e-Learning: Studying Canada's Virtual Secondary Schools*. Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.

3 Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, (April, 2006) *A Review of E-learning in Canada*. The Canadian Council on Learning. Retrieved Oct.5, 2006 from: [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca)

In British Columbia this year, 17,270 students are enrolled in distributed learning. Of that number, growth is seen toward online rather than traditional distance education.<sup>4</sup> BC has invested \$1 million and has earmarked an additional \$5 million toward LearnNow, a new virtual school launched this fall, which links Grade 10 through 12 students to online distance courses offered through 47 school districts in the province.<sup>5</sup> In Alberta, during the 2005/06 school year, 5,769 students were enrolled in online courses. In Ontario, 11 school boards are piloting the implementation of e-learning courses in secondary schools involving more than 800 students.<sup>6</sup>

Online assessment is an emerging related field. "Technology holds the potential to revolutionize the delivery and assessment of learning outcomes and will result in fundamental changes in how we teach; which mental processes, skills and understandings we measure; and how we make decisions about student learning."<sup>7</sup> Alberta and BC are currently piloting online testing for some provincial examinations.

### Directions for Research

Two main gaps in the research were identified by CSLP. The first calls for measured outcomes. Much of the research up to this point has been in the form of qualitative case studies. More quantitative or mixed method research would give policy makers a clear idea about what is working and what needs to be improved to support virtual learning. "More emphasis needs to be placed on implementing longitudinal research... and all development efforts need to be accompanied by strong evaluation components that focus on learning impact."<sup>8</sup> Specific attention should be paid to the impact on special needs, ESL, Aboriginal and ethnic minority students.

The second area of required research is in building appropriate support. A number of North American studies point to the lack of professional development for teachers in online instruction and course design.<sup>9</sup> Learning gains will be as a result of instructional design, teaching quality, and content rather than the use of the technology itself. Research areas include how teachers are adapting new technology for diverse educational needs, and how innovations in design and pedagogy are being communicated. "It is arguable that the education of Canadians would be better served by more emphasis on preparing and training practitioners to use technology effectively than rushing to adopt the 'technology *du jour*'."<sup>10</sup> Effective e-learning requires the support of leadership, technology specialists, service providers, teachers, parents and wider educational stakeholders.

E-learning raises important questions of cost, efficiency and quality. Decisions for future directions require clearly articulated evidence of success and best practices.

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- 4 Tim Winkelmanns, A/Manager BC Ministry of Education, Distributive Learning.
  - 5 BC Ministry of Education News release. Access LearnNow at [www.learnnowbc.ca](http://www.learnnowbc.ca)
  - 6 Ontario Ministry of Education. Retrieved from: [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)
  - 7 Taylor, A. R., (2005). *A Future in the Process of Arrival; Using Computer Technologies for the Assessment of Student Learning*. The Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. (P. 102).
  - 8 CSLP (p. ii)
  - 9 Learning Point Associates, (2004), *The Effects of Distance Education on K-12 Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis*. Retrieved Oct. 6, 2006 from: [www.learningpt.org](http://www.learningpt.org)
  - 10 CSLP (p. 36)

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Upcoming Events!

**School Improvement in Action: Sharing our Journey**, November 24, 2006, in Delta BC. Join us to launch the new School Improvement in Action case studies report and hear Cycle 2 Schools share their experiences, successes and challenges. Go to [www.saeec.ca](http://www.saeec.ca) and click on the link to register or find out more information.

The Technology Assisted Student Assessment Institute (TASA) and SAEI are hosting **Innovations in Testing Technology: From Promise to Practice** on February 23, 2007 in Richmond

BC. This symposium will examine recent advances in assessment technology for the K-12 sector and develop research collaborations in the field. Attendees will include experts and officials from Education Assessment Branches across Canada, school district leaders, researchers, and assessment developers. Visit <http://www.tasainstitute.com> to view our program and to register.



## Coping With Declining Enrolment

School choice has been a cornerstone of the educational landscape in Edmonton, Alberta since 1974. The interplay of choice policies and practices over this period of time has led to a robust K-12 choice environment that has generated international interest among educational leaders and researchers. A recent study<sup>1</sup> of Edmonton (Maguire, 2006) provides guidance on the effective design and implementation of urban school choice plans. Maguire's research pays particular attention to strategies to assist those who typically do not benefit from choice: lower income and minority families and public schools experiencing declining enrolment. It was conducted between April 2005 and June 2006 as part of a larger study on urban school choice.

