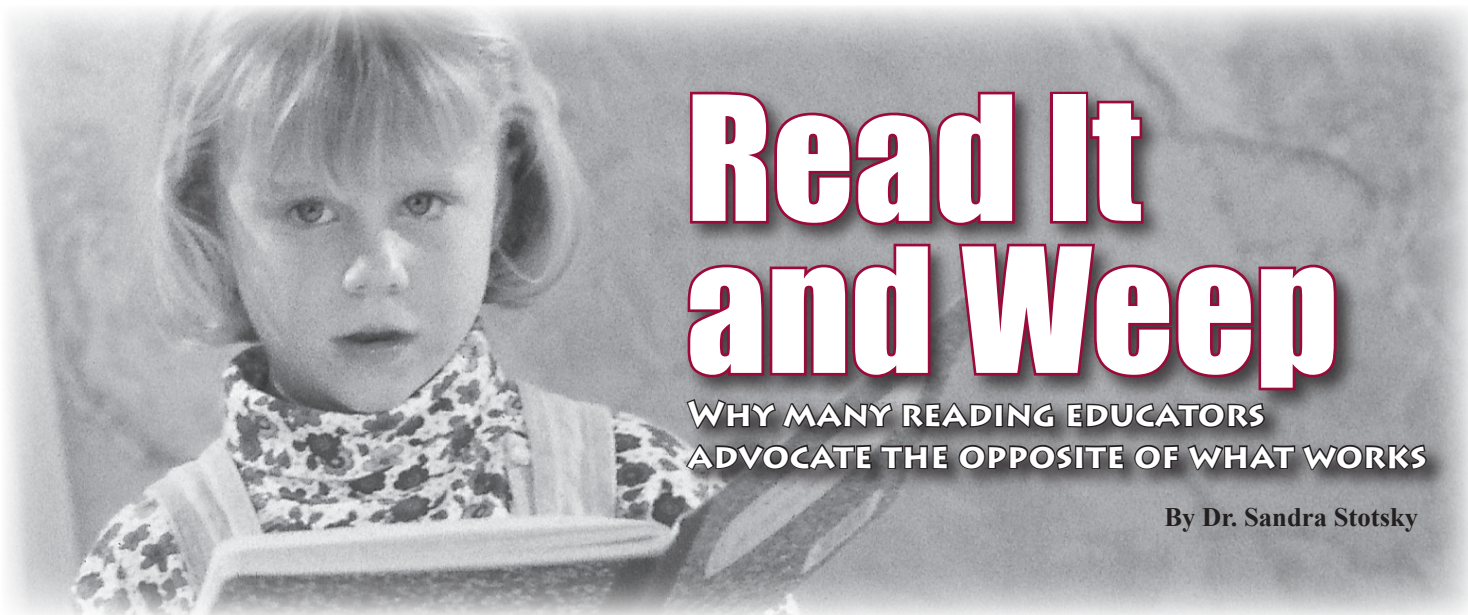


# Education Matters

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## Read It and Weep

WHY MANY READING EDUCATORS  
ADVOCATE THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT WORKS

By Dr. Sandra Stotsky

**R**eading instruction is one of the very few areas in which it is not the case that more research is needed. Educational policy makers already have the theory and the evidence supporting it to guide the implementation of effective reading programs from kindergarten through high school. In fact, they have had the theory and the evidence for decades. The central problem they face in providing effective reading instruction and a sound reading curriculum stems not from an absence of a research base but from willful indifference to what the research has consistently shown and to a theory that has been repeatedly confirmed. The evidence has been willfully ignored by schools of education and all those they influence, from teachers, administrators, educational publishers, professional educational organizations, and testing companies, to policy makers.

