spectra

The Magazine of the National Communication Association November 2014 | Volume 50, Number 4

ABOUT spectra

Spectra, the magazine of the National Communication Association (NCA), features articles on topics that are relevant to Communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners. *Spectra* is one means through which NCA works toward accomplishing its mission of advancing Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

NCA serves its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

All NCA members receive a *Spectra* subscription. The magazine also is available via individual print subscription for non-members at the annual cost of $50; to subscribe, send an email to memberservice@natcom.org.

Spectra (ISSN 2157-3751) is published four times a year (March, May, September, and November).

ADVERTISING IN SPECTRA

For information about placing an advertisement in *Spectra*, please visit www.natcom.org/advertising.

ADVERTISING IN CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Deadline for March Issue: January 15
Deadline for May Issue: March 15

Submit text-only ads online at www.natcom.org/postjob/. Payment information must accompany ad order.

Visit www.natcom.org/spectragraphicads/ for information on submitting graphic ads. NCA accepts Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express, and purchase orders.

Questions? Contact spectra@natcom.org.

NCA supports continued efforts to eliminate discriminatory hiring practices. All employers are asked to identify the inclusion of sexual orientation in their affirmative action statements. Advertisers must provide information about the availability of domestic partner benefits, which will appear with all online and print advertisements. NCA is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of advertisements.

In this issue

spectra

DID YOU KNOW

In its online Virtual Faculty Lounge, NCA provides a range of essential teaching and curricular resources for the inclusion of communication in grades K-12.

The Significance
OF COMMUNICATION TO K-12 EDUCATION

By Kathleen J. Turner, Ph.D.

In my previous presidential column for *Spectra*, I recalled how I came to the study of Communication well before I attended college: learning and performing poetry for my fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Kinkaid; editing my junior high school newspaper; participating in high school debate and extemporaneous speaking; and discovering general semantics on the power of language. My elementary, middle, and high school experiences equipped me to value the joy of learning and to explore the powerful role of communication in a variety of settings. So I am particularly pleased that this issue of *Spectra* addresses those formative years of education.

In his *Communication Education* article, "Essential Speaking and Listening Skills for Elementary School Students," nearly 30 years ago, Philip Backlund observed that "speaking and listening skills lie at the heart of a student's education. Neither basic skills nor excellence are completely possible without the ability to communicate effectively." And yet, he noted, "speech communication is probably the most widely used and least recognized area of knowledge essential to education. Our abilities to speak and listen form a central part of our humanity, yet this centrality is not reflected in most educational efforts in elementary and high schools."

Backlund's contentions about the significance of communication to elementary and high school education would, I suspect, go unchallenged by those of us who are members of the National Communication Association. However, has the status of education in communication during these developmental years been much improved?

Some might point to Common Core requirements to suggest that the standing of Communication indeed has been elevated, for the English Language Arts Standards in Speaking and Listening stipulate measures of comprehension and collaboration as well as presentation of knowledge and ideas for kindergarteners through seniors in high school (see http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/introduction/). Yet, as Sara Weintraub points out, those engaging in these instructional efforts need to be educated in the theory and praxis of communication processes. Without that kind of professional background and expertise, what appears to be a silk purse upon closer inspection turns into a sow's ear: There is an appearance of attention to these fundamental processes without the knowledge required to make that attention beneficial.

On a brighter note, at the Western States Communication Association convention in Anaheim

this February, I had the pleasure of meeting Shahani Waas, who this spring completed her master's thesis at California State University at Fresno on ways to help elementary school students learn to speak up and speak out. Her insights, intelligence, and passion offered an infectious vision of what scholar-teachers in Communication have to offer to the educational process.

In addition, the NCA Executive Committee recently voted to offer all K-12 teachers who are current members of NCA a free weekend pass to our centennial convention in Chicago this November. All they need to do is register in person with their school ID at the convention on Saturday and enjoy the sessions. The Educational Policies Committee worked with Michelle Randall, the guru of convention planning in the national office, to schedule a variety of panels of interest to these instructors during the weekend. With a large percentage of NCA's membership within driving distance of Chicago, a wide range of members may benefit from this option.

Classrooms all over the country (and beyond) host the next generations of scholars, teachers, leaders, and activists. May these future influentials learn the complexity, the power, and the promise of that process that makes us human: communication. ■

My elementary, middle, and high school experiences equipped me to value the joy of learning and to explore the powerful role of communication in a variety of settings. So I am particularly pleased that this issue of *Spectra* addresses those formative years of education.

Spotlight

NEW DATA ABOUT THE DISCIPLINE

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE HUMANITIES INDICATORS' DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY: COMMUNICATION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES initiated the Humanities Departmental Survey (HDS) in 2008 "to fill critical gaps in the knowledge about the state of the humanities in higher education; specifically, about the number of faculty and students in the field and the role of humanities departments in their institutions and society." The first HDS collected data on eight disciplines, including Art History, English, History, History of Science, Languages and Literatures other than English (LLE), Linguistics, Combined English and LLE, and Religion, at four-year colleges and universities. Communication was added to the second HDS, administered in 2012–2013, along with Classical Studies, Folklore, Musicology, and Philosophy.

A Popular Undergraduate Major

KEY FINDING: By a substantial margin, the discipline of Communication has the largest number of bachelor's degrees conferred and declared majors of all disciplines included in the survey.

In the 2011–2012 academic year, Communication departments conferred a total of 59,810 bachelor's degrees, for an average of 78.1 per department. In contrast, 45,780 B.A. degrees were conferred in English (at an average of 43.0 per department) and 34,780 B.A. degrees were conferred in History (at an average of 37.8 per department). Figure 1 reveals the average number of majors and degrees conferred across all the disciplines in the HDS.

While Figure 1 reports the average number of degree recipients and majors, the total numbers derived from the individual discipline reports show that there were 135,190 juniors and seniors with a declared major in Communication in 766 Communication departments, while there were nearly 50,000 fewer majors in History with 921 departments. With 1,064 departments, there were nearly 45,000 fewer majors in English than in Communication.

Figure 1. Average Number of Bachelor's Degrees Conferred (AY 2011-12) and Juniors and Seniors with Declared Majors per Department

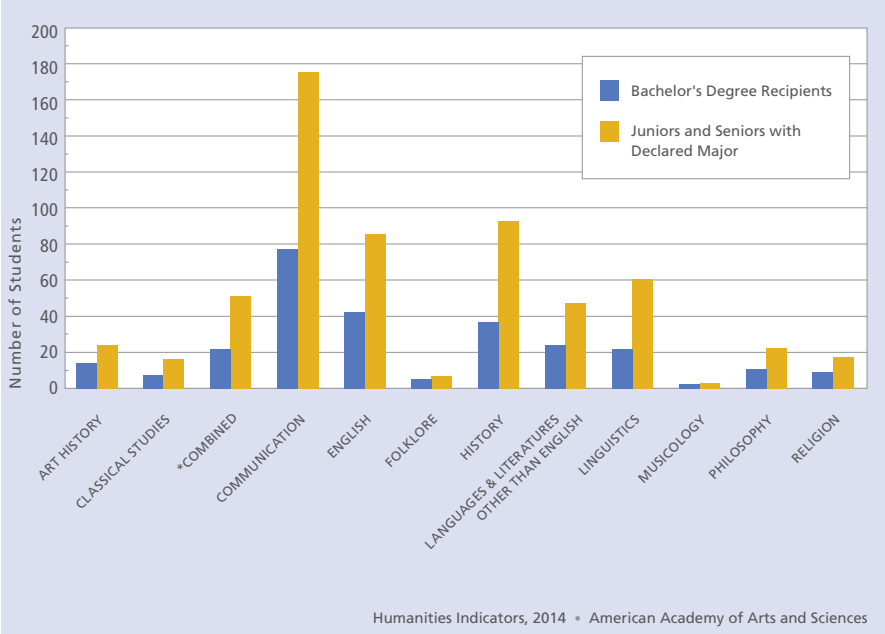
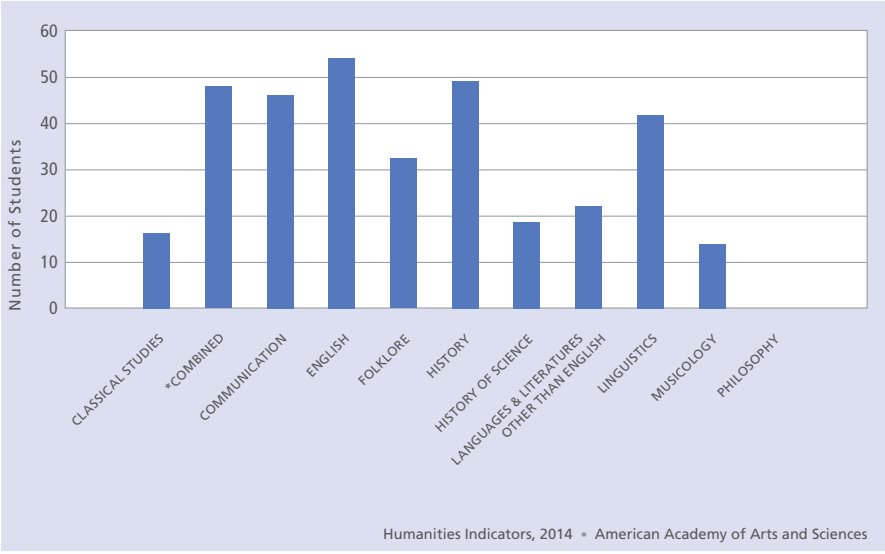