### Design of the Study

Maguire examined three facets of school choice in metro-Edmonton. First, the extent of choice available was documented through constructing a profile of each K-12 sector. Five-year enrolment trends, program offerings, choice policies and their implementation were established for the Edmonton Public and Catholic separate school districts, and francophone, charter, private, and home-schooling. In June 2005, a telephone survey of 601 randomly selected parents was conducted to provide information on their attitudes to choice and how they go about the business of selecting schools. Finally, school-level responses to competition and the role of the district in monitoring and supporting schools in this choice rich environment were explored through four case studies in the Edmonton Catholic School District. The cases, compiled in the spring of 2006 through interviews with district officials and school principals, describe two schools which had successfully reversed a five-year decline in enrolment, and two whose enrolment continues to decline. The findings from these three different levels of analyses were triangulated and examined for the practical insights they offer urban school districts on the implementation of school choice.

### Overview of the Findings

Choice was found to be a valued and well-established characteristic of schooling in the city. Edmonton's 327 schools offer a diverse array of options among six distinct providers

or sectors. Despite the number of choices available, however, it is an intra-district phenomenon for most parents. The public and Catholic school districts, funded on an equal footing, serve 95% of the city's 130,000 students. The fact that francophone, charter or private schools have not acquired sufficient mass to provide serious competition may in large part be attributed to the pro-active establishment of alternative programs by the two school districts.

### Parent Perceptions

The survey revealed strong parental support for the concept of choice (92%). Edmonton parents believe that they have good and sufficient information and are active choosers, with over 70% considering more than one school for their child. They rely heavily on school reputation and place greater emphasis on quality than convenience factors in making a decision. Sixty-two percent of parents reported checking annual reports on school performance, significantly higher than the national average of 45%<sup>2</sup>. Edmonton parents (91%) have high expectations for parental involvement in their chosen schools. Lower income and minority parents are less likely, however, to feel they have sufficient choice, be comfortable approaching school authorities, have the resources to acquire information on choosing or accessing alternative options, and in general experience more barriers to exercising choice.

### School District Role

Edmonton's two school districts are purposeful in their approach to choice philosophy and policy. Evidence from both districts suggests that the provision of educational options is linked to student achievement goals. Choice is used strategically for a range of purposes: to assist schools to respond to emerging unmet learning needs, foster inno-

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<sup>1</sup> Maguire, Patrick. (2006) *Choice in Urban School Systems: The Edmonton Experience*. SAEE Kelowna. 125 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Guppy, Neil et al. (2005). *Parent and Teacher Views on Education: A Policymaker's Guide*, SAEE, Kelowna. 95 pp.



vation, test new pedagogical practices, and renew inner city neighborhoods where school buildings have excess space. Success is achieved through carefully designed policies, supported by an administrative structure and oversight that reflects these values.

The addition of new program choices has been effective in underpinning district school improvement strategies and reinvigorating schools with declining enrolments. Both districts take assertive



approaches to the establishment of alternate or focus programs in the belief they can strengthen school communities and student learning. ESDC is quick to intervene in situations where enrolment and achievement are in decline, including a process of planning and consultation with school administration, staff and parents regarding the opportunities and benefits of new programming options or establishing a new direction for the school. Proactive intervention in school administration appointments and staff capacity building initiatives were also strategies used by the district in these instances.

Both districts were seen to maintain firm central control over the critical issues of program approval, location, administrator selection, and admissions and transportation policies. Ongoing support to schools is provided through staff development and assistance with promotional activities. The success indicators of student achievement, enrolment, demand, and parent satisfaction are consistently monitored. Through these mechanisms, central office is able to identify struggling schools and allocate resources to build capacity for growth. Oversight at EPSB also includes monitoring the supply and demand of choice, using alternative programs as a mechanism for "continual growth and renewal" in the district, whereby "programs in demand will increase and those least in demand will diminish".

### School-Level Responses to Choice

The case studies revealed the presence of school-based variables, with the more successful schools in this environment distinguished by three factors. Principals able to reverse

declining enrolments had a strong mandate from the district to improve the school, took proactive strategies to attract students, and, in establishing focus programs, gained city-wide promotional support from the district. These cases also suggest that Edmonton Catholic schools successfully collaborate in their choice and admission policies to avoid the intensely competitive relationship that would arguably undermine the integrity of the system and induce the 'have' and 'have-not' environment.