In *The Academic Achievement Challenge*, the last book she wrote before her death at the age of 78 in 1999, Jeanne Chall makes this point over and over again, with exasperation and sorrow. One of the world's experts on reading research and instruction, Chall was a major contributor to this body of research through her work on readability,

her analysis of the research on beginning reading instruction, and many other studies. Based on her own research, her work with hundreds of graduate students in the course of their dissertations or other research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and continuing contact with former students over the course of a long professional life, she was in a position to have a comprehensive, inside understanding of the twists and turns in her field and in education in general.

In one of my last conversations with her in 1998, I asked her what kind of reading research she thought was still necessary. Her answer was quick and cutting. We don't need any more. It's clear what we should do. It's been clear for decades. The problem is that we don't do what the research evidence supports, and in fact often do just the opposite.

Most of the issues in the curriculum could be seen, she suggested, as a reflection of the tensions between a teacher-centered and a student-centered approach to instruction and to education in general. Commentators on education over the years have come up with different terms for the dichotomy in approaches: traditional vs. progressive, direct

vs. indirect, content vs. process, product vs. process, structured vs. open, and skills vs. conceptual understanding are just a few of them. However, they always reflected how one viewed the learning process and the role of the teacher.

From her examination of trends in national test scores and both quantitative and qualitative studies in all areas of the school curriculum, Chall concluded that teacher-centered approaches led to higher student achievement in all areas of the curriculum including reading, especially in the elementary grades, and especially for low-income children. Yet, ironically, for the past 50 years, the conflicts were almost all about what was best for these children. The research evidence was clear about which approach would be best for these children. But it didn't seem to matter to those who claimed that social justice for the children of the poor demanded nothing but "best practices."

### Two Approaches

Chall noted there have been two basic, competing theories about the development of reading skill. In one theory, repeatedly confirmed, its development takes place in

a series of stages, with beginning reading differing from skilled reading. Phonological factors play a major role at the beginning because beginners must learn the various relationships between spoken words and the written symbols for their sounds in order to become skilled readers. In other words, they must learn the alphabetical principle. This multi-stage theory predicts that a lack of success in the early stages—in sounding out and identifying words in print whose meanings they already know—retards success in later stages when they must, among other things, learn the meanings of words they may be able to sound out with ease but not understand.

In the other theory, known as whole language, a sight word approach, or a psycholinguistic guessing game, beginning reading does not differ as a process from skilled reading. Reading skill, its proponents claim, develops naturally as language and cognition develop, with language and cognition maturing together independent of direct instruction. Proponents of this one-stage theory analogize learning to read and write to the natural process of learning to listen and speak, asserting that beginning readers learn to read through their effort to derive meaning from written language just as they have with oral language.

As is well-known, the evidence has consistently supported the multistage theory implemented by a pedagogy emphasizing explicit instruction in skills and mastery to the point of automaticity. The evidence has clearly supported the superiority of highly structured teaching for children deemed “at risk.”

### The Philosophical Divide

Chall noted that “powerful forces” other than reason and common sense have kept us doing the same research and answering the same questions again and again, with no end yet in sight. As she saw it, there has been a steady movement towards student-centered approaches to curriculum and instruction over the century despite the mounting evidence that its results were inferior to teach-

er-centered approaches, especially for the most vulnerable populations—low-income children and children with disabilities. Chall traced the root of the problem to conflicting philosophical beliefs about the child’s inherent nature and the goal of education in a democracy. One group of educators have viewed the child as someone whose intellectual growth

needed careful adult-determined direction within a clear pedagogical structure, with the end result of informed citizenship. Their primary goals have been academic. Another group of educators have viewed the child as essentially good, motivated to learn and cooperate with others, and a unique individual whose creative talents needed to be tapped and allowed to unfold naturally—an image befitting children living in a democracy as they pictured it. No authority figures need to be in charge of what children learn. For this group of educators, the primary goals of education have been social.

### Making Reading Political

In her last book, Chall frankly noted that the problem today is the identification of each theory and the pedagogy that best implements it with a political preference.