Figure 2. Average Graduate Student Enrollment per Department, Fall 2012



* "Combined" refers to departments that confer degrees in both English and Languages and Literatures other than English.

A Popular Discipline for Graduate Study

KEY FINDING: The HDS reveals that Communication has the third highest number of graduate students among the disciplines surveyed.

As Figure 2 reveals, Communication departments have an average of 46.1 students per department, which is slightly fewer than English (average = 54.3 students/department), History (average = 49.5 students/department), and "Combined" (average = 48.1 students/department), but more than all of the other surveyed disciplines. "Combined" refers to departments that offer graduate degrees in English and Language and Literatures other than English.

In terms of the total numbers of graduate students, English is the largest discipline for graduate study, with a total of 21,810 graduate students in 1,064 departments. History has a total of 18,500 graduate students in 921 departments. Communication follows, with a total of 13,750 graduate students in 766 departments. While "Combined" is third in discipline rank for the average number of graduate students per department, this category reported only 2,070 graduate students in just 147 departments. The rest of the disciplines are substantially smaller than Communication with respect to graduate student enrollment.

And We Do It with Fewer Faculty

KEY FINDING: Despite high undergraduate and graduate student populations, colleges and universities employ smaller numbers of faculty members in Communication departments than in comparable disciplines.

The HDS shows that Communication departments across the country employ 6,590 full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty members and 6,710 full-time and part-time non tenure-track faculty members, for a total of 13,300 faculty members. The overall number of faculty members in Departments of Communication is substantially lower than other disciplines. English departments employ a total of 28,750 faculty members; History, 15,800 faculty members; and LLE, 21,600 faculty members. In this context, "faculty" excludes graduate students and personnel with 100 percent research appointments.

IN OUR JOURNALS

Josh Boyd and Gina Boyd, "Sold! The Elementary Classroom Auction as Learning Tool of Communication and Economics," *Communication Teacher* 28 (2014): 208-212.

Boyd and Boyd's essay discusses the use of an economic tool, the auction, to enhance communication skills among elementary students. Specifically, the authors discuss the 30-minute activity as a capstone to a year-long mini-economy project in which students are "paid" for doing classroom tasks and then allowed to spend their earnings on items during a live classroom auction. This activity teaches age-appropriate communication skills such as speaking, listening, turn-taking, and eye-contact. The activity also requires students to think strategically about their communication. While this activity serves a role in all classrooms, it is particularly advantageous for teachers working with the Common Core State Standards, who must find engaging ways to integrate speaking and listening into already existing curricula.

Kyriakos Charalampous and Constantinos M. Kokkinos, "Students' Big Three Personality Traits, Perceptions of Teacher Interpersonal Behavior, and Mathematics Achievement: An Application of the Model of Reciprocal Causation," *Communication Education* 63 (2014): 235-258.

Charalampous and Constantinos investigate the application of the Model of Reciprocal Causation, the foundation of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. In this study, the authors examine the strength and type of relationships between three variables: achievement in mathematics (behavior), personality characteristics (personal factors), and perceived teacher interpersonal behavior (environment). They find that the more sociable and empathic students perceive teachers as more helpful and understanding. These students also perform better in mathematics. The authors suggest that teachers work to improve cooperation with and among students and look for ways to improve teacher immediacy and employ more affinity-seeking strategies.

Jody L.S. Jahn and Karen K. Myers, "Vocational Anticipatory Socialization of Adolescents: Messages, Sources, and Frameworks that Influence Interest in STEM Careers," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 42 (2014): 85-106.

Nearly 80 percent of college students majoring in a STEM field have clear career goals by the time they reach high school. Yet, as Jahn and Myers report, many students stop participating in the high school activities and courses that would lead them to STEM majors in college. The authors explore the communication of messages addressed to adolescents about STEM careers. They find that parents, STEM professionals, and the news media communicate the majority of messages about STEM careers. Parents provide personal fulfillment messages that do not provide students with specific career development information. Students then rely on their non-familial network to learn about STEM careers. According to this study, those in STEM occupations are well-suited to encourage adolescents by offering career information and also by discussing the benefits and rewards of math and science coursework.

PLAN *NOW* TO ATTEND

THE NCA FACULTY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (THE "HOPE" CONFERENCE)

July 19-25, 2015 ◆ Hope College, Holland, Michigan

THE NCA INSTITUTE FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT, also known as the Hope Conference, helps undergraduate Communication faculty stay abreast of ongoing changes and emerging issues in curriculum development. Now in its 29th year, the event has for several years been held at Hope College. This year's speakers will include: Carole Blair (Rhetoric), Barry Brummett (Popular Culture), Stan Deetz (Organizational Communication), Yahya Kamalipour (Global Media), Andrew Wolvin (Listening), and TBA (Interpersonal Communication). Barbara Biesecker will be the 2015 Hope Conference Scholar-in-Residence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
www.hope.edu/academic/communication/ncainstitute/index.htm.

λπη

NCA's LAMBDA PI ETA
UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL

WWW.NATCOM.ORG/LPHJOURNAL

NCA's LPH JOURNAL
Call for Submissions

The NCA's Lambda Pi Eta journal, developed to disseminate high-quality undergraduate Communication research, is currently accepting submissions for its third issue, to be e-published in the spring of 2015. Undergraduate members of LPH are encouraged to visit www.natcom.org/lphjournal for detailed submission information and to download the inaugural issue.

HELPING TO CLOSE THE *ACHIEVEMENT GAPS* in K-12 Education

There was nothing unusual about the wonder and fun that filled the classrooms I entered with enthusiasm each day when I was a child. As it is for most children, school was not only my locus of learning—it was my social world, my developmental sandbox, and the place where I first learned how to interact with mentors who were not my parents.

However, K–12 education also was a major focus at the dinner tables, outings, and "grown-up" parties of my childhood, making this issue of *Spectra* particularly meaningful for me. My parents were Los Angeles elementary school teachers who both became active in the California teachers' union movement. Most evenings, my father rushed from the dinner table back to the offices of American Federation of Teachers Local 1021, where he served as President from 1966 to 1975. Those years are somewhat foggy for me—as a young child, words like "collective bargaining" and "teacher benefits" meant far less than the tone of the animated talk in my home. In 1970, AFT Local 1021 merged with the Association of Classroom Teachers of Los Angeles to form the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA). While retaining his local AFT presidency, my father also became the first Executive Vice President of the new organization, which operated under the motto "Teachers Want What Children Need."

