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Joshua M. Beck
Intern
White House Domestic Policy Council
December 14, 2000

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- Fall 2000 Papers
- Fall 200 Miscellaneous
- Family Involvement
- NIF Report/ Public School File
- After School/ Community Impact
- Challenging the Status Quo
- Kettering Foundation File
- Teaching Report
- "Living in a New Economy" paper
- Hispanic Report
- Telephone Directory
- Religion in Public Schools
- POTUS Speeches
- Safe Schools File
- General Education Statistics
- Statistics and General Research
- IBC International/ Rep. Pallone File
- Miscellaneous Research
- National Test News Clips Feb.- Aug. 1997
- National Test News Clips Feb 1997- Present

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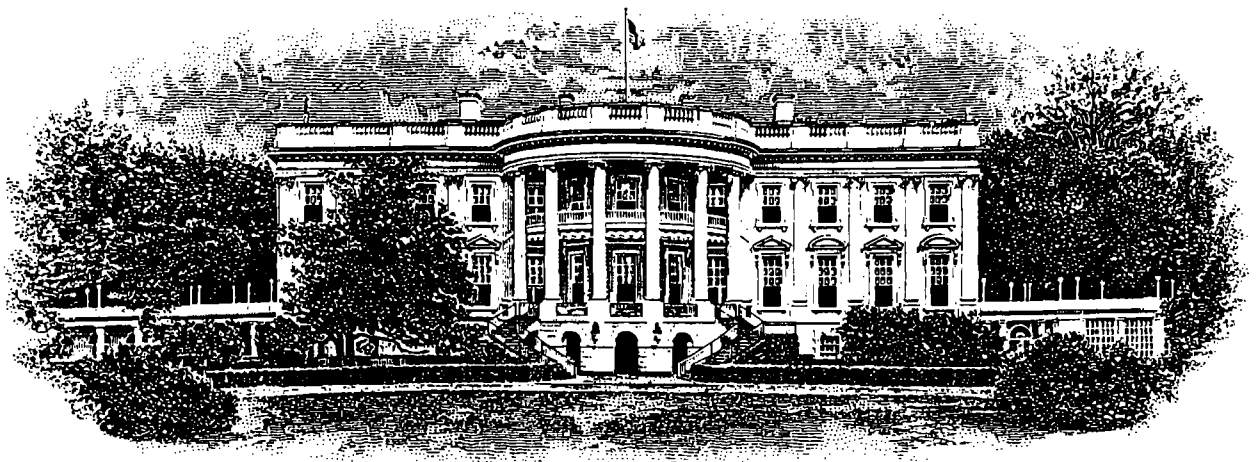
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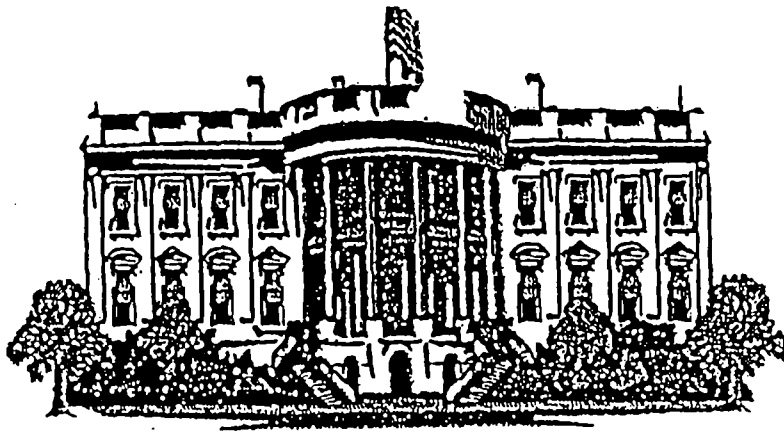
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charter school RESEARCH

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for the school is (209) 467-0703 and the
award was given on April 27, 1995 to SARA
Garfield. I know some of the pages have cut off
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Hope this helps,
Josh

Stan St. prof honored for homeless work

By Stuart Gordon
Dea staff writer

STOCKTON — When Stanislaus State University Professor Sara Garfield announced she would be skipping this week's inauguration of the university's new president, colleagues were aghast.

"They warned me, 'I hope you have a good reason,'" she said. "I told them I have a meeting with another president the same day."

On Thursday, the day university President Marvalene Hughes will be inaugurated, Garfield has an invitation to meet with that other president — in the White House Rose Garden.

Garfield, an assistant professor of teacher education, recently learned she was one of 18 people selected from among 3,000 nominees to receive the 1995 President's Service Award from the Point of Light Foundation.

The private, nonprofit foundation, created in 1990, honors volunteers across the country for outstanding community service.

"It's absolutely mind-boggling to get a phone call asking you to come to Washington, D.C.," Garfield said Friday.

Her colleagues, administrators and

See Page B-2, **Professor**

PROFESSOR: Has a date with president

Monday, April 24, 1995

The Modesto Bee

CONTINUED from B-1

Hughes agree that's a valid excuse to miss the Stanislaus State inauguration.

This isn't the first time she has won honors for her work with homeless children at the Transitional Learning Center, in the shadow of the Crosstown Freeway in one of Stockton's most crime-ridden neighborhoods. She's founder and director of the school.

Garfield says her work with the children of homeless families never has been about awards, honors or recognition. Then again, she doesn't plan to stand up President Clinton, either.

Garfield, 44, has seen the school, called TLC, grow from a tiny one-room trailer with 11 students when it opened in February 1992 to three trailers that serve nearly 80 students.

TLC does more than just teach children who have had little opportunity to attend elementary school. It also provides food, clothing, medical and dental care in conjunction with St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room, Stanislaus State and the Offices of Education in both San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

Garfield, a Stockton resident and full-time teacher at Stanislaus State's Stockton satellite campus, said she got involved with homeless children through her volunteer work with St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room about a decade ago.

She and her two daughters, Jaime and Jen, who were 4 and 7 at the time, washed dishes at the dining hall. That lesson turned into a several-year commitment to volunteer at St. Mary's.

Garfield said she was driving from the university campus in Turlock one day to Stockton when she got the idea for establishing a school for the young children she saw at St. Mary's.

"It just hit me. I had all the connections at St. Mary's and eager students at the university who were available and looking for field experience," she said.

Garfield brought St. Mary's, Stanislaus State and the county Office of Education together to make TLC a reality.

Stanislaus State graduate students in education and psychology volunteer to work with the children. At the same time, they are conducting research for their graduate studies.

Although children often disappear with their families after a few weeks, Garfield believes the brief contact with TLC can make a difference in a child's life.

"For a child who has been bounced around from school to school, we actually see the children become connected and become part of the classroom community in just a few days here," she said.

By providing a positive image of school, Garfield hopes the youngsters will attend school even after they leave TLC and move away with their parents.

There's one teacher for every four or five children at TLC. Stanislaus State students also help assess if the children have learning disabilities.

Garfield, who typically puts in 30 hours a week as director of TLC in addition to being a full-time professor, said her work

with homeless children is bitter-sweet. Losing contact with children when they move on can be hard.

"The first year we were open, I think the entire staff cried ourselves to sleep every night," she said.

"It's very, very difficult to maintain a balance between being here with the kids, being caring and very involved in their lives, and then leaving it behind when you go home at night."

Donations from the community keeps both TLC and St. Mary's afloat. TLC has never received a dime of federal funds, but Garfield hopes that will change now that the White House knows it exists.

Eventually, Garfield hopes TLC can serve junior high school-age children and work with St. Mary's to establish long-term housing for homeless families next to the school.

She also hopes to compile a book, "Voice of the Voiceless," that would include the writing of TLC students and anecdotes by staff and volunteers. Currently, families of children who attend TLC must leave emergency shelters after 30 days.

Garfield also received the 1994 J.C. Penney National Golden Rule Award and the 1994 Quality Education Award from the California Council on the Education of Teachers for her work at TLC.

Garfield, Stanislaus State and TLC also received the 1993 Christa McAuliffe Showcase for Excellence Award from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Turlock Journal

Monday, April 24, 1995

Prof in awe over national award

By DARIA WELLES
The Journal

Although Sara Garfield has known for two weeks now that she is one of 18 people nationwide to win the 1995 President's Service Award presented by the Points of Light Foundation, she said this morning she's still in a state of disbelief.

"First you're shocked, then you find yourself just feeling amazed," she said by phone from her Stockton home today.



GARFIELD

"It's almost impossible for me to find the words to describe how I feel. I'm honored. I'm excited. But I still don't believe this is really going to happen."

Garfield, assistant professor of teacher education at California State University Stanislaus' Stockton Center, will leave Tuesday to receive the award for her work with homeless children.

She founded and operates the Transitional Learning Center for Homeless Children in Stockton and will receive the award Thursday afternoon from President Clinton during ceremonies at the White House Rose Garden.

"I'm really looking forward to meeting the president, and hopefully Mrs. Clinton," Garfield said.

The TLC program is a cooperative effort of the university, the St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room social services program for the needy, and the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

It provides education for homeless children in kindergarten through sixth grade who would otherwise be excluded from schooling because they lack legal documentation and immunization records required for school enrollment, Garfield said.

The program is funded through the office of education and donations and is operated almost entirely by volunteers, including CSUS students who are training to become teachers.

The school opened about three years ago with 11 children being taught in a trailer, Garfield said.

Last week it expanded into its third portable school building and sometimes serves as many as 70 children at a time.

"Our enrollment fluctuates because these children's lives are so transitional," Garfield said. "Sometimes we have children for only as long as their family can stay in a shelter, usually just 30 days. But families don't get on their feet in that short a time. Sometimes they'll leave the shelter but remain in the area, staying with friends or whatever, and then we get to work with the children longer."

Because the program has a large number of volunteers available, the student teacher ration runs about 1 to 4, Garfield said.

"Because these children have been moved around so much and have missed so much school, they are far behind so we work to give them a very intense educational experience."

Irma Guzman Wagner, dean of the school of education at the university, praised Garfield for winning the national recognition today.

"Sara is being justifiably recognized for outstanding work in an important area which has largely been otherwise neglected — that is schooling for homeless children," she said.

"She deserves this award for seeing the need and responding to it with hard work, talent and commitment and for the great success she has achieved. She brings credit to the university and to the people of Stockton who have been so supportive and involved."