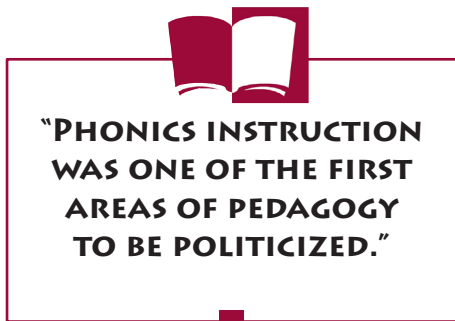
Phonics instruction was one of the first areas of pedagogy to be politicized, and by the author of *Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game*, Kenneth Goodman, with the help of his educator wife, Yetta Goodman. They were the founders of the whole language movement. In an attempt to ascribe the low reading achievement of low-income children to language differences, not language deficits, Goodman claimed that phonics instruction imposed standard forms of speech on dialect-speaking children through the teaching of conventional sound-letter correspondences and led to the failure of these children to connect what they decoded with their native language and a lack of motivation to learn to read.

Because these children could not associate the words they identified with the language they spoke, he argued, they could not read with meaning. Phonics instruction, he also implied, was the preferred strategy of

Christian fundamentalists, darkly hinting that it was favored by conservative parents because it fit in with attempts at controlled literal understandings of a text. In effect, Goodman made phonics instruction a civil rights issue and smeared it as a tool of both white middle class oppressors and white fanatics.

Goodman’s colleagues in education schools across the country took up this argument with eagerness and further support from Paulo Freire’s influential *Pedagogy for the Oppressed*, first published in 1970 and now available in a 30th anniversary edition. A Brazilian educator and a Marxist, Freire, too, ridiculed phonics instruction as an oppressive strategy for teaching illiterate Brazilian fishermen and farmers how to read, advocating instead a whole language approach. To a large extent, his teaching materials consisted of party slogans and Marxist propaganda, so far as I can determine. Although Freire has been judged one of the most influential educators of the 20th century, I have been unable to locate independent evaluations of his work in Brazil or elsewhere.

Did Goodman’s ideas make sense at the theoretical level, or have empirical or practical support? No, his ideas were untenable as language theory. Dialect-speaking children in this and every other country can comprehend the standard dialect orally; thus there is no comprehension mismatch when children sound out a word according to its standard pronunciation. (Goodman himself later corrected his claims on this issue.) Nor could Goodman’s ideas be implemented consistently by linguists because they could not agree on how to transcribe black dialect or indeed on which black dialect to use for a beginning reading textbook. His ideas were also unsupported by research; no peer-reviewed and published research found black children’s reading skills improved by the use of reading textbooks written in dialect. Indeed, dialect readers were opposed in practice by black teachers who didn’t want the stereotype of dialect-speaking blacks promoted in children’s reading materials. But none of this mattered. Phonics instruction was a civil rights issue—beyond theory, research, and the scientific method. Moreover, the English language itself was now being portrayed as the language of imperialists—and even literacy was being dismissed as the tool of oppressors dating back thou-



sands of years to the very inception of writing systems.

## Research Declared Irrelevant

In concluding her book, Chall noted how intractable ideological preferences are. However, rational being that she was, she still ended with the hope that scientific evidence would come to be more respected by educators. Here, I think, is where Chall underdeveloped a crucial piece of the problem she identified. She failed to note that scientific research in education—something the early Progressives did want, John Dewey among them—has itself been consistently disparaged as “positivistic” and irrelevant by the major proponents of whole language since the early 1970s. They have cleverly argued from the start that their theory and its associated pedagogy could not be assessed by scientific methods.

Goodman, now a professor emeritus at the University of Arizona, has regularly and outspokenly disparaged the value of scientific research in

education. Other whole language advocates are quoted in a March 20, 1996, article in *Education Week* as charging that “researchers have become the unwitting pawns of the conservative and religious right.”