The blur of those childhood years came into sharp focus later in 1970, when the 20,000 members of the newly established UTLA went on strike. For more than a month, I did not attend school, and my home was filled with people—teachers seeking counsel and union officials crafting strategy as the strike dragged on.

The major issue for the teachers was gaining collective bargaining rights and a union contract. While the striking teachers sought better salaries and enhanced professional status, they also fought against large class sizes, reduced spending for reading and other programs, and elimination of after-school enrichment programs.

Sound familiar?

As John Heineman points out in his opener to this issue of *Spectra*, however, much *has* changed. From the challenges associated with significantly shifting demographics, to increasingly ubiquitous digital distractions, many changes "present significant barriers to the engagement of our students and contribute to the achievement gaps in our schools," Heineman says. The articles in this issue address the work being done on multiple fronts to help close the achievement gaps Heineman laments.

How would my father feel about the work described in these pages? I'm not sure. But I think he would agree with Sara Weintraub that the Common Core standards are critical to ensuring that *all* K–12 students get the education they need to succeed in college and beyond. I know he would support John Landesman's Study Circles program, which is engaging parents, students, and school staff in facilitated dialogue and problem solving aimed at identifying, examining, and eliminating institutional barriers to African-American and Latino student achievement in in one of our nation's school districts. And, I believe he would endorse AFT President Randi Weingarten's call for ongoing teachers union–school district collaboration aimed at "reclaim[ing] the promise of public education."

I will have to send this issue of *Spectra* to my father and ask him. ■

—Wendy Sibelman Fernando
NCA Director of External Affairs and Publications

A Nation (Still) at Risk

By John Heineman, M.A., M.Ed.

When I first began to teach in 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* was published. Little did I realize at the time that this document would shape the direction of education in this country, as well as my career over the next three decades. This report brought to light the inconsistencies of the American education system relative to content, fiscal support, standards and expectations, time, teaching, and leadership. These issues remain the focus of school reform and transformation today. Please indulge me while I look back over the past 30 years as a public school speech and theatre teacher and reflect on what I've experienced in public education and with students in general.

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002 under the George W. Bush administration focused our government's attention on standards for teaching and learning, the achievement gaps of underserved students, and the need for accountability in our public schools. This legislation identified the underperformance of minority students, students living in poverty, special education students, and English language learners. Although often criticized, the legislation forced states, schools, and teachers to examine current practices and their effects on learning and achievement.

Throughout my teaching career, nothing has been more of a concern than the achievement gap. Many government agencies and education institutions report the gap of grades, graduation rates, discipline referrals, and college admissions based on race and socio-economic status. These statistics

Transforming our education system to ensure equal opportunity for *all* students is urgent and should be a top priority for everyone concerned about the future of American education.

are alarming and should be the focus of every school, college, and university in this country. Transforming our education system to ensure equal opportunity for *all* students is urgent and should be a top priority for everyone concerned about the future of American education.

To ensure we close the achievement gap for diverse groups of students, I believe we must first overcome what I call the engagement gap. Too many of our students are simply not as engaged in their learning as students once were. The promises of a good education are no longer enough to hold students' attention. I am often asked if students have changed in the past 30 years. My answer is always, "No, students haven't changed, but the world in which they are growing up has changed dramatically." Many of these changes present significant barriers to the engagement of our students and contribute to the achievement gaps in our schools.

Our classrooms have become more diverse and, according to the report, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012,* published by the U.S. Census Bureau, students represent the poorest citizens in this country. Families living in poverty are faced with many challenges to make ends meet. Add discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and culture, and it is no wonder that these challenges facing so many of our students play such an significant role in their success in school.

Not only have demographics changed, but distractions have become ubiquitous in our culture as well. I can't imagine how I would have fared growing up in today's world, where cell phones, computers, the Internet, video games, and social media can't be avoided by most students. All of this technology has created a world of endless possibilities, and a world of endless distractions. How do we engage students when the world of endless entertainment and social media are simply a click away? These distractions come at a time when the call for rigorous standards is being heralded. It is more difficult to engage students, and the expectations for achievement have never been higher. The challenge of getting students engaged in school has never been more vital or more difficult to achieve in my 30 years of teaching.

According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation report, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year Olds*, students devote an average of seven hours to entertainment media each day. What time is left for homework and studying when so much time is spent using media? If students are spending as much time sitting in front of a screen as they do in a classroom to learn, where is the time for homework, not to mention extra-curricular activities or time with families and friends? Students become accustomed to being highly stimulated and engaged with media without putting forth any real effort. This contributes greatly to the engagement gap, as students find a teacher standing in front of a class of 30 students relatively unexciting in comparison.

The greatest challenges to closing this engagement gap fall to teachers. As educators face the call to help their students meet more rigorous state standards and the

When a teacher builds strong relationships with students, many of the distractions and barriers to learning fall by the wayside.

Common Core requirements, they must find new ways to engage an already distracted and less-prepared student population. Homework, for example, has become one of the great hurdles for teachers. I often hear complaints by educators that many students will not do homework; they expect all instruction and practice to happen during the school day. The common concept of engaging in an activity or lecture for 20 to 30 minutes before moving on to a new activity has been replaced by a need to change the activity every eight to ten minutes. This style of teaching requires more skill and planning than ever before, and with all the demands on a teacher, time is a scarce commodity.

This scarcity of time leads to what I feel is the greatest challenge to closing the engagement gap. Little time is left for a teacher to build strong and trusting relationships with students. With class size growing, the number of students with special needs increasing, and the demand for more to be covered to meet rigorous standards, teachers have very little time to build the kind of relationships needed to overcome many of the barriers to engagement. Teachers are expected to do more, to teach more, and to do it without being given the time and resources to accomplish it all. It truly takes master teachers to balance building strong and trusting relationships with a class of 30 diverse students while still meeting the requirements of the ever-expanding curriculum. It may be cliché, but it has always been true in my classroom that students will not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Nurturing strong relationships takes time, but is essential to overcoming the engagement gap. When a teacher builds strong relationships with students, many of the distractions and barriers to learning fall by the wayside.

I think this is the greatest challenge facing our schools today: time. Teachers need time to plan and create curricula to meet new standards while still taking the time to build relationships with each student. Teachers need time to collaborate with other professionals to create effective pedagogical practices. Master teachers must be given the time and opportunity to lead the profession by providing guidance to new and struggling teachers. Teacher-to-teacher mentorship is a vital transformative practice that builds strong curriculums, engaging teaching, and strong insights into building relationships with students. In my own experience, having an expert observe my teaching, comment on both my strengths and weaknesses, offer helpful suggestions, and role model solutions has been the single most transformative contributor to my development. Formalizing these relationships and roles in a school takes time, and it asks our teachers to risk opening their doors to a colleague and to display the humility needed to reflect on one's own individual practice. It takes commitment from administration and school district officials to provide time and compensation for master teachers to become the leaders in school reform.

Teachers also need the support of researchers working in the fields of Communication and Education to continue to discover, redefine, and produce practical tools for teachers and schools to use. With the broad acceptance of the Common Core and other state standards, colleges and universities must partner with teachers

and schools to tackle the dual challenges of meeting high standards and developing strategies to create authentic engagement with our students. In my 30 years of membership in NCA, I have greatly benefited from the research and pedagogy I have accessed through our association. Now more than ever, we need significant research in our elementary and secondary classrooms. Communication scholars are uniquely qualified to work with teachers and students to close the engagement gap.

The challenges of the engagement gap have been evident in my Communication classes as well. Fortunately, our field has been a leader in standards and pedagogy throughout my years of teaching. The speaking, listening, and media literacy standards developed and adopted by NCA have played an important role in focusing teachers on what our students need to know and be able to do. Also, I can't count the number of lessons I have brought home from the NCA Annual Convention's G.I.F.T.S sessions. We need to continue to publicize and broadly disseminate these ideas so that more Communication instructors have access to these great tools.