SG-Vita - 5**AWARDS and RECOGNITIONS****NATIONAL**

- 1997 **HUD - Best Practices Award** to the City of Stockton for TLC School
- 1995 **President's Service Award** (in education) presented by President Bill Clinton, April 27, 1995, Washington, D. C.
- 1994 **National Golden Rule Medallion Award** (in Education) by JC Penney Corporation - \$5,000 awarded to TLC School.
- 1993 **Christa McAuliff Showcase for Excellence**, 1933 National Award, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) presented to CSU-Stanislaus and TLC School.
- 1992 **734th Point of Light for the Nation** - TLC School as part of St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room was honored in April 1, 1992 by President Bush

STATE

- 2000 **California Council on the Education of Teachers (CCET) Quality of Education Award** for Distinguished Service to Children and Education of Teachers to TLC School
- 1997 **Bautzer Faculty University Advancement Award** by the CA State University.
- 1995 **Teacher Educator of the Year Award** by the Credential Counselors and Analysts of California (CCAC), October.
- 1995 **Outstanding Volunteer Service to the Community Award** by the California Legislative Assembly, February.
- 1994 **Quality Education Award for Distinguished Service to Children and the Education of Teachers**, California Council on the Education of Teachers. (CCET)

COUNTY

- 2000 **Golden Apple Award** to TLC School, San Joaquin County CTA/NEA
- 1997-1998 **Outstanding Professor Award** (co-recipient) by California State University-Stanislaus
- 1997 **Girl Scout Role Model Award** by Tierra del Oro Girl Scout Council, Stockton
- 1995 **Educator of the Year**, Phi Delta Kappa, May.
- 1994 **Paul Harris Fellow for Service to Mankind**, Rotary International.
- 1994 **International Reading Association's Celebrating Literacy Award** San Joaquin Council of the California Reading Association.

SG-VITA -6

- 1994 **Golden Rule In Education Award**, Volunteer Center, San Joaquin County and JC Penney.
- 1994 **Good Samaritan of the Year** Award, San Joaquin County Food Bank.
- 1993 **Susan B. Anthony "Woman of Achievement in Education"** Award.
- 1993 **"Service to Mankind"** Award, Sertoma Club, 1993.

OTHER

- 1999 **Distinguished Alumni Award** – University of Wisconsin, Superior

TLC school provides tender loving care

Marcella Rojas

The Business Journal

They learn the ABCs, feel like winners and are given hope for a better tomorrow. The world does not seem so cold for children at St. Mary's Interfaith Transitional Learning Center (TLC), a school for homeless children and a place where they receive tender loving care.

Founded in 1992 by Sara Garfield, a California State University, Stanislaus-Stockton professor, TLC educates and provides social services for more than 3,500 homeless children. The TLC is a collaboration between Saint Mary's Interfaith Dining Room, CSU, Stanislaus, and the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

Approximately 400 university students have participated at the TLC, located at 545 West Sonoma Street in Stockton.

"The TLC provides a needed service in the Stockton community, and serves to tell children that they are loved and cared for," said Garfield. "They deserve to be educated, regardless if they are homeless."

The TLC has grown from 11 children in 1992 to 80 students currently. Daily attendance runs between 35 and 80 students. A day at the TLC includes a strong academic program in literacy, mathematics, language arts and second language acquisition. The school uses San Joaquin County's curriculum and

has a 1 to 5 ratio of teachers to students. Children attend school from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The center also provides children

Attendance), grants, donations and federal funds from the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

A third-year \$35,000 grant from

\$120,000 from the McKinney Act

However, future funding for the center is uncertain at this time. The U.S. Department of Education and a number of national advocates for the homeless want to eliminate federal funding for schools that serve homeless children, saying that such schools are inferior to public schools. Over the past 10 years, 42 segregated homeless schools in the U.S. have opened in response to needs of homeless children.

"The philosophy is the funds are used to support kids in their mainstream schools," said Garfield. "It's impossible for them to receive the multiple services that St. Mary's can provide at each school they go to."

She explained that the TLC helps provide children with a "smooth transition" to the public school system when their family moves to a permanent residence. Once a family has found housing, TLC provides follow-up services through the mentor-advocate program.

In spite of the stipulation that funds, over 350 concerned citizens and students wrote Senators Feinstein and Barbara Boxer in support of the TLC. Senator Feinstein pledged support of the TLC, saying he will continue fighting to secure funding for the center and other homeless assistance programs. Senator Boxer

See TLC



The TLC includes a strong academic program in literacy.

—Journal photo

with breakfast, lunch, school supplies, clothing, shoes and medical, dental and vision care from St. Mary's clinic.

TLC funding is a collaborative effort that includes State ADA (Average Daily

United Way pays for a full-time counselor and supplies. An additional resource teacher, outreach mentor-advocates, counseling and some transportation expenses are supported by

August 2000

EDUCATION

TLC

from page 20

not responded, Garfield said.

The bill in question, H.R. 2888, stipulating \$120,000 in federal aid, died in the Senate this summer, and will be resubmitted in the fall.

"We will not know until September if we will get funding for this year," said Garfield. "If the TLC does not receive funding we will not stop the services we are providing. We will have to go out in the community to raise funds."

Stockton Mayor Gary Podesto said trying to eliminate funds is "strange."

"These children have emotional issues from being homeless that are dealt with at the TLC on a one-to-one basis," he said. "I don't believe regular public schools are prepared to deal with these children. Many of them (children) will not fit in without help first."

If federal funding is eliminated, Podesto said people from the community will definitely come forward to help fund the TLC.

But, despite the political trouble, Garfield says the ultimate goal is to continue providing psychosocial, emotional, physical and educational needs

wage earners of the future. Anything the business community does to promote literacy will help businesses in the future." The business community has been generous in donating books and resources, Hammel noted.

When it comes to teaching she said it takes a lot of energy. "I think a challenge for me is helping the kids to take responsibility. They are terrific children, and work hard."

Many of the children at the TLC come from environments where they learn anti-social behaviors, said Dr. Peter Bradlee, TLC psychologist. "They see and are exposed to negative and dangerous patterns. At the TLC we let them know there is a positive side. It is a safe place for them to blossom."

In March, the TLC won the Quality Education Award for Distinguished Service to Children and the Preparation of Teachers from the California Council on the Education of Teachers. In addition, the San Joaquin County Coordinating Council of the California Teachers Association presented the prestigious Golden Apple Award to the center. President George Bush also recog-

of the children. Our primary focus is on literacy."

At this time, the center is looking for more volunteers and mentors from the community. TLC teacher Mary Hammel said, "These children are the

President's program as one of his Thousand Points of Light programs, and President Clinton acknowledged the TLC with a President's Service Award in Education.





St. Mary's Interfaith Transitional Learning Center
545 W. Sonora - Stockton, CA 95203 • (209) 467-0703

An African proverb states "It takes a whole village to raise a child". This concept has also been proven true in the development and growth of a School for Homeless Children, the Transitional Learning Center. The program demonstrates the importance of interagency collaboration and community support to providing multiple services for At-Risk students.

TLC is a collaborative effort between St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room, California State University Stanislaus and the San Joaquin County Office of Education working with ten (10) area shelters and transient motels. The goal of TLC is to provide for the physical, emotional and educational needs of homeless children of San Joaquin County, as well as raise community awareness of the plight of homeless children. Approximately fifteen (15) other community agencies collaborate with us to provide an extensive range of services to our children and families. We also enjoy the support of numerous civic, church and educational organizations.

TLC has grown from eleven (11) children on our opening day of February 11, 1992 and to date has served approximately 3,500 students with daily enrollment ranging from 60-80. A day at our school includes an intense academic program in literacy, mathematics, language arts, and second language acquisition. We also provide the children with breakfast, lunch, school supplies, new clothing, shoes, underwear and socks, personal hygiene kits from our clothes closet and medical, dental and vision care from ST. Mary's Clinics, along with an abundance of positive reinforcement, self-esteem and Tender Loving Care.

Along with our three full time teachers, we have additional credentialed teachers and student teachers from CSUS, plus volunteers here daily to allow for a 1-5 teacher pupil ratio. We also offer a play therapy/counseling program through the support of numerous grantors including United Way, which includes a school counselor, psychologist, and counseling intern. Our own Girl Scout troop, along with numerous field trips combine to provide a rich and varied learning experience for all the children. Mentor advocates assist our families with follow up support services when they leave TLC School and enroll in their neighborhood schools.

The faculty and staff of TLC are dedicated to upholding and teaching fundamental values of respect, understanding, caring and fairness in all relationships. Therefore, issues of self esteem, problem solving, conflict resolution, tolerance, and helping children find appropriate ways to deal with feelings are integral components of our life skills curriculum.

We invite you to visit our school, located on the grounds of St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room, or call to schedule a tour. On behalf of all the children, faculty and staff of TLC, thank you again for your interest in our program. Together, we can make a difference.

TLC
Transitional Learning Center
Tender Loving Care
Teachers Loving & Caring
It's All The Same



9-11-00

TLC loses funding, but gains great hope

Earlier this year, director Sara Garfield's worst fear for the Transitional Learning Center (TLC) was the loss of federal funding. It's happened.

She has a new worst fear: pressure from misguided U.S. education officials that will end California funding. If that happens, she's not sure what's next for the unique Stockton school for homeless children.

The screaming question: Why is a program so successful and so honored being threatened?

There is good news nestled among the bad. While Garfield is still reeling from the loss of federal grant funds, community leaders already are rising up to rescue TLC.

Even better news: you can help. We all can.

Mounting a quick fund drive — the school at St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room will be short \$125,000 beginning Oct. 1 — are three high-powered Stocktonians: Bob Kavanaugh, retired president of Stockton Savings Bank and a member of the board of directors at the Port of Stockton; Helen Crane, active for years with various San Joaquin County charities; and Andy Prokop, president and CEO of United Way.

"We can't let this happen," said Prokop. "I took a recent tour of TLC with United Way's loaned executives. I saw the happiness; the only certainty in these young lives is going to TLC. We're going to do whatever we can."

"This is a tremendous asset to our community — it's not too late for us to make a difference."

The federal threat to the Transitional Learning Center remains a classic case of federal bureaucrats trying to apply a one-size-fits-all policy at the local level. Just last week, Garfield was in Phoenix, speaking before the House Education Committee in an attempt to explain the value of schools for homeless children and to encourage reauthorization of funding through the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

How you can help

There are two ways to join the fight to keep the Transitional Learning Center at St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room solvent:

(1.) Write to show your support for federal funding to:

Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy
2495 W. March Lane, Suite 104
Stockton, CA 95207 or
2411 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

(2.) Contribute to the community fund-raising effort:

TLC Fund-raising
@ Schools Credit Union
P.O. Box 8929
Stockton, CA 95208

barriers these kids face," she said. "Many models of education work."