The reading process advocates were joined in their disparagement of experimental research very early on by Donald Graves, the first to emphasize a holistic writing process for teaching writing in the elementary school and the graduate school mentor at the University of New Hampshire of Lucy Calkins, his most prominent student. In 1980, for example, Graves dismissed writing research as “exercises for students to apply statistics to their dissertations.” In his view, most experimental research “wasn’t readable and was of limited value.” It was “devoid of context and concerned only with sterile and faceless data.”

If experimental research is declared inappropriate, no evaluation of the efficacy of the reading and writing process approach is possible. How convenient. Its advocates

never have to admit that their theory is bankrupt and their pedagogical recommendations have little or no warrant. And because they are true believers, the bankrupt theory spreads. As we all know, it has influenced educators across the curriculum in tandem with another related, unproved, and unprovable theory of learning called constructivism. Both new and experienced teachers are actively dissuaded from teaching discrete skills (except, possibly, in no more than 10-minute “mini-lessons”). Pseudo-teaching strategies like small peer-led group work are touted as ways to teach the content of any subject. However, borrowed theories, bankrupt or not, often lead to unexpected problems in the new domain.

For example, both mathematical and scientific terms have fixed meanings uninfluenced by context. But a theory that views contextual meaning or “prior knowledge” as determining word meanings leads to a pedagogy in mathematics and science that is potentially harmful, especially when there

are many words whose everyday meaning differs from their precise scientific definition.

More problematic is the notion that it matters little if students misread the exact words in a sentence if they have “constructed” an approximate “meaning” for the sentence. It is a short leap to the notion that students should be given more credit for spelling out their reasoning for solving a mathematical problem even if they come up with a wrong answer than for getting the correct answer without spelling out the reasoning. It’s also a short leap from pedagogical approaches that insist students should choose what they want to read and write about, ground their interpretations of what they read in their life experiences, and write mainly about their life experiences (all in the name of “ownership”) to the notion that children should be expected to induce their own algorithms for basic arithmetical operations and engage chiefly in solving “real-world” problems.

## Generations of Willful Ignorance

The problems go deeper than Goodman’s and Graves’s indifference to a bankrupt theory and its misapplication to another domain. These two educators communicated their sarcastic dismissal of scientific research to their own graduate students and to other educators for decades. Spread by their students and colleagues in schools of education across the country, their views have kept thousands of graduate students and prospective teachers from studying methodologically sound research in their education courses and discouraged them from using it later in their own work.


Educational policy makers are in an unenviable position. Most of those who prepare new teachers and retrain experienced ones in our schools of education do not appear to accept the results of scientific research on the nature, development, and teaching of reading and writing. They do not accept the results because they have declared scientific research irrelevant. They thus erroneously train those who are preparing to teach in costly licensure programs and continue to erroneously train them in even more costly professional development programs. Rational argument is not possible with those who maintain that evidence does not matter—or that an opinion or an appealing anecdote can also be considered “evidence.”

A society cannot afford to continue funding teacher training institutions whose educational philosophy promotes a bankrupt theory and its associated pedagogy in the name of social justice in order to disguise their own intellectual bankruptcy. ■


*Sandra Stotsky, Ed. D., now an independent education researcher, was Senior Associate Commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Education from 1999 to 2003. For thirteen years, she directed a summer Institute on Writing, Reading, and Civic Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and now directs a We the People summer institute.*



*This article is an adaptation of Dr. Stotsky’s presentation at the Courant Initiative for the Mathematical Sciences in Education, New York University, October 2, 2005. The entire presentation can be viewed at the [www.NYCHOLD.org](http://www.NYCHOLD.org).*



**“A SOCIETY CANNOT AFFORD TO CONTINUE FUNDING TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS WHOSE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY PROMOTES A BANKRUPT THEORY.”**





# SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE

Northwest Professional Educator  
Helps Migrant Families Sprout a  
Hopeful Future

The town of Warden, Washington, is barely a dot on the map. As a small farming community with a population of just over 2,600—over half of which are migrant workers—it would seem that the roads to success are limited.