### Barriers to Choice

Despite these positive findings, some continuing barriers to choice were found, primarily related to admissions policies, information gaps and transportation issues. Lower-income and minority families and harder to educate students were seen to be disadvantaged by current practice in these areas.

### Conclusions

As with many other policy initiatives, when it comes to school choice, the 'devil is in the details'. The Edmonton case illustrates that well-designed choice plans serve a variety of educational purposes, are positively endorsed by stakeholders, and that factors associated with overall school improvement can be purposefully and successfully integrated into urban choice policies. Despite the high degree of stakeholder satisfaction, however, further policy work remains to ensure equal access on the part of lower-income families and harder to educate students. *Choice in Urban School Systems: The Edmonton Experience* concludes with a checklist that is intended to assist district leaders in the task of designing an effective choice program.



# BOOK REVIEW

## Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning

Mike Schmoker (2006). ASCD  
ISBN 13978-1-4166-0358-0. 195 pp. \$26.95

*Results Now* offers a provocative critique of the state of K-12 instruction and bluntly confronts a system which tolerates and perpetuates ineffective practices.

Schmoker, whose earlier books have inspired legions of educators, adopts a more critical stance in this latest work before outlining practical strategies and supporting structures for attaining "unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning".

*Results Now* is divided into three distinct sections. Section One exposes the yawning gap between what is known to be good practice and what occurs in the typical classroom. In blunt language, richly salted with research citations and pithy quotes from leading experts in the field, he condemns "the protective barrier that discourages and even punishes close, constructive scrutiny of instruction" (p 13). This failure has manifold consequences, preventing communities, school boards, principals and teachers themselves from knowing what or how well their colleagues teach or from learning from each other, cumulatively exacting a formidable toll on the quality of schooling children receive.

Schmoker offers sobering statistics on the system's meaningless evaluation rituals and lack of quality control over instruction which rob teachers of valuable feedback and the opportunity to learn from their results. He observes that this combination of isolation and insulation serves only to "mask starkly different results achieved by different teachers, ensuring that highly unprofessional practices are tolerated in the name of professionalism" (p.24).

He cites recent evidence based on over 1,500 classroom observations (Learning 24/7, 2005) on the frequency that researchers found the following in those lessons: a clear learning objective (4%), higher-order thinking (3%), writing or using rubrics (0%), non-instructional activities (35%), worksheets (52%), and fewer than half the students paying attention (85%).

Schmoker points to four root causes of endemic ineffective practice:

Reviewed by Helen Raham

- Students are asked to read too little and write even less, with little higher order thinking about text.
- Teachers do not follow a common curriculum, continuing to teach what they want with activities irrelevant to specified learning outcomes.
- Administrators lack any formal mechanisms to accurately assess the content teachers cover or how effectively it is taught.
- Teachers do not work as professional learning communities, teaming to prepare lessons, assess learning and refine instruction.

Compelling illustrative case studies and recommendations to address these obstacles to improved instruction form the remainder of the book.

In Section Two, Schmoker concentrates on literacy instruction for its power to scale up student achievement. He makes a strong case for deep and strategic reading combined with writing to develop the higher order thinking, argumentative powers and logic necessary to strengthen civic democracy. Another chapter, based on empirical research and fieldwork notes, paints a discouraging picture of the state of literary education today. The low level of expectations, the minimal time spent in actual reading and writing tasks, and the arts and crafts and other diversions that pass for reasoned literacy exercises are seen to contribute to "wasted time and wasted lives".

The third section of *Results Now* addresses learning and leading in the professional learning community. Here, Schmoker presses for transformative and systemic change to create extraordinary impact on instruction and its improvement.

*If there is anything the research community agrees on, it is this: The right kind of continuous structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and pays big, often immediate dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting (p. 177).*

He describes the fundamental attributes of learning communities, why shallow imitations haven't worked, what's wrong with conventional professional development, and how to create winning teams and quick measurable gains. The ability to manage such teams will redefine school leadership. A further chapter makes the case for new forms of teacher evaluation and compensation, including evaluation by teacher teams. The final chapter targets changes in policy and practice that must be brought about at the district and state level to facilitate large scale change.

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Choice in Urban School Systems: The Edmonton Experience	\$35		
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