And that remains TLC's strongest argument; it works.

Unfortunately, those with the purse strings don't understand its value in the lives of at-risk kids, its working relationship with the area's public schools, its authorization through the county Office of Education and its oversight by California State University, Stanislaus. There are some public and private advocates at the national level who would actually like to see all programs like TLC disbanded across the country, even threatening to withhold federal funding from those states who allow them to continue.

In February, we issued an SOS (save our school) and 350 personal letters resulted. They were delivered to the office of Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

Today, the alarm is sounded once again. What can we do? The funding battle has shifted to the House of Representatives; the address for Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, is listed above. Call or write his office.

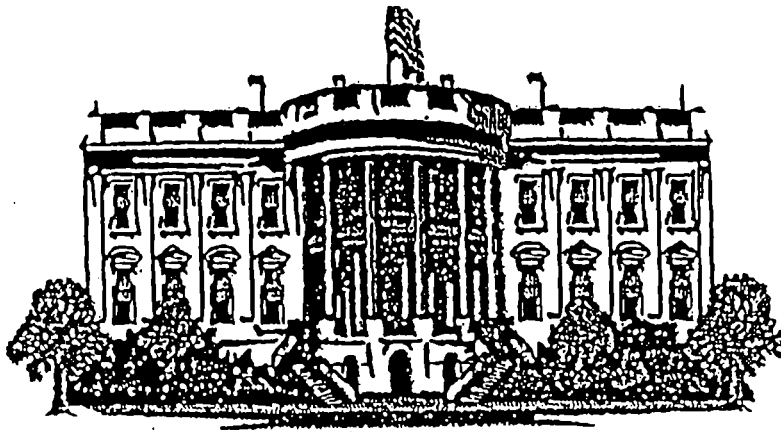
Also important: contribute financially to this cause. The address is listed above; don't wait for Kavanaugh-Crane-Prokop, et al, to ask.

In 1992, the Transitional Learning Center was one of President Bush's original points of light across the United States.

*** TX REPORT ***

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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COMMENTS: I WAS JUST ASKED TO FIND SOME INFO
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CALL TOMORROW FROM DEBRAH GIST ABOUT
T.L.C. IF SHE HAS ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE PROGRAM.

Success for All Does Not Produce Success for Students

by

Dr. Stanley Pogrow

STANLEY POGROW is an associate professor of education at the University of Arizona, Tucson, where he specializes in school reform and administrative and instructional uses of technology. He is the developer of the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program for Title I and learning-disabled students and of Supermath, a pre-algebra curriculum. He can be reached by e-mail at stanpogrow@worldnet.att.net, and his Web site is www.HOTS.Org. He wishes to thank Georgia Hedrick, Fred Roemer, Linda Schoolcraft, MaryAnn Darmer, Leonard Walstad, Dana Keller, a concerned educator in Memphis, and many others for their comments on this article, but the opinions expressed are his own.

The issue of whether the use of Success for All (SFA) is supported by valid research is probably the most important and relevant research discussion for practitioners in years. The belief in the unique success of SFA has caused Congress to reshape Title I policy in favor of comprehensive schoolwide reform models and approaches, has caused states and courts to mandate such programs, and has caused New Jersey to try to mandate the use of SFA in all high-poverty schools in the state. As SFA and its approach are increasingly favored, the choices that schools and teachers are allowed to consider (to serve educationally disadvantaged students) are increasingly restricted. The belief in the validity of this program has also concentrated funding from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in the hands of a few large organizations that are deemed to be using the right approach. Thus new knowledge and program innovations are also restricted. In other words, the belief that the issue of how best to help students has been settled by the "unassailable" data provided by Robert Slavin, Nancy Madden, and their associates—both in the *Kappan* and elsewhere—makes it inappropriate even to consider alternatives.

Until I and others started to question the data and methodology used to support SFA, criticism was limited to concerns that the program was overstructured and regimented to such an extent that it limited the professional discretion of teachers. Nevertheless, I agree with Slavin and Madden, co-developers of SFA and of Roots & Wings, that, if their data truly show that their approach is overwhelmingly producing success for students, then it is my professional obligation to support its use, regardless of my own philosophical bias.

But suppose the data and conclusions are not valid and that there is no valid evidence of student success. Then we will have lost 10 years of knowledge generation and opportunities for improvement, and we will have imposed an ineffective approach and adopted misguided policies. Even worse, we as a profession are then guilty of mistakenly pushing a mind-numbing form of learning onto large numbers of low-income students.

The perceived success of SFA gave the program extraordinary influence both on its own and as part of the New American Schools (NAS), an organization that promotes the use of SFA, Roots & Wings, and other schoolwide reform models. Everyone agrees that overall school improvement is and always has been the desired goal. The question is how to achieve this end in ways that also improve the performance of educationally disadvantaged students and thereby reduce learning gaps. The perceived success of SFA led Congress to favor the use of "validated" schoolwide models, rather than the targeting of services to Title I students. The expectation is that improving a school's overall performance will increase the achievement of Title I students more greatly than will providing them with special help. Slavin's writings and the work of the research center he heads have played key roles in identifying and promoting the use of validated whole-school reform models.

However, if the research supporting SFA is not valid and if the program does not work, then we have been using the wrong approach to helping disadvantaged students, and they may be falling through the cracks. Indeed, the \$8 billion this nation spends each year to help Title I students may be helping the more advantaged students to reap even

greater benefits— thereby increasing the learning gaps the funds were designed to reduce.

This article will focus on answering some central questions about SFA's success. Do the data say that SFA has been a success for students, teachers, and the profession? Are the results of research on SFA based on a scientifically unbiased process, or do they merely represent "vendor spin" on the data? Does the program actually produce success in the real world? And if SFA and the other schoolwide reform models do not work, then what should practitioners and policy makers do?

Did Slavin and Madden Really Respond?

On reading the response of Slavin and Madden to my April 2000 *Kappan* article, one can quickly see how congressional staffers, the courts, policy analysts, and academics came to believe that research clearly establishes the success and superiority of SFA. I must admit that I took a few gulps the first time I read through their article and saw their array of data. But do the seemingly endless studies stand up to careful scrutiny, and did Slavin and Madden actually respond to the points that I and other critics have made? Did they document success for students?

This is actually Slavin and Madden's second response to my April 2000 *Kappan* article. The first appeared last May in a Backtalk letter. Slavin also responded to my criticisms in a debate that was published in the prestigious and refereed *Educational Researcher*.¹ An exchange of letters between Slavin and co-authors Herbert Walberg and Rebecca Greenberg also appeared in the March 2000 Backtalk.² My rebuttal will draw on all these responses.

My article last April made a number of points. First, as the co-developer of SFA as a director of a research center, and as someone who has published a critique of the research base of competing programs,³ and critiqued the research methodology of agencies that support program dissemination, there is a huge potential for conflict of interest for Slavin—and for Madden, who is director of the SFA Foundation. Second, the research center at Johns Hopkins University and the SFA Foundation continue to receive the lion's share of federal R&D and dissemination dollars, despite a lack of valid evidence of success; only a few other organizations share the remainder. Third, Slavin's research center and the people working in it have essentially created a monopoly of information, which has misdirected both practice and knowledge generation in ways that have promoted their own beliefs and SFA. And fourth, the research that supports SFA makes use of highly

biased methodology that has made failure for students look like success.

In terms of conflict of interest, I asked whether it was appropriate for the head of a research organization to be the co-developer of a program for him to be the evaluator of it and of competing programs, and for his organization to be the conductor of the key policy analysis that forms the basis for related government and judicial actions that mostly benefit his program. I also noted the large sums involved. Last year, Slavin's research center, which was originally funded for \$27 million, was refunded for another five years for \$36.5 million without competition. This center and the SFA Foundation received a dissemination grant and a middle school development grant estimated to be \$23 million over the next five years, and SFA sales were projected to be \$44 million this year.⁴ NAS is also well funded. The NAS Web site reveals that eight organizations have donated at least \$3 million and that 17 have chipped in at least \$1 million. To date, I have received no response from Slavin and Madden to the obvious problem of potential conflict of interest.

In terms of current grantmaking activity at ED, I asked why a large percentage of all new federal R&D and dissemination grants were going to SFA and its related activities. In particular, I asked why SFA was being given dissemination grants at all, since the program is 15 years old, does \$44 million worth of business annually, charges schools a fortune for its programs, and has a business arrangement with a large private company that raises capital in the private sector (Edison Schools, Inc.). There was no response to this question.

I also raised concerns that the concentration of funds on SFA and other schoolwide models was producing a concentration of knowledge generation in the hands of a few interrelated individuals associated with Slavin's research center who conduct all the key research and policy analysis, and I questioned whether such concentration was distorting findings related to how best to help educationally disadvantaged students. When I first made this point in *Educational Researcher*, Slavin responded by offering a series of citations and pointing out how many institutions this body of work represents. I pointed out that every source cited had his and/or Madden's name on it. In this response, Slavin and Madden impressively list all the individuals involved in SFA research to show just how broad the participation is in terms of people and institutions, and they complain that I and others unfairly criticize these individuals simply because they find positive results for SFA.

The affiliations that Slavin and Madden refer to are not as independent as they claim. For example, they mention WestEd. At the time that WestEd did evaluations of SFA, the lab had a large contract to be the regional training center for SFA. Hardly an independent source. Then Slavin and Madden invoke the name of William Sanders of the University of Tennessee. The problem is that Slavin mentioned Sanders in his exchange of letters with Walberg and Greenberg in the Kappan last March. At that time, Walberg and Greenberg pointed out that Sanders had produced his work as an unpublished paper for the University of Memphis, which was listed on the SFA Web site as the "Mid-South distributor for SFA." The paper was also done in collaboration with the senior researcher in Slavin's research center. Another unpublished paper I read from the research group at the University of Memphis (hereafter referred to as SFA South) was commissioned by "SFA developers at Johns Hopkins University."⁵ This is what Slavin and Madden call independent third-party research?

It is troubling that Slavin and Madden again invoke Professor Sanders of the University of Memphis, as though this issue had not already been discussed and dismissed. It is as if they believe that reiteration makes something true. Unfortunately, this is a recurring pattern in their response. In addition, they make it seem as if the work by Sanders and S. Paul Wright was done at the University of Tennessee. In fact, they were collaborators on that same paper produced by the research group at SFA South.