Angie Dorman, a Warden High School teacher and member of Northwest Professional Educators (NWPE), is working to change that mentality and develop a strong, stable community. Her route to accomplishing that goal: get kids to college and support them through achievement of their degrees.

“The 2000 census revealed that only thirty-six people in our community had attained a bachelor’s degree,” said Dorman, who teaches history at Warden High School and is pursuing her doctoral degree in history at the University of Idaho (UI). “I want these kids to get their degrees.”

Many of the workers in the area come for the seasonal work and leave for jobs elsewhere or return to Mexico when harvest is complete in late fall.

“We go where the work is,” said Carlos Hernandez, a criminal justice major at the University of Idaho. “We have an unspoken rule that education is acceptable as long as it doesn’t interfere with work or money.”

In the few months of the year that Dorman has migrant students in class, she asks questions that make them think about their futures.

“She came up to me and asked what I was planning on doing with the rest of my life,” said Tony Garza, a freshman at the university. “When I shrugged, she said that I can choose to settle for a mediocre life, or I can go to college and have a better life. That’s when I made the decision to come here.”

In 2003, Dorman sent an e-mail to UI Professor Dale Graden to ask for financial help for a deserving student. The conversations that followed opened the doors for the first Warden student to attend college in Moscow with assistance from the university’s College Assistance Migrant Program.

## Helping Families

The next step was to convince parents to send their kids to college outside of the community. With a community college nearby, parents didn’t understand why their children had to go to a larger university, particularly one out of state. Dorman’s biggest challenge came in changing the perception that once kids leave the area, they don’t return home.

“In our culture, girls only leave home when they get married and guys stay with the family and work the farms,” said Monica Martinez, a sophomore pursuing a degree in Latin American studies and Spanish.

Hernandez’s parents thought he was joking about going to college. “Only when they had to sign my



application and financial aid forms did they realize I was serious about college.”

“Now that we’re here, our parents are completely supportive,” he said. “But we have high expectations to live up to—the community sees us as role models for the younger students. There’s a lot of pressure to complete our education and act responsibly.”

“All honest work deserves respect. These families have worked hard to provide for their kids and their future,” said Dorman. “The kids need to realize that a college education is within their grasp and they should take advantage of the opportunities their parents did not have.”

In 2003, Ricardo Buenrostro was the first from Warden to enter UI. His journey was carefully watched by the families in Warden. The following year, three more students made the move to Moscow. This fall, eight additional students enrolled at the university.

“Warden High School has about 200 kids,” said Dorman. “We now have twelve enrolled at the university, including two Gates Millennium Scholars. UI has been instrumental in helping these kids believe that a university education is possible.”

Dorman continues to play the role of shepherd. She piques student interest in college, coordinates visits to campus, and invites university representatives to Warden to meet with the students.

“When we come to Warden each fall, Angie has the students lined up with completed enrollment and financial aid applications,” said Yolanda Bisbee, U I CAMP program director. “She ensures they hit all the deadlines.”

Dorman also follows the students’ academic progression once they’re at UI. “She’s a second mom to the group. She calls me almost daily to make sure I’m doing my homework before goofing off. She checks in with every Warden kid on campus throughout the week, and knows exactly what’s going on. If I mess around, she’s among the first to know,” said Garza.

## Working with the University

Besides making sure her students toe the line, Dorman ensures that UI lives up to the reputation she conveys to her students—an institution committed to enhancing the personal growth and civic responsibility of students.

“The University of Idaho is dedicated to creating a diverse alumni base,” said Dorman. “I couldn’t go out in good faith and talk about UI to kids and their parents if I didn’t see the university’s long-term commitment to people of diverse backgrounds.”

“A friend of mine often criticizes academic institutions. He claims they like to talk about diversity, but are only interested in sports teams and short-term diversity numbers,” she said. “I use the University of Idaho as a rebuttal. UI doesn’t just recruit diverse students and consider their work finished. They continue to work with the students throughout college.”