The warnings of *A Nation at Risk* and the promise of reforms from the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act continue to play key roles in improving our American education system. The achievement gap must be addressed to meet the promise of the American dream of equality and justice. It will be up to teachers, administrators, families, researchers, and communities to work together to help our students reengage in their classes and education. ■

JOHN HEINEMAN is the Coordinator for the International Baccalaureate and AP Programs at Lincoln High School in Lincoln, NE, where he has taught oral communication and theatre for more than 30 years. He is Co-Chair of the NCA Task Force on Communication in K-12 Institutions. Heineman received the NCA Marcella E. Oberlee Award in 1998, and was named the Nebraska Teacher of the Year in 2000.

why Communication Teachers Should Care About the Common Core

By Sara Chudnovsky Weintraub, Ph.D.

What do students need "to know and be able to do" in order to be successful in college or their careers? This is a question asked by parents, teachers, and those in the business world. To address this question, a partnership was developed between the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to provide a well-defined and clearly articulated understanding of what students should know by the time they graduate from high school. The goal of this effort was to ensure that "all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life" (www.corestandards.org). This collaboration resulted in the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Although most states have adopted the CCSS, their acceptance has caused some controversy. Those opposed to the standards have indicated the CCSS will bring all students down to the "lowest common denominator," that they are not "internationally benchmarked," that "no teachers were involved in writing the standards," or that the standards are not based on "research or evidence" (www.corestandards.org/about). Furthermore, in a 2014 speech to the Modern Language Association, education historian Diane Ravitch described the standards as "rigid, inflexible, and prescriptive." Finally, some educators and parents believe the standards are inadequate and will not improve the overall quality of education.

On the other hand, those who support the CCSS believe that the standards do not encourage the "lowest common denominator" mindset, have indeed been benchmarked against many of the highest performing countries, are based on research and evidence, and give teachers the flexibility to implement the standards based on their particular students. Most important, teachers at all levels have been involved in the development of the standards. In response to some of the criticism, Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor of the State University of New York system, noted in a July 2014 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "If we start throwing in the towel now on Common Core, we won't have another moment like this."


time
Egg
Adult
The Lifecycle
of a Butterfly
Metamorphosis
Pupa (chrysalis)

45 percent of new college students said they had gaps in their oral communication skills—more than any other area…

Why does something that has an impact on K-12 education concern those in higher education, and why is it particularly important for Communication educators to help implement the Common Core State Standards? The Common Core State Standards include speaking and listening standards for kindergarten through grade 12, highlighting the importance of these competencies throughout one's education. This initiative therefore provides Communication educators with a significant opportunity to help incorporate Communication education into potentially every K-12 classroom.

For several years, those teaching in higher education have complained about their students' lack of preparedness. According to a 2010 special report issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board, there is a gap between "college eligibility" and "college readiness." The report indicates that roughly 60 percent of first-year college students must take remedial courses in English or mathematics, and that these courses do not carry college credit. A similar finding appeared in a June 2014 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. The article noted, "Remedial work is necessary for as many as 50 percent of community-college students and 20 percent of students at four-year colleges." According to the same article, colleges spend $7 billion a year on remedial courses for their students, while the cost to students who must take these courses is roughly $3 billion or more annually. While this is very costly, without remedial help, students may do poorly in their coursework, causing them to fail courses or leave college altogether. Thus, everyone in higher education should be concerned with the CCSS, as the standards' implementation will have a direct impact on the preparedness of the students that educators at the college and university level will see in their own classrooms. As John Morgan, Chancellor of the Tennessee Board of Regents, has noted, "While our colleges are working very hard to re-engineer our remedial and developmental education approaches… there's really no possibility of matching the results that will be achieved by having students actually enter our institutions ready for college-level work."

Students may also fall short with regard to their oral communication skills when they enter college. Educators at the college and university levels have long understood the importance of communication skills, both in their classrooms and for their students' ability to get and keep jobs after graduation. Students themselves recognize the importance of effective communication, yet realize they need remediation in this area. For example, a survey conducted for Achieve found that 45 percent of new college students said they had gaps in their oral communication skills—more than any other area—and 12 percent said the gaps were large. In the past, little consistent attention has been paid to developing speaking

and listening competence in K-12 education. The CCSS highlights the importance of communication, and will give more attention to the critical skills of speaking and listening. This, in turn, should contribute greatly to students' success throughout their education and beyond.

Overall, it is clear that the preparation K-12 students receive has a major impact on their ability to meet the challenges and rigors of college. Needless to say, those who teach at the college and university levels will see the benefits of clearly articulated and aligned standards that help all students, no matter where they live, to meet common benchmarks in their K-12 education.

Those who teach in higher education must work collaboratively with school systems and state departments of education to help implement the CCSS. It is especially important for Communication educators to help provide the resources and professional development K-12 educators need to implement the CCSS English Language Arts Standards in Speaking and Listening. These standards are critical for students and, if Communication educators at all levels share their knowledge and resources, K-12 educators will be better equipped to effectively implement the speaking and listening standards in their classrooms. This, in turn, will better prepare all students for college and careers.

To provide some specific background, the standards in speaking and listening are centered on "Comprehension and Collaboration" and the "Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas" (www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI.ELAStandards.pdf).

With regard to Comprehension and Collaboration, students must be able to:

- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

With regard to the Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, students must be able to:

- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

The Common Core State Standards in Speaking and Listening provide a significant opportunity for Communication educators at all levels to work together to help prepare every K-12 teacher to effectively incorporate speaking and listening competencies into the curriculum…

Naturally, the standards are in steps according to grade level. Thus, in kindergarten, for example, students would demonstrate their ability to listen to others, take turns speaking, as well as ask questions to gain information, clarification, or help. With regard to their ability to present knowledge and ideas, the kindergarten students would "describe familiar people, places, things, and events and with prompting and support, provide additional detail." They would also need to "speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly." Although the overarching goals remain the same throughout the students' education, the expectations and complexity increase at each grade level.

How and when the CCSS will be implemented is an important issue. A great deal of information is available to help state departments of education and local school systems prepare to put the CCSS into practice. For example, Achieve and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute have created a workbook to help state and district leaders implement and assess the CCSS. They provide a step-by-step approach that includes: aligning instructional materials to the CCSS, training educators on the CCSS and "related assessments," transitioning to the assessment systems to be used, reporting and analyzing the results, and aligning "teacher preparation, evaluation and licensing" (http://www.achieve.org/ImplementingCommonCore). Both PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) and Smarter Balanced (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) are working on the assessment tests that will be given based on the frameworks of the CCSS. Both of these organizations have begun field testing with some of the states in their respective consortia and, by 2015, more testing will be done throughout various school districts within these states.

Many in higher education have helped in the development phase of the CCSS and should continue to be a part of the implementation and evaluation phase of the process. There is much to be done and so much that we can do to help all students communicate more effectively. Already, the National Communication Association (NCA) and its members have been actively involved in several areas to help specifically with the CCSS. For example, the Association's Educational Policies Board (EPB) has worked on resolutions, programming, and outreach to strengthen NCA's recognition and policies regarding K-12 educational standards in communication. Three NCA members received an "Advancing the Discipline" grant to gather and develop resources for 6-12 educators on the CCSS in Speaking and Listening (see box). These materials will be available on the NCA website upon completion of the grant. At this year's NCA convention in November, several programs will address the CCSS. NCA members have been asked to work on assessment tools for speaking and listening. In addition, NCA President Kathleen J. Turner has formed a Communication in K-12 Institutions presidential task force. These are just a few examples of what is being done by Communication educators and NCA to strengthen K-12

communication education and support the implementation of the CCSS in Speaking and Listening. These efforts will help highlight the overall importance of communication as an integral part of every student's K-12 education.