The fact is that all the key studies done in this country that Slavin and Madden cite in support of SFA with two exceptions contain one or more of just five names, all of whom are or have been affiliated with Slavin's research centers in some fashion.⁶ I showed last April how members of this small group quoted one another to support their points of view on key reform issues—even when alternative views were supported by replicated research. I also noted that ED's key study to determine the best strategy for Title I was conducted by two researchers in Slavin's center.⁷ I questioned the wisdom of awarding this "Special Strategies" policy study to an organization with a clear interest in a particular strategy. Then one of these two researchers became the lead researcher for the American Institute of Research (AIR) study, funded by the five largest professional education associations, which was to identify the programs most strongly validated by research.⁸ The AIR study did not adjust for the methodology problems employed in SFA research and endorsed SFA as one of the few programs strongly supported by research.⁹

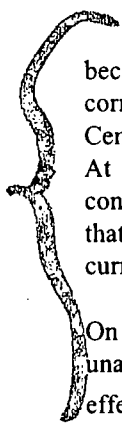
Slavin and Madden offer no response to this obvious concentration of funded research in the hands of individuals with affiliations to their particular strategy and program. They blithely continue to pretend that the studies were independent.

But the self-serving use of this knowledge generation monopoly misdirected knowledge in ways that had tangible consequences for the profession and for helping students. Slavin and Madden discuss the conclusion reached by the Special Strategies study for Title I: "Only . . . Success for All and the Comer model showed significantly greater achievement gains than other schools" (p. 61). These schoolwide reform models were thus presumed to offer the best strategy for emphasis in the Title I reauthorization and the subsequent Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program.

However, there is one major problem. There were only two schools using each of these programs in the study, and these were selected from among those recommended by the vendor (i.e., not a representative sample). Even under such a setup, of the two SFA schools, one did better than the national sample of similar schools, and one did worse. Nor did the lowest 20% of students make much gain relative to the national, more representative, sample. (Coincidentally, questions have also been raised recently in the prestigious *American Educational Research Journal* about the ability of the Comer model to increase academic achievement.)¹⁰

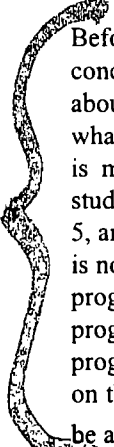
Although I had reported in my first *Educational Researcher* article the failure of SFA and the Comer model in the Special Strategies study, Slavin and Madden did not mention this previously published finding and merely requoted a self-serving passage from that national study (which had been conducted by researchers at Slavin's center). So the actual limited results of the schoolwide reform models in this study, which should have been an early warning sign that these models were not necessarily going to improve things even under the most favorable of conditions, instead became evidence that this was the most successful strategy. On the basis of this study, educators marched off more convinced than ever before that schoolwide reform models would substantially raise the achievement of high-poverty schools and of low-income students.

Slavin and Madden are correct in saying that of the four negative studies of SFA that were being quoted, one was done by employees of the Johns Hopkins research center.¹¹ However, the researchers had left before Slavin



became director/co-director of the center. It is, therefore, correct to say that, since Slavin became director of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), there have been no negative conclusions published about SFA use in this country from that center or by outsiders collaborating with individuals currently employed in that center.

On the other hand, the three independent and clearly unaffiliated studies all concluded that SFA was not effective.¹² In addition, two of the unaffiliated studies were done independently of each other in Baltimore—one by the district's research office and the other by Richard Venezky of the University of Delaware. They both concluded that the program was not successful in the city where it was launched. ~~Such independent corroboration undercuts the claims of Slavin and Madden that Venezky's negative conclusion is "subjective."~~ In addition, new confirming results from independent sources will be presented below.



Before I begin my critique of the methodology and conclusions of the SFA research, I want to say something about what constitutes "success" in Title I. I do not know what Slavin and Madden's definition of success is, but here is mine. Title I has always produced gains in K-3, but students level off in grades 3-4, start to decline in grades 4-5, and fall behind thereafter at an accelerating pace. Thus it is not enough just to set goals for grade 3; success in a K-6 program would mean that low-income students make progress toward grade level up to grade 3, continue their progress toward grade level thereafter, and enter grade 6 on the upswing. My definition does not require students to be at grade level by grade 6 but to be getting closer.¹³

Critique of SFA Methodology And Conclusions

I have pointed out in three different published articles that students in Baltimore were entering the sixth grade three years below grade level and falling further behind. Whenever I and others have pointed out this sad outcome, Slavin and Madden have always interpreted the critics as being upset because the students are not on grade level. Given this history, I went to great pains to express in my Kappan article last April that we critics are upset because students are three years below grade level, which is not acceptable in any system of accountability. So what do Slavin and Madden do? Once again they say that "Venezky believed that . . . the program could not be considered successful if it did not bring children up to grade level" (p. 39). It seems clear now that Slavin and Madden are consciously sticking to their script rather than engaging in dialogue.

At the same time, other researchers have gotten upset when SFA students were not at grade level. Consider the following:

In the first year Success for All brought children at all grade levels to almost the 50th percentile on individually administered measures.... This is good, but it does not yet fulfill the commitment to bring every child to grade level in the basic skills. Not until this year's preschoolers have reached third grade can this commitment be assessed.¹⁴

Can you guess who wrote this? It was Slavin, Madden, and their co-authors in 1990. Times have certainly changed.

Claiming success for students who are doing terribly on the basis that they are doing less terribly than others means, as Venezky shows, that ~~Slavin and Madden do not understand that the goal of reform is not to get students to progress from hopeless to hapless. It is to get them to be successful.~~ My conclusion, reported in my first article in *Educational Researcher*, was that there was no evidence of consistent effects at this point for any of the schoolwide reform models.

Slavin and Madden use a wide variety of other spin tactics to dismiss the negative findings. These include a number of excuses.

- *There was a hurricane.* Hurricane Hugo did a great deal of damage in South Carolina. But it also hit the control school. In addition, if a hurricane caused a problem in the first year, one might expect gains in the following years. But there was no subsequent success, and the results were consistent with the findings in Baltimore of a bump in the earliest grades, only in the first year.

- *The schools were very high-poverty.* Where do they think most Title I students are? Slavin and Madden powered their approach to the forefront because of their criticism of the limited effects of prior policy on the achievement of Title I students. Now they want to pass when it comes to having their results count in schools with very high poverty? In the *Educational Researcher* debate, when Slavin claimed success in a lower-poverty school after the third grade, I showed how he was misrepresenting the grade levels at which the data were generated.¹⁵ Moreover, according to transcripts of his New Jersey testimony, he did not reveal his reservations about producing success in schools with very high poverty levels.

✓
• *The superintendent left.* The superintendent in urban districts almost always leaves. The average tenure for urban superintendents is 2 1/3 years.¹⁶ If making the program effective requires that the superintendent stay longer, then maybe SFA should require an 80% vote of the community to keep the superintendent for at least six years.

✓
• *The program was not implemented properly.* Slavin and Madden claim that the reason why Dade County (the high profile urban district using SFA after the bust in Baltimore) did not find any advantage to using SFA was that the program was not properly implemented. However, the Dade County report concluded that the program was properly implemented. Data are starting to come in from other urban districts that are corroborating the conclusion of Dade County.

4
The Baltimore findings of SFA students doing poorly would be bad enough if that were all there was to the story. But the severe methodological problems in the research that I pointed out resulted in unfair advantages for the SFA groups and thereby inflated effect sizes (the difference between the SFA schools and comparison schools). I noted that, ~~when Venezky reanalyzed the Baltimore data he found that Slavin and Madden counted in their final analysis only those students who had participated in SFA for five years, which means they dropped large numbers of students and ended up with a non-representative and stable group of students.~~¹⁷ Even more problematic is that the vast majority of ~~special education students disappeared from the SFA schools during the course of the study, while far more remained in the comparison schools.~~ Moreover, the SFA schools in Baltimore received up to \$400,000 in additional funding. As a result, the fact that SFA students did better in the comparison seems a clear result of a deck stacked in favor of the SFA schools.

As researchers engaged in scholarly debate, Slavin and Madden had the responsibility to reanalyze their data to see if the effect sizes resulted from not counting all students or from the disappearance of special education students. They did not do that. Instead, Slavin's response in his May 2000 Backtalk letter was, "The Baltimore study met the highest standards of rigor. . ." (p. 720). This is obviously not true.

Even worse, in their current article Slavin and Madden try to deflect Venezky's conclusion from the Baltimore data that SFA was not the solution for the reading problems of inner-city children by noting with pride: ~~"SFA substantially reduced special education placements"~~ (p. 39). That is true, but only because the special education

students disappeared from the SFA sample. Now that the cat is out of the bag, instead of admitting the problem, they spin it into a positive and actually claim success for the resultant lower level of special education students. This is a novel way of dealing with special education students and ~~indicates a troubling willingness to say anything in an effort to cover up the failure of the program in Baltimore.~~ This is spin, not research.

The methodological problems in Baltimore are continued in the other studies. For example, the results displayed in Figure I look impressive until you read the fine print saying that students who were not in the school in the first grade were not counted because they did not receive the full impact of the program. Well, in your typical urban school, what percentage of fifth-graders started first grade in that school and remained there? Unfortunately, that number is quite small. Madden and Slavin need to establish that SFA works in the real world; they cannot continue to tailor unrepresentative conditions in their research.

Even worse, given the conclusions of the analysis in South Carolina and the reanalysis of the Baltimore data showing that almost all of the gain and relative advantage occurs in a first-grade bump, their decision to eliminate students who were not in the program since the first grade is not as innocent it appears. Without this bump, they cannot make effect sizes appear. Since students who were not in SFA in the first grade do not contribute to producing effect sizes and so make it more difficult to show gains, they are dropped from the analysis. This sophisticated methodological misdirection is found throughout their work. ~~Ultimately, this is about making numbers successful not students.~~

Another methodological way that SFA research stacks the deck is by not reporting if students in the control group are spending as much time reading. Given that SFA students spend 90 minutes a day reading, it is possible that increased reading time, not SFA, is producing the gains. I agree with the researcher who eloquently described the problem of not accounting for differences in instructional time as follows:

But as a question of experimental design, the extra time given to . . . classes is a serious problem. It is virtually unheard-of in educational research...to systematically allocate an experimental group more time than a control group....Presumably, ~~any sensible instructional program would produce significantly greater achievement than a control method that allocated 20%-33% less instructional time.~~ Studies that fail

to hold time constant across treatments essentially confound treatment effects with effects of additional time.¹⁸

The researcher quoted here is Slavin, criticizing another program, mastery learning. Unfortunately, Slavin and Madden do not apply a similar standard of evidence to their own programs or research.