Martinez said that migrant families tend to be tight-knit, which means children return to the area to raise families. Those who return with an education have done more than enrich themselves; they offer their knowledge to the community, sowing seeds that yield a fine crop.

“By not working side-by-side in the fields with our parents, we might be making life difficult for them. But by getting an education, we’re making life better for ourselves and future generations. We don’t want our kids to have the hard life we’ve had,” said Martinez.

The families in Warden support those dreams. Garza’s family was in a car accident in December 2004; his father’s ability to work has been limited and the family has been strapped financially. Even so, his par-



**“In our culture, girls only leave home when they get married and guys stay with the family and work the farms.” - Monica Martinez**

ents encouraged him to go away to college and are willing to deal with tight finances in hopes that his degree will earn more for the family and blaze the trail for other kids in the family.

“The parents I work with know that fieldwork is not stable. They want a better life for their kids—a life where their kids can choose the type of work they do,” said Dorman. “They want their kids to be free from worry that a bad back will give out, bringing a prompt end to that season’s work and income.”

She believes that alumni are the key to low-income and diverse students seeking higher education. “I encourage alumni and other patrons of the university to donate to the programs that support these kids. A little financial help changes the opportunities available to these students, and as a result, changes an entire community,” she said.

When students and parents thank Dorman for her help to make college a reality, they ask how they can repay her. She simply asks that the favor be passed along. “When the kids graduate from college and get on their feet, I ask them to give money for scholarships back to Warden High School.” ■

*Northwest Professional Educators is an affiliate of the Association of American Educators. This was adapted from an article by Joni Kirk who works in media relations for the University of Idaho.*



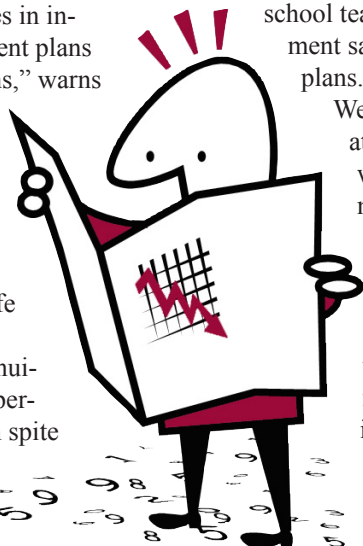
Northwest Professional Educator and AAE member, Angie Dorman helps the children of migrant workers attend a university.



## Retirement Rip-offs

“Some of the biggest names in insurance peddle lousy retirement plans with high fees and low returns,” warns Neil Weinberg writing for Forbes.com. Weinberg cautions educators to avoid buying variable annuities—as he describes them, “a basket of half a dozen mutual funds wrapped in a life insurance policy.”

“The main downside to annuities is stiff fees, often 2 or 3 percent a year,” he points out. In spite of this, according to Weinberg, about 1.5 million public



school teachers put their retirement savings into these insurance plans.

Weinberg points the finger at teachers unions, who, he writes, “are complicit partners in this dubious pursuit.

Insurers cut murky deals with labor unions to buy exclusive access to their members, sometimes paying the unions millions of dollars in fees in exchange for the unions’ endorsement of their annuity plans.”

Source—[www.Forbes.com](http://www.Forbes.com)

## Show Me the Money



Kansas City, MO, joins the growing number of cities where officials are considering a pay-for-performance plan for teachers. With this

plan would come clearer professional expectations, measurable goals, and the ability to grow within a profession—making teachers no different from other business professionals. The idea seems to be generating support from the school board, reformers, and the teachers union alike. However, like many proposals circulating far and wide, the question for parents and teachers in particular is what happens to those who perform exceptionally well versus those who do not?