The Common Core State Standards in Speaking and Listening provide a significant opportunity for Communication educators at all levels to work together to help prepare every K-12 teacher to effectively incorporate speaking and listening competencies into the curriculum, and to help students realize the importance of communication in every facet of their lives. This is the chance for educators to work with students from the time they enter kindergarten to the time they graduate from high school to strengthen their ability to communicate effectively. If this can be accomplished, students will be much better prepared for college and their careers. ■

NCA's "ADVANCING THE DISCIPLINE" GRANT—COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

NCA members Ruth Kay (Detroit Country Day School), Jean Ann Streiff (Oakland Catholic High School), and Sara Chudnovsky Weintraub (Regis College) recently received an NCA "Advancing the Discipline" Grant entitled "Common Core State Standards in Speaking and Listening: A Resource Guide." The intent of the project is to develop and gather resources for teachers in grades 6-12 to help them implement the speaking and listening standards that are part of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. At the end of the project, the resources will be available on the NCA website to help educators and state departments of education implement the standards.

SARA CHUDNOVSKY WEINTRAUB is an Associate Professor in the Communication Department at Regis College and a member of the NCA Task Force on Communication in K-12 Institutions. In addition, she is a past member of NCA's Educational Policies Board, a current member of NCA's Legislative Assembly, and one of the team leaders on NCA's Learning Outcomes in Communication project.

Using Dialogue to Close the RACIAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By John Landesman

I often get a blank stare when I tell people that I organize and facilitate dialogue for a living. It sounds like a touchy, feely job with no real outcomes. But as Communication scholars know well, dialogue, when done well, is an essential tool to solving our most intractable problems.

Consider the issue of police/community relations, for example. I was writing this article during the last few weeks of August. Michael Brown, a Black teenager, had just been killed by a White police officer. Images of White police and African-American protesters were all over the media. Most Americans were shocked and sad, but they had vastly different views on what should be done. A nationwide poll conducted the week after Michael Brown was killed showed that 80 percent of Black respondents said the shooting of Michael Brown "…raises important racial issues that need to be discussed…" In that same poll, 47 percent of Whites responded that "…race is getting more attention in this case than it deserves." Strategies to address this issue would most likely fail without understanding these different perspectives. An effective dialogue-to-change program should be a first step to understanding the full breadth of the issue and to cooperatively working together for change (see sidebar).

While the circumstances surrounding Michael Brown's death and the achievement gap of African-American and Latino students in our public schools are different, our perspectives, opinions, and proposed strategies for addressing both are impacted by personal beliefs and experiences.

With this in mind, leaders in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), a large, diverse school district in the Maryland suburbs bordering Washington, DC (see sidebar), decided that the school district needed to better understand issues contributing to the racial achievement gap and create the partnerships that would help close the gap. Like many other school districts, MCPS struggled with a persistent gap between African-American and Latino students and their Asian and White peers. MCPS decided on a dialogue-to-change model called Study Circles, promoted by the national organization *Everyday Democracy*. The program engages diverse staff, parents, and students in facilitated dialogue and problem solving. Since 2003, more than 8,000 stakeholders have participated in 430 Study Circles.

HOW STUDY CIRCLES CAN BE USED TO DISCUSS TWO RACIALLY CHARGED ISSUES

Below are statements that have frequently been said about two issues: Michael Brown's killing ***and*** the achievement gap in schools.

Rank these statements in order of relevance or truth for you…

1 = most relevant/true
4 = least relevant/true

MICHAEL BROWN's KILLING

a. Michael Brown did something wrong.
b. Michael Brown's death was simply a tragic mistake.
c. The police officer is a racist.
d. This case is another example of American institutions failing the African-American community.

RACIAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

a. Parents and students of color need to take more responsibility for their education.
b. It's sad that some students are falling through the cracks, but not every student can be successful.
c. Teachers have low expectations for students of color.
d. Schools and school districts are set up to teach White students and not students of color.

- How someone prioritizes these statements will determine how they develop strategies to address the issue.
- Often, how someone views an issue is based on their own personal experience and the experience of people with whom they spend time.
- Study Circles help participants hear one another's experience and develop a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the problem. They can then develop more effective strategies.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 154,000 students
- 202 schools
- Students: 36% White, 27% Latino, 21% Black, and 14% Asian
- 35% of students receive Free or Reduced-priced meals
- More than 20,000 students are in classes for English for Speakers of Other Languages.

TYPES OF STUDY CIRCLES

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES/ INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Participants:
Staff, school leaders, administrators, and central office personnel.

Format:
Two-day retreats with coaching sessions throughout the year. Possible summer follow-up retreat.

Objective:
To create a learning community or leadership team that has the trust, awareness, and skills necessary to confront the personal attitudes, practices, and policies that impact the racial achievement gap.

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Participants:
Parents, teachers, administrators, staff (and students when appropriate).

Format:
Six two-hour sessions, usually in the evening.

Objectives:
To build a unified group of diverse parents, teachers, and students that understands the challenges and benefits of a diverse school.

To create personal and group action steps that address racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement.

To encourage an environment in which racial and ethnic issues are talked about openly and productively.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

Participants:
Parents, teachers, administration, staff (an interpreter is provided for participants who do not speak Spanish).

Format:
Six two-hour sessions, usually in the evening.

Objectives:

To create an ongoing Latino Parent Committee.

To use the lessons learned in the Study Circle to help staff change their practices and policies.

STUDENTS

Participants:
Students, staff, and administrators.

Format:
Three three-hour sessions.

Objectives:
To understand the students' experiences and perceptions on race, and how race impacts their education.

To help students and staff talk together about racial barriers to achievement.

The mission of the Study Circles Program is to identify, examine, and eliminate institutional barriers to African-American and Latino student achievement in Montgomery County Public Schools. The program engages parents, students, and staff in facilitated dialogue and problem solving. It provides a structure for diverse stakeholders to:

- Develop trust.
- Confront perceptions and beliefs.
- Develop a shared understanding of a problem.
- Collaborate on actions that impact attitudes, practices, and policies.

For example, when Diane Morris became Principal at William H. Farquhar Middle School, she heard parents say "Farquhar is racist. The teachers don't care about our children. Our children don't receive the same opportunities as White students. The administration is targeting children of color and giving them unfair consequences." The Principal decided to create a principal's advisory committee composed of teachers and the parents who had expressed concerns. She started with a Study Circle and wrote this about her experience:

> "The Study Circle allowed us to get to know each other on a more intimate level and share our experiences with one another. It provided a safe environment where we could really begin to discuss student achievement and perceptions. By the end of the Study Circle, we were looking at data and the comments/perceptions soon began to change. The group suggested a number of action items that were easy to implement, showed the parents that we cared, and had a positive impact on our students…all of them. As a result, the number of students enrolled in advanced classes has increased, and the number of students taken out of intervention classes has also increased. My role as a leader has become much clearer, and my ability to understand different perspectives has really changed my focus and actions. At a follow up meeting a year later, parents said 'Wow, Farquhar is really doing a lot to support our children and we appreciate the efforts.' I honestly attribute the success of my first year as Principal to the Study Circles Program."

Based on the needs and suggestions of participating schools, the program expanded its work to include new types of Study Circles to meet the needs of different audiences (see sidebar). Schools use a combination of these formats to engage different stakeholders. Eugenia Dawson, former Principal at Earle B. Wood Middle School, explained how she used Study Circles at her school:

"In combination with other initiatives, the Study Circles Program contributed greatly to change at our school. It helped to create a climate of trust among staff, students, and parents, and it provided a structure for opening honest dialogue about the barriers to student success in our school. Only then were we able to develop the strategies for success.

"Our student Study Circles helped us understand what students see as barriers. We brought back their experiences to the staff and included it in staff development. The year we did the all-staff Study Circle opened up the door for our whole staff to develop the trust and awareness that we needed to tackle the achievement gap and to discuss the difficult issues of racial barriers to achievement. It also helped us to hear the concerns of the students and parents. Each year, the ideas from the Study Circle are fed into our School Improvement Plan.

"Some examples of change include a dramatic decrease in referrals and suspensions and just as dramatic increases in parent involvement. In the four to five years that we have been doing Study Circles, referrals have decreased by 91 percent and suspensions by 89 percent. This means that students are in the classroom where they have an opportunity to learn. The Study Circles helped us to drop the barriers to connecting with parents of color so we can partner together for our students. Parents trust us more, and staff are less intimidated and see the value in working with parents.