There are other ways that SFA research stacks the deck in comparisons. I noted in both *Educational Researcher* and the *Kappan* that research conducted by Memphis researchers at SFA South had found effects favoring SFA only after control schools were dropped from the sample. I reported that schools were dropped in one such study because the control schools implemented a good practice, which interfered with the researchers' chosen methodology. What were the control schools guilty of? They were guilty of reducing class size and tutoring the students.¹⁹ In addition, current research at SFA South also drops a site after the start of the research (see the discussion under Memphis, below).²⁰

Slavin and Madden respond with the claim that they have never dropped a control school. However, that is not the issue I raised. The issue is that, instead of acknowledging the problem of sites being dropped in the SFA South study and dealing with it appropriately (especially since the study was funded by Slavin's research center), Slavin and Madden again cite this very same "drop the control school" study in their article as proof of the effectiveness of SFA. Furthermore, every study they cite in their "Comparison" section to show SFA's superiority to other schoolwide models or to programs such as Reading Recovery has involved the SFA South researchers. They are not doing anything about the reported problem of schools being dropped—and are trying to benefit from the reported results.

In addition, SFA schools have a lot more money to spend than regular control schools or other NAS models. Most of this extra money appears to be used to reduce class size during reading. Leonard Walstad, who has a Ph.D. in applied math from Harvard University and has been a mathematician and oceanographer at the University of Maryland, looked into SFA's research as an interested parent and as someone running for the school board. His conclusion, expressed in an e-mail, is:

The results Slavin reports for SFA are consistent with previous studies that only reduced class size. This strongly suggests that SFA has no effect. This is like replacing the engine of a

family sedan with a race car engine and then painting a racing stripe on the car, then reporting that racing stripes make cars go faster.

In other words, as a result of the failure to equate resources between SFA and control schools, there is no evidence of added clear value from the SFA curriculum or from the program itself.

The research presented by Slavin and Madden also makes use of the oldest trick in the program vendor's book. Vendors select a test that their curriculum is linked to, and lo and behold their students do better than controls who were not taught to the test. Then they give the tests repeatedly to demonstrate progress; school administrators are impressed by the printouts showing progress. Unfortunately, these results almost never transfer to real-world tests.

The clear picture that emerges is that researchers at Johns Hopkins and at SFA South have sought to keep the control schools as hapless as possible and to advantage the SFA schools in all respects. Between the dropping of students by Slavin and Madden and the dropping of control schools by SFA South, no comparison program has a chance.

While the overall design of SFA research obviously stacks the deck, I was curious as to what an evaluation of the statistical and methodological fine points would show. Since this was beyond my expertise, I enlisted the aid of Dana Keller, chief statistician for a multi-state medical foundation, who has designed statistical formulas for the Johns Hopkins research center. (Keller was not involved in analysis of data for Slavin.)

Keller concluded that key information needed to assess the methodological rigor of the analyses in the articles he reviewed was generally missing in six important areas of sampling and statistical analysis.²¹ Based on what he read in his limited review of both recent and older research papers by Slavin, Keller was not comfortable with the support for the methodological validity of the conclusions. Therefore, he concluded that the articles he read had insufficient methodological rigor to be taken seriously for high-stakes purposes—at least not without more methodological clarification—and thus could not be used to justify supporting the widespread use of Success for All.

A Review of Slavin And Madden's Research

Baltimore. After all the criticism of their use of effect sizes, what do Slavin and Madden do? They present their same effect sizes again. It does not seem to matter to them

that the students are failing, as long as they can show an effect size. Then they proudly reveal a new effect size. They are proud that, two years after the students left the program, there was still an effect size in the seventh grade. However, ~~the effect size is now less than half of others.~~ This means that the former SFA students are now probably four years below grade level. This is success?

It is ironic that, as I was writing this article, the Wall Street Journal carried an article about Abbottston School in Baltimore. This school had just contracted with Edison Schools, Inc. The article described the struggles of the principal to raise test scores in this highly impoverished school in a low performing district. The Edison model essentially uses the SFA approach and materials. Guess which Baltimore school was the original SFA site? Yes, it was Abbottston. While I feel sorry for the plight of the principal, I have no sympathy for those who ignore history. After receiving an additional \$144,000 for this project from the state of Maryland, the principal laments the low scores but pluckily asserts that the scores would be even lower without this program and boldly predicts that the reading program "will raise scores to the state average by the time today's kindergartners take the fifth-grade exam."²² It sounds as if the principal does not know what happened to the students who spent five years in SFA in that school the last time around.

Memphis. Memphis is significant because it was the pioneer of the "each school adopt an NAS schoolwide reform model of its choice" approach to school reform. Lots of additional funds were devoted to this effort (although no one could give me an exact figure as to how much). Memphis became the poster city for the NAS, and RAND researchers referred to it as one of the two most advanced districts nationally in implementing NAS designs.²³ The majority of restructuring schools chose SFA. Memphis was also hailed as the prototype district for the Obey-Porter (CSRD) legislation and for the "new" approach to Title I.

Figure 2 of Slavin and Madden's article apparently shows huge advantages for SFA schools over control schools and the state average of 100, with SFA schools doing almost 38% better than controls in reading and exceeding the state average by almost 30%. An unpublished paper out of SFA South by Steven Ross and his colleagues concluded that schools using schoolwide reform models outperformed matched controls and that across the schoolwide reform models, SFA/Roots & Wings did best.²⁴

Once again, the reality is very different. An e-mail to the district's research office from a third party (not from me)

attempting to get district data elicited the following response from a knowledgeable source who wishes to remain anonymous:

I have forwarded your request to our Executive Director of Research. He will probably tell you to contact [Steven] Ross directly at the University of Memphis.... The Memphis City School R&E staff was kept far, far 'out of the loop' on SFA. Only as of now have our staff Title I evaluators been allowed to dolly into the picture for a closer look. As for the reasons why, I refer you to critical articles by Stanley Pogrow (in the Educational Researcher...and...in the Phi Delta Kappan)....I believe more scrutiny is needed.

The director of research for the Memphis Public Schools, John Nunnery, was a former employee of the Johns Hopkins research center. He did not respond. Steven Ross at the University of Memphis (SFA South), said that the study was confidential and that it would be necessary to contact the superintendent to get a copy.²⁵

Clearly, there was no point in contacting the superintendent. She had left two months earlier for a cushy job with a foundation. Before leaving, she announced tremendous gains, declared victory for the reform strategy, and was named national Superintendent of the Year. Would all of this have been possible without SFA South's having control of the flow of information? Or did a miracle of reform actually occur in Memphis?

Shortly after I received the e-mail quoted above, the state released rankings of the districts.²⁶ Guess where Memphis ranked? ~~Next to last.~~ Of course, the low rating could have been a function of high poverty. But Tennessee also has its value-added system (the TVASS statistic that Slavin and Madden's Figure 2 reports), and it independently ranks districts in terms of gains produced. In terms of gains produced in reading, Memphis ranked fifth from the bottom of 137 districts in the state.

But perhaps within these awful district results SFA was a success, and the problem was that not enough Memphis schools had adopted SFA. No! ~~Twenty-four of the 77 lowest-achieving elementary schools in Tennessee are Memphis SFA schools.~~²⁷ While SFA is in use in about 36% of Memphis elementary schools,²⁸ ~~it constitutes about 52% of the Memphis elementary schools ranked in the lowest 77 in the state.~~ No success here.

Once these terrible scores were published, Ross, the lead researcher at SFA South, was quoted in the newspaper as

urging the districts to keep the whole-school reform models going because the ones that had been implemented earlier were doing better than those that had just been implemented.²⁹ However, more than half of both the oldest and the newest SFA sites are among the state's lowest 77 schools in reading.

Once again, we have fancy statistics and charts that do not mirror reality. How were the impressive results in Figure 2 generated, and how did the study by Ross and his colleagues conclude that SFA and Roots & Wings were producing superior results? First, the unpublished Ross paper dropped a control school for being an "outlier." No other explanation was offered, so no one can tell what the impact of that action was on the results. Indeed, two of the 37 SFA schools were doing well. If we dropped them from the analysis as outliers, then SFA schools would have been way below the others. (We did not do this.)

A second and more significant problem is with the TVASS calculations themselves. Currently, the statistics work differently for grades 3-5 than for grade 6. Small gains produce huge value-added scores in grade 6, but only small ones in grades 3-5. For example, the state manual gives an example of a non-Memphis school in which the gains for grades 3-5 are "relatively" low, while the gains for grade 6 are 688, almost seven times the national average. One huge number like this at the sixth grade can clearly skew the results for a group of schools. The report concludes that, with respect to sixth grade, "these scores have a much wider distribution . . . than other scores. Thus, schools with sixth-graders may have substantially higher or lower cumulative scores than schools that don't have those grades."³⁰

In other words, under no conditions should sixth-grade gain results be combined with those of grades 3-5, for they have totally different characteristics. My own analysis with current data shows that the only way to produce high TVASS (e.g., gain) scores for the SFA schools is to mix in grade 6.³¹

What is the reality? Let's make it simple by looking at the test from which the TVASS scores were generated. From 1998 to 1999, average reading scores were actually down for grades 3-5 across all the SFA schools, and they were down for grade 6 in those SFA schools with a sixth grade. The bottom line is that the actual reading scores for SFA schools went down at all grade levels.

Without looking at the raw data, one would not know what is going on. This situation is the same as when Venezky analyzed the case of Baltimore. What was not revealed in

the unpublished reports by SFA South and quoted by Slavin and Madden was more important than what was revealed, and the new information clearly documents failure—not success.

What is even worse in the case of Memphis is that there was apparently a conscious effort to keep school district researchers from getting anywhere near the data. While this manipulation was going on, Slavin was busy spinning: "When people ask me, 'Where is an urban system with a vision of where it is going, and a plausible plan of how to get there?' then Memphis would be at the top of my list."³² In their article, Slavin and Madden call the Memphis evaluation "a completely independent evaluation" (p. 59). Now you know the rest of the story.