Paying teachers more for doing well is a common theme of education reformers and one that rarely makes it into the debate. Policymakers and education officials moving towards the concept that quality should be rewarded is a sign that systems are feeling the heat from new accountability systems and need incentives for their most precious employees.

Source—CER Newswire, published by The Center for Education Reform. [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com)

## News Service for Students

StudentNewsDaily.com is a current events website for high school students designed to build high school students’ knowledge of current events and strengthen their critical thinking skills. It provides comprehension and critical thinking questions along with posted news articles and other current events items.

StudentNewsDaily.com is also pleased to introduce “Answers by Email.” This FREE service provides answers to questions from the Daily News Article, Tuesday’s News Issue and Friday’s News Quiz.

StudentNewsDaily.com provides additional news resources for the high school classroom, presenting students with a broader perspective of the news.

To sign-up for Answers by Email, visit its home page at [StudentNewsDaily.com](http://StudentNewsDaily.com).

## Fair Doesn’t Necessarily Mean Equal



Unable to fill a speech and language pathologist position at the salary set in the teachers’ contract, the Kenmare School District in North Dakota accepted the recommendation of a state fact-finding committee and offered an additional \$15,000.

The Kenmare Education Association quickly filed suit in district court. “For one individual to be allowed to negotiate up to \$15,000 additional salary is wrong,” KEA President Donna Schmit told the *Kenmare News*. However, the Northwest District Court Judge William McLees has ruled in favor of the district. The union has the option to appeal the decision to the state supreme court.

Source—The Education Intelligence Agency’s (EIA) Communiqué. You may find more information about EIA at [www.eiaonline.com](http://www.eiaonline.com).



## AAE Invited to Participate in President Bush's Four-Year Commemorative NCLB Event

In commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act, President Bush, the First Lady, and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings visited North Glen Elementary School in Glen Burnie, Maryland, on January 9, 2006. Members of AAE's Washington, D.C., Education Policy office were among the V.I.P.s in attendance.

The President selected the elementary school because it was an exemplary example of the progress he hopes NCLB initiates. Before NCLB was signed, the school's math and reading scores were near 50 percent proficient. Now those scores are well over 80 percent.

"The results are beginning to come in," the President explained. "They show a revival in mathematics achievement in the early grades, coupled with more reading progress in the past five years among nine-year-olds than in the previous three

**"We are pleased that the Administration recognizes the importance of AAE as a leader of the independent educators' movement."**

*- Heather Reams, AAE Director of Communications*

decades. Remarkable academic gains have been made by African-American and Hispanic students, helping to close an achievement gap critics once called intractable and inevitable."

The President emphasized that the law is initially effective because it helps to identify and diagnose problems in achievement through testing.

AAE continues to work with the U.S. Department of Education to make NCLB more fair and flexible for all schools. ■



President Bush and Secretary Spellings visited with students and staff at North Glen Elementary School.

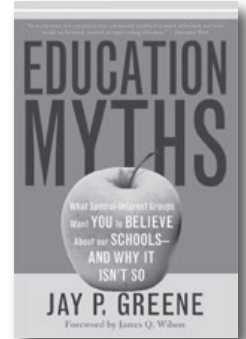
White House photos by Kimberlee Hewitt

## Book Review

### EDUCATION MYTHS

What Special Interest Groups Want YOU to BELIEVE about our SCHOOLS— AND WHY IT ISN'T SO

By Jay P. Greene



How can we fix a floundering public school system? The conventional wisdom says that schools need a lot more money, that poor and immigrant children can't do as well as most other American kids and that high-stakes tests just produce "teaching to the test." But what if the conventional wisdom is wrong?

In this book, Jay P. Greene examines eighteen widely held beliefs about American education, and finds that they just aren't true. In addition to myths about class size and teacher pay, he debunks common views about special education ("special ed. programs burden public schools"); certification ("certified or more experienced teachers are more effective"); graduation ("nearly all students graduate from high school"); draining ("choice harms public schools"); segregation ("private schools are more racially segregated"); and a host of other hotly debated issues.