"Finally, our Spanish-Language Study Circle led to an active and ongoing Hispanic Parent Group that continues to meet monthly with a large number of Hispanic parents. This has led to a strong partnership between school staff and Hispanic parents. We now work together and are able to provide parents with strategies for supporting and advocating for their children."

As more and more schools embraced the Study Circles concept, principals began to realize that their leadership teams did not always have the cohesion necessary to effectively address the challenges and ideas they were receiving from the Study Circles. In fact, leadership team members consistently say they had neither the trust required to talk about race, nor the collective skills required to support teachers who struggle to teach African-American and Latino students. Scott Murphy, Principal of Watkins Mill High School, described his experience:

"In my 13 years as a school administrator, our work with Study Circles was the best professional development for the leadership team that I have ever experienced. Not only did we develop a community of leaders who is now able to talk about race and the persistent achievement gap at our school, but we came together as a strong, cohesive team to a degree that we had never experienced. We got to know each other's stories and brought levels of trust, commitment, accountability, and shared leadership to new heights. This unintended outcome has strengthened the [team] more so than I ever envisioned, and has launched us into a renewed commitment to confront issues of race and work together to close the achievement gap."

Little by little, participants see that they can have honest and respectful conversations about their different experiences with stereotypes, skin color, and racism.

PROCESS

While some of the specific questions and activities are different, all Study Circles follow the same steps:

Step One: Develop Trust and Begin to Understand Each Other's Experience

Participants go through a series of activities that help them develop a foundation for honest and productive dialogue on racial barriers to achievement. A mix of small and large group activities helps participants hear one another's stories. Comments after Step One include many like the following:

- "I learned about peoples' perceptions and beliefs, what defines who they are, and where they are coming from. This activity opened up a window."
- "I feel like a wall was knocked down."
- "The facilitators created an openness to tell our stories and show our vulnerability and empathy."

Step Two: Explore Different Racial Experiences and Viewpoints

Step Two builds on the trust established in Step One to help participants talk with one another about racial barriers to achievement. Participants are taken through activities that start easy and slowly get more difficult. Little by little, participants see that they can have honest and respectful conversations about their different experiences with stereotypes, skin color, and racism. The activities are designed to highlight their different experiences. Then, facilitators help them question and hear one another, and talk honestly about their beliefs and experiences.

Evaluations from a recent high school Study Circle with parents, staff, and students included comments from three participants:

- "Given that the topic of race and education most often results in confrontations and little real conversation, the facilitators created a respectful space where 20 people, who hardly knew each other, could share their most personal thoughts and experiences."
- "…we were able to really LISTEN to each other and therefore gain valuable insights into the issues."
- "Many of the conversations were painfully honest, and I am amazed that in less than two days, we were able to build the trust necessary to make these difficult discussions positive and productive.'"

Step Three: Collaborative Action

Collaborative Action looks very different, depending on the format and participants. However, Step Three of each Study Circle provides a framework for participants to identify the beliefs, practices, and policies that led to the racial achievement gap in their school. They are then able to develop action steps that lead to change. For example, a middle school held a Study Circle composed of Latino students who are in classes for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and diverse teachers and staff. Using the framework, they realized that most of the teacher practices were to push the students to use their accommodations. Most of the students, however, felt that the teachers were embarrassing them in front of their peers when they were pushed to use their accommodations. So, they refused to use them. Together, they came up with different age-appropriate strategies to get students the support they needed.

BEST PRACTICES

After 430 Study Circles, we have had enough successes and made enough mistakes to have identified some best practices.

Move past talk to action

Some dialogue programs never get past the dialogue stage. While there are always benefits from building relationships and awareness, people get frustrated if they don't see the program start to move toward change.

Understand the culture of the organization in which you are operating

Every organization has its own unique culture. Before starting a dialogue, figure out where change can happen and what the challenges are to getting participants to the table.

Take time to reach out to the audience you want

The Study Circles Program spends a lot of time helping the schools reach out to parents in different ways to ensure their participation. Almost every parent Study Circle has a participant who says that this was the first school meeting he or she had ever attended. Study Circles start with an information meeting. Flyers, personal letters from the principal, personal phone calls, and reminders are standard for parent Study Circles. Some Study Circles have included door knocking or greeting parents as they put their kids on school buses.

Address power dynamics

Every Study Circle has power dynamics that need to be addressed. Principals, teachers, students, and parents all have different levels of power that may keep some participants from opening up. The early activities help get people on the same level. But, facilitators will need to monitor the dynamics and make adjustments when necessary.

Train the facilitators well

Facilitators are the most important part of the Study Circle. Their job is to create the opportunity for others to engage in dialogue. Study Circle facilitators participate in a minimum of 22 hours of training. They are each given opportunities to observe Study Circles and then co-facilitate with a more experienced facilitator. Every Study Circle has at least two facilitators who reflect different racial/ethnic backgrounds. ■

JOHN LANDESMAN has almost 20 years of experience developing and organizing dialogue-to-action programs that address the effects of racism and racial barriers. He is currently Coordinator of the Montgomery County Public Schools Study Circles Program, an initiative that engages diverse students, parents, staff, and district leaders in facilitated dialogue to impact racial and ethnic barriers to student achievement and parent involvement. Landesman also serves as a Senior Associate for Everyday Democracy, consulting with school districts, foundations, and companies to create dialogue programs to dismantle structural racism in these institutions.

The American Federation of Teachers:

Collaborating to Improve K-12 Education

By Randi Weingarten, J.D.

Our job as educators—teachers, school staff, and administrators—is to help all students to acquire deep knowledge and learn how to apply it; to persevere; to build trusting relationships with their peers and with adults; and to experience joy as they learn.

And we must help *all* children, regardless of their geography or their demography, not only dream their dreams but also achieve them.

The work to reclaim the promise of public education in America begins with creating safe, welcoming, and collaborative environments for teaching and learning. From there, we must ensure that our public schools become centers of their communities, that we secure a voice and respect for those closest to the classroom, and that we fulfill public education's purpose as a propeller of our economy and an anchor of democracy.

None of this magic happens in a vacuum. At its core, education is a collaborative process. Education is a shared responsibility that requires real partnerships among everyone in the family of believers in public education.

Yet, educators in our nation's public schools are doing yeoman's work, despite the fact that policymakers and others who want to dismantle public education throw a lot of obstacles in our way: austerity, test fixation, privatization, and the idea that teachers are not professionals but interchangeable cogs in a machine. The latest push is to strip teachers of their voice and divide them from their students through the recent Vergara court decision in California—a case challenging teachers' due process rights that is now being appealed by the state's governor and state superintendent—and copycat lawsuits in New York.

These so-called reformers would rather denigrate, devalue, and demonize teachers than work together to give all children the high-quality public education they need and deserve. They are so busy trying to divide that they fail to talk about the real problems plaguing public schools—or to engage in real solutions.

Today, half of our children in public schools are poor. And three-fourths of African-American and Latino children attend schools where a majority of the students are living in poverty. At the same time, these high-need schools are strapped for resources, forcing their teachers to do more with less.

Study after study has shown that poverty and other out-of-school considerations are the biggest factors affecting student achievement. In fact, two-thirds of the achievement gap can be attributed to out-of-school factors.

Our nation's teachers have become first responders to the stress, hunger, and hardships our children are facing day in and day out. Nearly two-thirds of teachers in this country work in high-poverty schools—the highest rate

among the 34 countries included in the recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Globally, the average is just under 20 percent.

All children deserve a safe, welcoming neighborhood public school where they can build trusting relationships, develop critical thinking and persistence, and experience the joy of learning.

We need to level the playing field for poor and minority children by ensuring access to early childhood education and wraparound services that help address their social, emotional, and health needs. We need to ensure that teachers and school staff are well-prepared and supported, and have manageable class sizes and the time to collaborate to meet the individual needs of every child.