~~Texas.~~ The latest results from Texas show that a record 80% of students are passing the TAAS tests and that black students are up to 76%.³³ (Results for the Spanish TAAS are lower.) This clearly has nothing to do with SFA but is a result of teaching to the test. ~~At whole industry has developed in Texas that produces sample tests and test related curriculum materials at much lower cost per school than SFA. The Texas results have been produced by a single-minded focus on raising test scores and by careful attention to the progress of minorities.~~

Not having had the time to examine the Texas study Slavin and Madden cite, I can only speculate on how the effects in Figure 3 were produced. For example, I wonder why Slavin and Madden reported data in Texas for all sites that had ever used SFA at any time during the period. I wonder how many of the schools had dropped or reduced the use of SFA in favor of a more efficient and direct test-prep approach, as I found in other states. And I wonder if these schools ended up doing better and were needed to produce the effect sizes. Did Slavin and Madden drop students (as they did in Figure I and Baltimore) who had not been in the first grade or who did not remain at a given SFA school for the time listed—say, four years?

~~New York City.~~ Scores just released for 1999 show all districts in New York City making gains, including the Chancellor's District, a set of low-performing schools taken over by the chancellor. Data presented by Slavin and Madden in Figure 6 show SFA schools doing better for the period 1997-98. Aside from the fact that more money would have been spent on the SFA schools, it is important to know whether the gains merely represent the initial bump suggested by other studies of SFA. Unfortunately, no follow-up data on further student progress are presented. Slavin and Madden explain this omission as due to a change in the test. While that is true, New York City

did publish equating norms designed to link the two tests; thus the ~~analysis could have been extended to show student progress. Unfortunately, that wasn't done.~~ An opportunity to determine whether student success was actually occurring was lost. In addition, I do not know how to relate their impressive results in Figure 6 to the latest results that show the Chancellor's District doing less well than the city as a whole.³⁴

International. I did contact one of the international groups mentioned by Slavin and Madden. I do not want to identify which one because the researchers were early into their research and seemed sincere. At the same time, they could not tell me how the control groups were doing or whether there were differences in costs between SFA and control groups. Nor did I inquire as to whether their group was a regional SFA distributor.

New SFA/NAS Results And Political Mayhem

Memphis demonstrated once again that SFA studies misrepresent the reality of failure. There are now more and more districts and schools reporting problems with SFA and with the political process associated with it. Let's visit some of these other places.

New Jersey. Given the huge amounts of money being focused on high-poverty schools, New Jersey probably has the greatest potential to make reform work. The state has done much well, but it has made one terrible mistake. A quick review of New Jersey history is needed.

It took almost three decades of legal action and threats by the state supreme court that it would close the schools before New Jersey equalized school funding. After providing some sort of foundational support, in 1997-98 New Jersey allocated approximately \$250 million per year to bring some 440 poor urban schools up to the funding level of the wealthiest. These schools are called Abbott schools. On the positive side, the court ruling specified that the funds had to be used for a wide range of educational services, including preschool, all-day kindergarten, integrated social services, family support teams, and instructional technology. It also directed the state commissioner to develop recommendations for an educational plan for getting students to meet New Jersey standards.

The state commissioner recommended to the court that all 277 Abbott elementary schools adopt Success for All and said that his department would do everything to ensure that this happened. In effect, this would create a monopoly. When Slavin pointed out that SFA could not serve so

many schools, the commissioner added four other NAS schoolwide models as ones that schools could adopt, but he said that SFA was to be the presumptive model and that schools choosing another schoolwide reform model would have to justify the choice to the education department. The consultant to the state supreme court, Allan Odden of the University of Wisconsin, concurred with this approach.

What was the rationale for imposing this near monopoly? Careful analysis? Hardly! What is interesting is what was not done. At the time the commissioner made his decision, 14 of the Abbott schools were already using SFA. Did he investigate how the program was performing in these schools before recommending a monopoly be awarded? No. According to court transcripts, in response to direct questions, the commissioner said that he did not know if anyone on his staff had evaluated the results of SFA in those schools, he had not personally examined any results from that program, and he did not believe that it was essential to examine the performance of students in the 14 SFA schools.³⁵ Go figure!

So how did things go? In the first year of implementation, only 13 additional Abbott schools chose SFA. (The existing 14 SFA Abbott sites were not allowed to switch to another model.) Test results from the first year of implementation showed that only one of the 277 Abbott elementary schools met state requirements. Now in all fairness, this was a new test, and most of the Abbott schools had not yet implemented a schoolwide reform model of any kind, so it is too early to reach any conclusions.

How did the court and commissioner react to the initial disappointing news? It was decided that the way to improve scores was to get more Abbott schools to use SFA (even though the one Abbott school that met state requirements was not an SFA school). ~~This past June, the new commissioner announced that any Abbott site that adopted SFA would be eligible for up to \$220,000 in additional funds. Educators in New Jersey recognized that this was, in effect, a bribe.~~

San Antonio. San Antonio was the second site that RAND researchers said was doing advanced implementation of the "each school adopt an NAS schoolwide reform model of its choice" approach. The report on the board meeting of the ~~San Antonio School District for 27 March 2000 indicates that the director of research for the district concluded that non-NAS schools [were] showing slightly higher gains...~~ There is no evidence that NAS designs have had a measurable value-added impact on TAAS scores." Of the 25 SFA schools,³⁶ the scores of 11 went

down, while 10 went up, and four remained unchanged. There was no overall effect on school performance.

Once again we have the case of a high profile implementation of a schoolwide reform model by a district that allows its research office to conduct reasonable and independent studies and comes to the conclusion that SFA and other NAS models in general are not doing as well as other alternatives.

Dade and Putnam Counties, Florida. Dade County just released its newest study of SFA, which confirmed the findings of its earlier study: "~~The gains in English language proficiency for students in schools implementing the SFA program were found to be generally inferior to those of other schools in the District...~~" The academic performance of the students attending schools which implemented the SFA program was no different from that of other schools in the District."³⁷

These results are confirmed by reports from Putnam County. According to information gleaned from Web sites, six schools indicated that they use SFA. Between 1996 and 1998, the scores on the Florida state test went down in five of these schools and up in just one.

Baltimore County Public Schools. Adjacent to the oft-discussed Baltimore City Public Schools is the even larger Baltimore County School District (BCPS), in which one-third of the 105 elementary schools are high-poverty. In 1996, BCPS had the SFA reform model in place in 21 schools. Concerned about the poor results, in 1996 the district developed its own reading intervention that combined in-house materials with a commercial product. However, the SFA schools were allowed to retain SFA. The number of schools that subsequently chose to stay with SFA dropped to 11, and these schools are limiting the use of SFA to a few grade levels and have had to modify the program to meet their needs.

According to a district curriculum specialist, 1998-99 data show that the SFA schools remained in the bottom one-fifth of schools on the reading performance of students in grades 1-3. The district recently identified its low-performing/high-minority schools. Of 14 such sites identified, four were SFA schools. All decided to switch to the district curriculum, confessing that they had cut back on their use of SFA because of dissatisfaction. The reaction to SFA in this district is very different from the rosy picture presented by Slavin and Madden. Moreover, it illustrates SFA schools cutting back on implementation of the model because of its limited effects. In addition, of the

four schools that had dropped SFA at least a year earlier, three made large gains this year.

State of Washington. Recent scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading test for grade 3 in Washington reveal that, for 13 schools with CSRD grants that are using SFA, the percentage of students in the lowest quartile of ITBS actually increased 1% between 1999 and 2000. Eight of these 13 schools either made no improvement or did worse, while five improved. No success for students here. On the fourth grade Washington state tests, there were data for 12 SFA schools with CSRD grants. The percentage of students meeting state standards increased a negligible .79%. Of these 12 schools, scores for six schools went up, one stayed even, and five declined. What is interesting in these data is that two different tests essentially paint the same picture: SFA is a wash in Washington! There is no overall increase in success, even with the extra funding and planning requirements that go along with CSRD grants. However, what is troubling is the finding that, despite the promise that schoolwide reform models would raise the lowest students, the number in the lowest quartile actually increased.

Beyond Data: A Grassroots Look at SFA

Data analysis and methodology aside, what is really happening from the point of view of teachers? Clearly, many feel that SFA is making them better teachers. This point of view has been voiced in many newspaper articles that have appeared around the country. However, there is another side.

The most recent media stories note with surprise that there is an anti-SFA Web site. In the course of my investigation, I began to communicate with the two founders of this Web site (www.alt-sfa.com), both of whom have taught at SFA schools. Fred Roemer is still a fifth-grade teacher in a Florida SFA school, and Georgia Hedrick is a former nun who taught in a Nevada school district. They estimate that the site has received more than a million hits in the past year, suggesting that there is a great deal of pent-up grassroots frustration with SFA.

Once I established that both were teachers who believed in a balanced and comprehensive approach to teaching, worked hard at their craft, and did not have some ideological ax to grind, I began to wonder why they use their own money and spend every spare moment maintaining the Web site.

Roemer has been teaching at his current school for 12 years. Previously, he says he respected Slavin's work and had read several of his books. Thus he was willing to give

disproportionate numbers, their leaving will limit the overall benefits of SFA.

Those few SFA schools that were making large gains were invariably using other literacy programs as well. This points to two problems. SFA is supposed to be a schoolwide literacy model. If schools have to use other literacy programs in addition to SFA to produce large gains, then SFA is not what it is advertised to be. The second problem is that Slavin and Madden have no evidence that, in such situations, it is not the supplementary literacy program in combination with reduced class size that produces the gains they attribute to SFA.

What Should Practitioners Do?

The bottom line for practitioners is that, if you want your school to improve substantially, ~~SFA by itself will not do the job~~. You'll have to add lots of other literacy-enhancing things, and then it is quite possible that the other things are what produce the gains. So it seems reasonable to try to make the other things—e.g., ~~better teachers, focus on literacy, curriculum alignment, reduced class size, work first?~~



SFA does incorporate some excellent principles of instruction. These include strategic ~~class-size reduction~~, starting with a ~~structured approach to reading~~, ~~increasing reading time~~, some ~~individualized tutoring~~, and some use of ~~homogeneous grouping~~. These are generally good ideas that all schools should consider, regardless of the specific curriculum they are using. The lesson of SFA is that schools should view principles of organizing instruction and the actual curriculum they adopt as separate processes. Once the principles of organizing instruction have been agreed upon, then a school or district should identify the best content curriculum and staff development. Most schools and districts should adopt SFA or Roots & Wings only if they feel that it has the best reading or math curriculum available—not because it is a research-based, schoolwide reform model. The same goes for all the other schoolwide reform models.