Greene's reasoned and accessible approach refutes each myth with relevant and reliable facts and figures, including a broad review of the research. He believes problem schools can be fixed, and concludes the book with important recommendations that, once implemented, will help schools achieve measurable and affordable success. This landmark book provides a vital frame of reference for education reformers—and a wake-up call for taxpayers.

*JAY P. GREENE is a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and endowed chair and head of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas.*

# A Bright Idea for School Reform

Educators see remarkable gains with new approach.

By David W. Kirkpatrick

An education program called Project Bright IDEA1, recently developed by Duke University and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), brought a new educational model to 900 kindergarten, first-graders, and second-graders in five Title I schools in North Carolina.

Bright IDEA1 uses what organizational theorists call the organic model—the opposite of the mechanistic one in use in our schools. In a Bright IDEA1 classroom, students engage in problem-solving tasks as individuals and in small groups. Encouragement is given to such habits as persistence, innovation, and systematic thinking.

Bright IDEA1 was built on advanced research, and seeks to empower regular classroom teachers through training and mentoring to design concept-based curriculum, and to change the classroom environment to meet the learning styles of all children.

Although the organic model is unusual in our schools, such systems are driving the twenty-first century. Starting in the 1980s, corporations adopted the approach of solving problems by small teams thinking creatively, supported with rapidly evolving information technology.

This structure exhibits many of the characteristics seen in Bright IDEA1 classrooms: small group structure; use of collaborative skills; a focus on engagement; brainstorming, and discussion to solve problems; use of visual and conceptual tools; and learning by doing.

Organic structures are decentralized.

They engage, empower, and connect all people in an organization so that imagination and initiative are unleashed and magnified. People working in organic organizations, like high-tech companies, tend to be highly motivated and innovative. Over the past twenty years, this model has led to the largest increase in economic productivity in American history.

The Internet is an organic system. Video games are highly organic and are powerful tools for learning if their potential can be tapped for education. The fun of video games is learning—they are complex challenge structures, and gamers build up extremely intricate mental models. A recent study found students, who may be bored in a traditional 40-minute classroom, may spend hours playing video games. In addition, research has shown that gamers have a distinct advantage as managers in the modern workplace—they understand the organic model that predominates in corporations and can work very effectively in it.

That's a brief rhetorical explanation. The result? (Keep in mind that these are not the well-to-do children you might expect to be at the top of their class. They are from underrepresented populations, attend Title I schools, and are not preselected on any criteria.)

A May 23, 2005, joint announcement from NCDPI and the American Association for Gifted Children, reported:

*All kindergarten Bright IDEA1 classrooms scored in the 99th percentile on the state literacy assessment.*

*Significant gains were seen in student achievement in the K-2 Literacy and Mathematics Assessments across all subgroups of children.*

*Achievement among African-American and Hispanic populations was raised close to the level of white and Asian students.*

*One school showed Bright IDEA1 second-graders scoring in the 80th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Reading vs. 39th percentile for those who did not go through the Bright IDEA1 program. Class sizes averaged 21.5 in Bright IDEA1 classrooms and 18.8 in regular classrooms.*

*One principal provided data showing nearly all Bright IDEA1 students in K-2 classrooms scoring 50-100 percent higher than students in regular classrooms. Not one child was left behind: the achievement gap was closed across all demographics.*

Teachers, whose job satisfaction skyrocketed, say that Bright IDEA1 students also had greatly reduced social and attention problems.

Kindergarten teacher Virginia Avery says, "I would not return to teaching the way I did prior to Bright IDEA1. I wish I could go back and teach all my previous students this way." ■



*David W. Kirkpatrick is Senior Education Fellow, U.S. Freedom Foundation, Washington, D.C., and Senior Education Fellow, Buckeye Institute, Columbus, OH. David is former President of NEA-affiliate Pennsylvania State Education Association.*