So what is the path forward? It starts with working together.

Union-district collaboration is more important now than ever. Some people assume that teachers and their bosses are adversaries. And some *want* us to be adversaries in order to feed into those politics of division.

In my experience, there is far more that binds us than divides us. First and foremost, we and our bosses both believe in public education. We both believe in reclaiming the promise of public education. And, yes, while we don't always see eye to eye on the hows, we are bound together on the whats and the whys—in the mission to help all children in all of our communities.

When school districts and unions have come together, we've seen real results. Research shows that labor, management, and community collaboration is essential for real reform efforts to be effective. In 2010, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research published a study based on demographic and testing data (1990 to 2005) from more than 400 Chicago elementary schools; the study found that the most effective schools had a high level of relational trust among their stakeholders.

Collaboration is not kumbaya or the absence of conflict. Rather, collaboration is about a commitment to work together and develop trust so that problems can be solved in a constructive way that enables everyone to come together to ensure our kids are afforded great educational opportunities.

While at the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, I worked closely with the then-chancellor of the city's public schools to seed and then expand one of the most successful reform initiatives in the country: the Chancellor's District.

That partnership had a transformative effect on some of the most troubled schools in NYC—and the

I know that when some people hear words like "collaboration," what they actually hear is "cede control." But the kind of collaboration I'm talking about…

work that was done helped the students we served, and empowered the educators we represented. And, it taught me a lifelong lesson about the value of real partnerships between teachers unions and school districts.

Instead of closing down struggling neighborhood schools, the nearly 60 schools included in the Chancellor's District were given a fiscal shot in the arm—spending an average of $2,700 more per student than at comparable schools.

That extra money was well spent on an intensive and cutting-edge literacy curriculum designed to bring students up to speed, additional teachers to help lower class sizes, academic after-school and summer programs to get struggling students the extra help they needed, and school-based professional development that helped teachers continuously improve their skills. Teachers spent additional time before and during the school year to do all of this, and they were paid for it.

The results were clear: In the three school years studied in a comprehensive report by New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy, the portion of students who met standards on the statewide fourth-grade reading test rose 17.7 percentage points.

We achieved real success because both sides understood that accountability meant helping schools to get better, instead of standing by and letting them struggle and fail.

In the ABC Unified School District in Los Angeles County, CA, a partnership between the school district and the ABC Federation of Teachers was forged in the late 1990s. District administrators, school board members, and union officials came together to figure out ways to push the envelope to improve schools, teaching, and learning. Since then, ongoing communication between the district and the union has helped to resolve issues quickly and keep the focus on student achievement.

The ABC labor-management partnership is involved in every education decision, with the goal of working to improve student achievement and enhance the teaching and working environment for teachers, staff, and administrators. In addition, teachers and administrators take part in an annual retreat that acts as a shared professional development opportunity.

The community reviews the district's strategic plan annually, and a peer assistance support system helps struggling teachers get the help they need.

The result? ABC Unified's district score on California's Academic Performance Index has increased every year under the labor-management partnership, most recently coming in 53 points higher than the state average.

Here's why this is working so well: Teachers are closest to the classroom. So, when administrators listen to teachers, and when they work together to chart and implement a good academic plan, children and school districts really benefit from their expertise.

This link between collaboration and student achievement is nothing new. Research, including a recent study by Saul Rubinstein and John McCarthy, consistently shows that stronger partnerships lead to greater student achievement.

According to OECD's TALIS survey, countries that consistently rank as higher-performing are those in which everyone works to create a collaborative culture in schools—with innovative practice as the result. Unfortunately, here in the United States,

> ...focuses on "seeding control," or expanding the group that is rowing in the same direction for our schools and our kids.

traditional top-down hierarchies have predominated in public schools for more than a century. Yet, teachers consistently want a different way.

Teachers become teachers because they love to teach, which is why the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) actively works to create better working conditions and support for teachers through increased union-district collaboration, because that creates better learning conditions.

On the national level, AFT works with organizations such as the National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administrators to foster better partnerships.

And to incubate efforts at the local level, since 2011 the AFT has convened teams of administrators and teachers from districts pursuing collaborative approaches. The AFT Innovation Fund—which cultivates and invests in school reform ideas proposed by local and state affiliates—has awarded several grants to support collaborative efforts in local school districts.

We have seen these efforts bear fruit in places like New Haven, CT, and Cincinnati, OH, where collaborative practices are embedded in collective bargaining agreements.

In New Haven, a hard-core, union-versus-district environment had turned community members and business leaders away from the city's schools. Both sides decided that the continued rancor wasn't helping New Haven's children. We set aside our differences, began to build trust, and eventually agreed on a bold, outside-the-box contract that sets up a system of continual improvement for teachers as well as a strong wage-and-benefit package and professional development initiatives.

Teachers in New Haven say they come to school to work hard and work as a team, not just teach behind closed doors. Collaboration now is embedded in their schools' culture. And, after three years of using the new evaluation system, the community, the district, and the union trust that the system is assessing teacher quality fairly; fewer than 2 percent of teachers have left each year due to performance issues or a lack of sufficient improvement.

In Cincinnati, collaboration resulted in the city's pioneering Community Learning Centers—public schools where students and their families have access to wraparound services to address their social, emotional, and health needs. These schools use an all-hands-on-deck approach to meet the needs of the whole child. Teachers, administrators, parents, and community service providers come together and work together. Since adopting the Community Learning Center approach in 2001, Cincinnati has become the highest-performing urban district in Ohio.

In these two cities and others, collaboration has enabled students, teachers, administrators, and parents to move forward together.

I know that when some people hear words like "collaboration," what they actually hear is "cede control." But the kind of collaboration I'm talking about focuses on "seeding control," or expanding the group that is rowing in the same direction for our schools and our kids.

Committing to change requires an existing level of trust. When trust doesn't yet exist, it is crucial to build this foundation before trying to accomplish anything else. Once that trust has been established, transparency, mutual accountability, and shared leadership are crucial, along with adequate time to hear one another's views and work toward collaborative decisions. And once those decisions are made, every aspect must be communicated from and to the educators, students, and parents in the schools.

If we are going to reclaim the promise of public education in America, we have to work together and lift up the places that are working for children. We have to embark on new ways to work together. At the AFT, we call this being solution-driven, or being willing to step outside our typical roles as adversaries to rethink how we approach change.

That doesn't mean we always have to agree. What it does mean is that we will work to bring people who care about the future of public education together instead of pushing them further apart.

Consider what we've been doing in McDowell County, WV, one of the poorest counties in our nation. The AFT has led a public-private partnership that includes the school district, business leaders, nonprofits and, most importantly, local community members and leaders, and that aims to improve education outcomes; provide better access to health

and social services, technology, and housing; and boost economic development. The partnership was launched as a new way to combat chronically failing schools, one that takes on all the issues plaguing the local community—education, social, and economic. Through collaboration with local, state, and national groups and individuals, we have been able to begin to make a dent in revitalizing the county and improving educational outcomes.

As Tom Heywood, a corporate attorney in Charleston, WV, and a board member of Reconnecting McDowell, said at AFT's 2014 national convention: "Reconnecting McDowell is seeing a lot of accomplishments because business, government, labor, and nonprofits are working together on a common cause. Although you do not always see these groups sitting at one table and collaborating, such collaboration is a powerful way to effect tangible, meaningful change. And if it can be done in a place like McDowell County, it can definitely be done to revive struggling urban schools and communities."

We know that collaboration works. We need to sustain the conditions necessary for collaboration to take root, and to replicate our successes throughout the country.