While the attention and money were being focused on comprehensive school reform and the strategy whereby each school adopts a chosen NAS schoolwide reform model, a less glamorous reform approach has quietly been gaining ground. In this approach, a ~~district or region identifies a few key priorities~~—e.g., the development of literacy—and brings to bear in a coordinated fashion the best curriculum and training it can find, while leveraging all sources of funding to implement these techniques effectively. (Schools remain free to determine their

approach in other areas.) To make this focused approach work, however, you need the best of curriculum and staff development.

The effectiveness of this traditional sounding approach was first documented by researchers in District 2 in New York City.³⁹ It is also being used in Sacramento, California, and in Baltimore County. The superiority of the more focused approach appears to hold true even in Baltimore City—birthplace of SFA.

Despite all the disappointments and problems in Baltimore, there was a recent story of a success there.⁴⁰ According to a story in the *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore had been piloting an approach that is similar to that being used in Sacramento: a new reading series consistently used with appropriate staff development and class-size reduction. The story quotes a school board member, Sam Stringfield, as saying: "These gains are the kind that professional educators hope to see once in a lifetime." According to this board member, the gains were some of the largest he had seen in his 25 years of working with urban school systems. This view was seconded by the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

Who is this board member? Alert readers will recognize him as the Johns Hopkins researcher who was the lead author for the analysis section of the Special Strategies study discussed above, which concluded that schoolwide reform models produce the best results. I applaud Baltimore's success, Stringfield's civic service, and his accomplishments as a researcher. However, this success was the result of Baltimore's using an approach that is not a schoolwide reform model. This result also supports the contention that good curricular expertise within a district or region and focused and coordinated curricular leadership will outperform SFA—or any other existing schoolwide model.

And now we have come full circle. Slavin and Madden quote a conclusion from a study, done by a researcher from the Johns Hopkins center, who later discovers a better—once-in-a-lifetime—way of reforming schools.

The Effect of Schoolwide Models on Title I Students

It is clear that SFA does not generally raise overall school performance. But what is happening to the Title I students in these schools? Are the Title I students benefiting more than they did previously? This is an important question, since most of the cost of schoolwide reform models is being paid for with Title I funds.

SFA a try, even though he had misgivings. Roemer's school had a low rating on the state assessment when it adopted the program. Shortly after the school adopted SFA, Roemer felt that the program was destroying his students' interest in reading. After the first year of the program, his school's rating fell. Roemer hopes that his school will vote out SFA next year.

He runs the alt-SFA Web site because he believes that SFA is hurting students all over the country and that no one is able to get that message out. "Most days," he says, "I feel like David with a frayed slingshot"—a reference to the site's outdated and unreliable equipment. This past summer, he worked three jobs to keep the Web site up.

Georgia Hedrick just retired from teaching after 37 years of service. She retired earlier than planned because of SFA. Data she collected from her district office reports reveal that last year scores in four of the five SFA schools in her district went down; they went up slightly in one. Hedrick reports that, in the school that went up, nine people are transferring out, including four teachers, a secretary, a custodian, a tutor with a teaching credential, a clinical aide, and a nurse. Four more teachers are on the transfer list awaiting appropriate openings. Care to predict this school's scores for next year?

Why is Hedrick so upset with SFA? In her own words from an e-mail she sent to me:

All I ever wanted to do was teach, that's all. And it is getting harder and harder every year, because I have to fight just to be able to teach as I know how. This year was the greatest insult of all: ~~It was not only told how to teach, but precisely what to say while I teach, and how long to take while saying each thing that I must say. SFA is much like a microwaved meal . . . it is packaged, it is precise . . . and it is never filling.~~ It simply doesn't reach everywhere the child needs to be reached. ~~That sort of teaching takes time, sensitivity, awareness of differences, and a stockpile of strategies to explore to reach that child.~~ SFA can't do that; it is prescriptive and boring.

The bottom line is that your school cannot have both SFA and teachers like Roemer and Hedrick.

Why are schoolwide reform models performing so poorly? There are three strikes against them.

The Problem with Schoolwide Reform Models

Despite the glowing portrayal of how SFA and the other NAS schoolwide reform models are progressing, new data coming in from other lighthouse reform experiments and from other schools and districts are consistently showing no effects. This suggests that the poor results in Baltimore and Dade County—already documented by "critics"—were not flukes.

Why are schoolwide reform models performing so poorly? There are three strikes against them. ~~The first strike is that, by trying to be everything, they end up providing the best of nothing.~~ SFA is not really a schoolwide model; it is a reading program. Wings is a math program. Are they the best ones available? If my theory is correct that helping students after grade 3 requires different approaches for part of the day than those used in the early grades, then it is unlikely that any one program will provide the best for both age groups.

The second strike is that most of the schoolwide reform models are processes for decision making without curriculum. They end up being very inefficient, and decisions that traditionally were made by committees over several months now take years, with no evidence that better decisions are made.

The third strike is that ~~researchers have estimated that it takes three to 10 years to produce results.~~³⁸ That means that, on average, by the time a schoolwide restructuring model produces results at the elementary level, all the students will have left. Ultimate success unrealistically requires that all the key pieces remain in place. As such, the implementation assumptions of schoolwide models are simply not viable on a large scale in the real world.

The problems with each individual NAS model are compounded, especially in large districts, by the approach that allows every school to "adopt the NAS model of its choice." You end up with each school having a different approach and training that has to be arranged and paid for. This ends up being very expensive and incoherent for students and teachers who move between schools. And the more mobility in a district, the less sense this approach makes.

~~SFA has some special problems, particularly its inability to build upon early gains. Why does this happen? Clearly, there are some teachers who benefit from SFA's very structured approach. But just as certainly, teachers who prefer to make their own diagnoses and judgments while teaching—and are good at doing so—feel that SFA limits their ability to perform.~~ If they opt to leave SFA schools in

The answer is that we really do not know what is happening to the Title I students. The results from ED's Special Strategies study did not show the lowest students making substantially more progress than previously. The results from the state of Washington show the numbers for the lowest quartile of students in CSRD schools using SFA increasing slightly. Clearly, when a school with very high levels of poverty among its students increases its scores, then the Title I students' scores are also increasing. However, we have no reliable evidence at this point that in the high- to mid-poverty schools using schoolwide reform models the Title I students are making substantial progress. Indeed, it is possible that, if the extra funds used for the schoolwide program had been spent for conventional improvement strategies, the low-income students would be doing even better. To this point, I see no credible, independent evidence that SFA or any of the schoolwide reform models is raising the performance of the lowest students in a school, which is the goal of Title I. We know less about the progress of Title I students now than at any point in recent history.

Unfortunately, Congress is considering further dropping the cutoff for using Title I funds for schoolwide models—this time making schools with only 40% low-income students eligible. Will this minority receive needed services? ~~While such liberalization of targeting requirements over the last 10 to 12 years has benefited the vendors of schoolwide models, progress in reducing the learning gap has stalled, and there is some evidence of regression.~~

I have prepared more detailed recommendations on the future of Title I for the Harvard Civil Rights Project, and I will make them available to readers via e-mail.⁴¹ Suffice it to say here that ~~I hope Congress will not consider further liberalizing the use of schoolwide models until further evidence is available on whether they substantially raise the performance of Title I students in all but the highest-poverty schools.~~

How Could This Have Happened?

How could a program and an approach that lack solid, independent evidence of success come to such prominence? First, the profession did not demand independent corroborating evidence. It also ignored the negative conclusions reached by the research departments of the school systems in Baltimore City and Dade County. These failures cost the profession 10 years of misdirected policy, lost opportunity for helping students, billions of wasted dollars, and a distortion of the knowledge generation process.

The second problem is that key officials and organizations did not exercise proper diligence in choosing programs. In New Jersey, the department of education sought to impose a program without first analyzing existing results within the state. This illustrates how the presumption that solid scientific evidence supported SFA actually provided cover for laziness and incompetence among public officials. The decision of the New Jersey commissioner (who is no longer in office) is just one example of a situation in which an administrator under pressure to produce quick results turned in desperation to a savior—in this case, SFA.

Nor has ED exercised proper diligence. My first article questioning the validity of the research behind SFA appeared in a leading research journal in 1998. The following year, ~~Slavin's research center was re-funded by ED for \$365 million, without competition. No one in ED investigated whether there really was a problem.~~ Indeed, this lack of diligence appears to be part of a more general problem. According to a recent article in the Los Angeles Times, ED has the highest proportion of political appointees of any federal agency, and that ratio is increasing.⁴²

A third problem is how a few people behind the scenes influenced the selection of programs deemed to be validated in the Obey-Porter CSRD legislation, which listed 17 supposedly validated and mostly schoolwide programs. These were then grandfathered into the Northwest Regional Education Lab's database of research-validated programs without any formal review. This initial head start created a de facto monopoly for these programs for several years—both for CSRD funds and for Title I funds in general. With its large base of funding, SFA was best able to take advantage of the opportunity. Steven Urdegar, the Dade County researcher who was one of the whistle blowers, was correct when he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*:

Success for All's claims of universal effectiveness are not supported by the research, and to use Congress, through the Obey-Porter Reading Excellence Act, to force schools to adopt only those programs which Mr. Slavin deems acceptable is unethical and irresponsible.⁴³

Finally, Slavin and Madden took advantage of two real problems that had caused a vacuum. The first was the stalling of real progress on reducing the learning gap. They promised that they knew how to produce success. The second problem was a major flaw in the progressive education movement (of which I am a member), which

historically has failed to recognize that *you cannot impose grandiose and idealistic conceptions of teaching, learning, and freedom onto organizations that cannot do basic, simple things well*. SFA was responsive to a system that was stressed by the combination of 1) teachers' discomfort with the largely unstructured teaching approaches in vogue, 2) a stripping away of coordinated curriculum expertise and authority (at the district level) in the name of site-based management, and 3) an infrastructure for training teachers and administrators that focused more on philosophical advocacy than on the transmission of skills.

Now What?

The big issue for the profession is not that SFA doesn't produce success. Of far greater concern is the dominating influence it exercises over current policy and practice because of the belief that SFA is highly successful. We need to wipe the slate clean and undo many of the steps we have taken in the past decade. We need to restart the conversation on how to do reform.