We can reclaim the promise of public education together by promoting solutions that are proven to work, instead of continuing to escalate the politics of division that do nothing to help our children succeed. ■

RANDI WEINGARTEN is President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, which represents teachers; paraprofessionals and school-related personnel; higher education faculty and staff; nurses and other healthcare professionals; local, state, and federal government employees; and early childhood educators. Prior to her election as AFT President in 2008, Weingarten served for 12 years as President of the United Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2, in New York City.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Aquinas College
Tenure Track Assistant/Associate Professor of Communication

Aquinas College, an inclusive Catholic College in the Dominican Tradition, seeks a dynamic and caring professional dedicated to teaching excellence and professional scholarship as a tenure-track Assistant/Associate Professor of Communication. Responsibilities include 12 credit hours per semester, office hours, academic advising, and department/college activities. Primary teaching responsibilities include Intercultural Communication and Applied Statistics for the Social Sciences (rotational basis) with additional teaching opportunities: Humanities, First-Year Experience, and departmental core courses (Intro to Communication, Interpersonal, Public Speaking, Small Group, etc.). Teaching area of specialization may be negotiated. Ph.D. or ABD with completion by time of appointment (August 2015) required. Submit cover letter addressing teaching philosophy and statement on contributing to the College mission, curriculum vitae, two letters of recommendation, and a list of references to Lori Orlowski, Executive Assistant to the Provost, at llo001@aquinas.edu. Deadline: December 1, 2014.

This institution chooses not to disclose its domestic partner benefits policy.

California State University, Chico
Assistant Professor-Communication Studies

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences is searching for a tenure-track Assistant Professor to start August 2015.

Qualifications: The minimum education requirement for appointment to this position is an earned Ph.D. in the field of Communication. Candidates must have demonstrated ability or potential to teach in at least one of two primary areas at both the undergraduate and graduate levels: Organizational Communication and/or Rhetoric; demonstrated ability or potential to teach in at least one of two secondary areas related to the program, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels: Health Communication and/or Intercultural Communication; potential for college-level teaching excellence; potential to teach writing-intensive course for majors; a record in and commitment to scholarship and publication that includes one or more of the areas of interest listed; evidence of active participation or service in professional organizations; and ability to work well with multicultural international students. Candidates are subject to a criminal records check.

Preferred Qualifications: Experience using technology in teaching; experience with public speaking and/or general education curricula; experience with curriculum assessment; experience in writing-intensive courses; experience in grant writing; ability to manage large lecture courses.

More information and the application requirements can be obtained by checking the CSU Career Site at http://csucareers.calstate.edu/.

Review of applications will begin on November 7, 2014, and continue until the position is filled.

This institution offers benefits to same-sex and different sex domestic partners.

UMASS AMHERST

Performance Studies and Rhetoric Scholar

The Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst seeks a performance studies scholar with strong roots in or an ability to converse with critical approaches to rhetoric (broadly conceptualized), including critical race studies, postcolonial studies and decolonizing theories, transnational feminism, queer studies, or civil rights. We are seeking talented applicants qualified for an Assistant Professor position. However exceptional candidates at any rank will receive consideration.

The hire would join a faculty who work at the intersection of performance and rhetorical studies in a department deeply committed to critical approaches to media and culture, and should contribute to this engagement. The ideal scholar would be committed to social justice through public advocacy, community-based research and teaching, or service-learning education, and should be willing both to teach the introductory course in performance and rhetoric and to contribute new courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. Preference will be given to those candidates whose research and teaching occurs at the intersection of the social sciences and the humanities. A Ph.D. in Communication or related field required by September 1, 2015.

Please submit letter of application, curriculum vitae, a research sample, evidence of teaching effectiveness (such as student evaluations), and contact information for three letter writers submitted through the Interview Exchange website at http://umass.interviewexchange.com/jobofferdetails.jsp?JOBID=53042 by November 14, 2014.

The University is committed to active recruitment of a diverse faculty and student body. The University of Massachusetts Amherst is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer of women, minorities, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities and encourages applications from these and other protected group members. Because broad diversity is essential to an inclusive climate and critical to the University's goals of achieving excellence in all areas, we will holistically assess the many qualifications of each applicant and favorably consider an individual's record working with students and colleagues with broadly diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds in educational, research or other work activities. We will also favorably consider experience overcoming or helping others overcome barriers to an academic degree and career. This institution offers benefits to same-sex and different sex domestic partners.

Kent State University
Faculty Non-Tenure Track
Communication Studies
[Job 990385]
Kent Campus–Kent, Ohio

The School of Communication Studies at Kent State University invites applications for two full-time, non-tenure track positions at the rank of Lecturer or Assistant Professor. These are teaching positions, and applicants will be considered primarily on the basis of teaching credentials. M.A. in Communication Studies is required, Ph.D. is preferred.

The school offers undergraduate concentrations in applied, global, health, interpersonal, organizational, and public communication. We are interested in candidates who can teach a diverse range of courses in two or more of these concentrations in addition to core courses across concentrations.

The School of Communication Studies is part of the College of Communication and Information. The college encourages interdisciplinary work among the schools of Communication Studies, Journalism and Mass Communication, Library and Information Science, and Visual Communication Design. The School of Communication Studies places high value on collaborative work.

Kent State University, with more than 27,000 students on the Kent campus, has been ranked by *Times Higher Education*, a London-based higher education magazine, as one of the top 200 universities in the world. The Kent campus is located in the rolling hills of Northeastern Ohio. Kent State is a major research university with a commitment to innovative strategies for learning and civic engagement. The town of Kent offers a delightful combination of a small but vibrant college-town environment and close proximity to the cultural, dining, and professional sports activities of major cities, along with the recreational opportunities of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and many lakes in the region.

Review of applications will begin on November 15, 2014, and will continue until the position is filled. We anticipate an employment start date of August 2015.

A letter of application, vita, three letters of recommendation, degree transcripts, a teaching philosophy statement, and any evidence of teaching effectiveness (such as course evaluations or a supervisory review of teaching) should be uploaded by applicants to https://jobs.kent.edu.

For more information about the position, please contact Dr. Catherine Goodall, Search Committee Chair, cgoodall@kent.edu.

To apply, please visit us at http://jobs.kent.edu.

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer/Disabled/Veterans. This institution offers benefits to same-sex and different sex domestic partners.

For all official job descriptions, visit www.kent.edu/hr

Photo credits:
Cover: Rawpixel/iStock.com and mexrix/Shutterstock.com;
page 7: Rawpixel/iStock.com; page 8: michaeljung/Bigstock.com;
page 11: Robert Kneschke/Shutterstock.com; page 13: Blend_Images/iStock.com;
page 14: track5/iStock.com; page 15 and 25: asiseeit/iStock.com; page 17:
monkeybusinessimages/Bigstock.com; page 18: michaeljung/Shutterstock.com;
page 21: PeopleImages/iStock.com; page 23: Rawpixel/Shutterstock.com; and
page 26: Konstantin Chagin/Shutterstock.com.

Don't Miss These

Special Sessions

AT THE

NCA Centennial Convention

PLUS HUNDREDS MORE!

With **NCA's Centennial Convention** just a couple of weeks away, plan to attend some of the many sessions that will mark the association's 100th anniversary by looking back at our collective past(s) and forward to our imagined future(s)! Here is just a sampling of this year's more than 80 centennial-related sessions:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

- Microhistories of Communication Studies
- The Rhetoric of Resistance: Performances of Significant Speeches Celebrating NCA's First Century
- NCA 100: Past, Present, and Future

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

- Communication Activism: The Presence of Our Future(s)
- The Errors of Our Past, Paths to the Future: Significant Issues in Communication Research Statistics and Design
- Past, Present and Future of Women and Leadership at NCA's Centennial: Perspectives of NCA Presidents

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

- Communication and Pragmatism: 100 Years Later Returning to Chicago
- One Hundred Years of Progress… But Are We Going in the Right Direction? The Woolbert-Hunt Debates Revisited
- Looking in the Mirror: Reflections on Diversity in NCA
- 1968–1977, The Decade that Changed the Face of the NCA

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23

- (tele)Presence Research in Past, Present, and Future Technologies
- The Talk of Aging: Examining the Lives of the Oldest Living through a Historical Communication Lens

SEE YOU IN CHICAGO!

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION
1765 N Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Merrifield VA
Permit No. 2333