Right away, teachers and administrators should stop feeling embarrassed or ashamed if they have not been able to make SFA produce success in their schools. In addition, dissatisfied teachers and administrators need to come out of the closet and speak up. Share your experience and data with others on the ALT-SFA Web site and with your legislative representatives. Places such as New Jersey⁴⁴ and Memphis need to reverse course. In addition, we need to ~~break up the R&D funding monopoly~~ held by schoolwide models. We have to rebuild a democratizing infrastructure of smaller grants for R&D, for dissemination, and for research in general on students placed at risk.

We can also learn from this experience that, when everyone in the profession agrees on a course of action, it is probably wrong. It is still too easy to seduce almost everyone in education into once again pursuing a fad. The profession—construed broadly to include teacher unions, Congress, state and local officials, the judiciary, and the research community—was led to believe in the superiority of SFA and acted accordingly. The result is that at-risk students are even more at risk today.

Any new conversation on how to do reform right has to focus on improving the quality of teachers generally and equalizing the distribution of good teachers between low- and high-income students.⁴⁵ Indeed, providing access to high-quality teachers is one of the most important civil rights issues of this decade. It makes no sense to equalize funding if that does not result in an increase in high-quality

teachers in low-income schools. States must also seek to reduce student mobility by modifying welfare and public housing policies, and the profession needs to work to provide more sophisticated interventions that are capable of enhancing cognitive functioning and accelerating learning after the third grade. Reforms that do not make substantive progress in these areas are merely Band-Aids. (More extensive ideas on school reform for the nation and New Jersey, along with advice to practitioners on research validated reforms, can be found on my Web site, www.HOTS.org.)

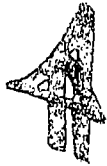
Conclusion: There Never Was Success

Slavin and Madden's forthcoming book is titled: *One Million Children: Success for All*. But the reality is that there never was scientific evidence of the success of SFA. The studies supporting SFA and other NAS schoolwide models are anything but sound. On close examination, the apparent successes in Baltimore and Memphis become stories of failure. And many additional reports of such failure are now surfacing. The striking thing is that the evidence of a major problem with the claims made for SFA was there all along, begging to be tapped, but almost no one looked. It is also striking how little real information there is about student success amid the welter of SFA data. Information about all those things that indicate true educational success is virtually absent. How are students progressing after the third grade? Are they graduating, dropping out, or going on to college? The RAND studies for NAS are not yet even looking at such matters.

There is now strong evidence that the research behind SFA never used valid methodology or appropriate reporting of results. While everyone makes methodological mistakes, the problem is that Slavin and Madden have never responded as researchers when mistakes were pointed out. Instead of full disclosure, they impugn the motives of the critics and launch bizarre defenses that they have stuck to over and over again despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. I admire their tenacity, but what they have engaged in is clearly not science but vendor spin and spin control. The numbers presented by Slavin and Madden generally misdirect attention from reality or tell only part of a story. Above all, the inescapable conclusion remains that research done by them and their affiliates (at least in this country) finds success, while school districts and independent researchers have reported conclusions that have been universally negative.

All the advocacy by Slavin and Madden is simply that—advocacy, not science. The work is not that of researchers but of marketers with a lot at stake. They provide no new insight into the nature of learning or testing, nor do they

even recognize alternative perspectives on reform and student progress. Rather than ushering in a "revolution," SFA is another in a long line of programs that have failed to accelerate student learning after the third grade. In terms of results, it is the same old, same old—with lots of bucks and political influence behind it.



We failed as a profession in our efforts to make use of the best research-based programs because no one was asking the right questions. ~~The people at the top wanted strongly to believe that there was an easily replicable and effective intervention that would produce high levels of success. But they had no idea of the psychic toll it was exacting on teachers or the negative effect it was having on the creativity of students.~~ And judging from the reaction that I got when I started down this path three years ago, no one wanted to know. We wanted saviors, and we needed to believe in them.

How much sense does all this reform effort, with all its sophisticated philosophical underpinnings and brave rhetoric, make when held up against the insight of 12 year-old Silas Moutrie, a California student?

~~You can't take books home because we don't have enough. . . Instead, we have to come to class to do the same thing we could have done at home. We're probably behind other schools because they get homework, and they get to take their books home.~~ 46

His words point clearly to the many basic and necessary things for substantive change that are not in place. We are overlooking these obvious needs and problems in our haste to be postmodernistic, visionary, and in Slavin and Madden's words, "revolutionary." Silas is smart enough to know that, with all the sophisticated reform initiatives of the last decade and all the money spent on expensive programs, he still must function on a very unlevel playing field. He also reflects the possibility that Title I funds designed to help him are helping others instead.

The story I have told is not a pretty one. ~~The basic norms of our profession have been compromised,~~ perhaps even corrupted. Please keep in mind that Slavin and Madden have not disputed a single fact that I and other critics have brought forth. It is time for leaders in our profession to step forth and start corrective action.

However, I want to end by emphasizing the positives. Society is increasingly aware that education is the key to economic, social, and cultural progress and is willing to increase funding for education. In addition, many brave

practitioners at the grassroots level used their instincts for helping students to buck the trend and start moving in a different direction when they realized that the current fad was not working. Whatever mistakes our profession made were made out of a love for children and a desire to do better by them.

It is now time to move forward—to support a diversity of approaches to success, to stop demeaning traditional approaches to reform, to make sure that at risk low-income students get access to high-quality instruction and the special help they need. There is a tremendous amount of commitment, expertise, and good will in our profession. The reforms we need to make will not be easy or glamorous and will require new forms of interaction among existing interest groups. But if we succeed, we can resume the progress we have made in reducing the learning gap since the institution of Title I 35 years ago. ~~By reopening competition and true experimentation between models and approaches and re-democratizing the funding and program validation processes, we can give voice to a wider variety of high-potential ideas and practices.~~ The bottom line is that there is huge untapped potential in low-income students—and the vast majority wants to be successful and do respond to high-quality education. We can produce much higher levels of real success.

1. The original debate between Robert Slavin and me on how to evaluate program effectiveness and whether research supports the use of Success for All took place in the following publications: Stanley Pogrow, "What Is an Exemplary Program, and Why Should Anyone Care? A Reaction to Slavin and Klein," *Educational Researcher*, October 1998, pp. 22-29; Robert E. Slavin, "Rejoinder: Yes, Control Groups Are Essential in Program Evaluation: A Response to Pogrow," *Educational Researcher*, April 1999, pp. 36-38; and Stanley Pogrow, "Rejoinder: Consistent Large Gains and High Levels of Achievement Are the Best Measures of Program Quality: Pogrow Responds to Slavin," *Educational Researcher*, November 1999, pp. 24-26, 31.

2. There was also another debate about SFA in fall 1999. Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, "The Diogenes Factor," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 127-28; Bruce R. Joyce, "The Great Literacy Problem and Success for All," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 129-31 and Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, "Educators Should Require Evidence," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 132-35.

3. Robert E. Slavin, "IBM's Writing to Read: Is It Right for Reading?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1990, pp. 214-16; and Olatokunbo S. Fashola and Robert E. Slavin, "Schoolwide Reform Models: What Works?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1998, pp. 370-79.
4. William Bulkeley, "Now Johnny Can Read if Teacher Just Keeps Doing What He's Told," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 July 1999, pp. A-1, A-9.
5. Lana Smith, Steven Ross, and Jason Casey, "Multi-Site Comparison of Success for All on Reading Achievement," Unpublished manuscript, University of Memphis, undated.
6. The common names are Robert Slavin, Nancy Madden, Rebecca Herman, Sam Stringfield, and Steven Ross.
7. Sam Stringfield et al., *Urban and Suburban/Rural Strategies for Educationally Disadvantaged Students: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1997).
8. Rebecca Herman et al., *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Research, 1999).
9. The discussion of SFA in the summary section of this report made no mention of the concerns raised by a number of researchers about the data for the past year, the extent of the supposed gains, or the grade levels at which the gains occurred. Nor was there any concern for what was going on in the control schools or whether they were placed at a disadvantage.
10. Thomas D. Cook et al., "Comer's School Development Program in Prince George's County, Maryland: A Theory-Based Evaluation," *American Educational Research Journal*, Fall 1999, pp. 543-97. A defense of the program was also included in the same issue: James P. Comer and Norris M. Haynes, "The Dynamics of School Change: Response to the Article 'Comer's School Development Program in Prince George's County, Maryland: A Theory Based Evaluation,'" pp. 599-607.
11. Elizabeth M. Jones, Gary D. Gottfredson, and Denise C. Gottfredson, "Success for Some: An Evaluation of the Success for All Program," *Evaluation Review*, vol. 21, 1997, pp. 643-70.
12. One independent evaluation is Richard L. Venezky, "An Alternative Perspective on Success for All," in Kenneth Wong, ed., *Advances in Educational Policy Vol. 4* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, forthcoming). The two independent unpublished studies are Stephen Ruffini et al., "Assessment of Success for All," Baltimore City Public Schools, 1992; and Steven Urdegar, "Evaluation of the Success for All Program, 1997-98," Miami Public Schools, 1998.
13. Obviously, at some point a definition of success should include graduation from middle school and high school and enrollment in college.
14. Robert E. Slavin et al., "Success for All: First Year Outcomes of a Comprehensive Plan for Reforming Urban Education," *American Educational Research Journal*, Summer 1990, pp. 255-78.
15. Slavin, "Rejoinder: Yes, Control Groups Are Essential in Program Evaluation."
16. Council of the Great City Schools, www.cgcs.org.
17. It makes no sense to count only those students who were in school for all five years unless Slavin and Madden believe that it takes five years to produce results and advertise the fact that SFA is only for students who attend for five years.
18. Robert E. Slavin, "Mastery Learning Reconsidered," *Review of Educational Research*, Summer 1987, 175-213.
19. Smith, Ross, and Casey, op. cit.
20. Steven Ross et al., "Two- and Three-Year Achievement Results from the Memphis Restructuring Initiative," Unpublished paper, University of Memphis, 2000.
21. Keller's six concerns about inadequate information for assessing whether possible methodological anomalies produced or inflated the effect sizes or statistical significance in favor of SFA include:

Matching. There was not enough information to tell if the researchers' matching techniques balanced the problem of potentially different effects from regression to the mean, which could lead to overstated effect sizes if regression to the mean occurred and was greater in the experimental groups than in the control groups.

Data cleaning of outliers. The articles lack evidence about the extent of a "cleaning of outliers" and about whether the cleaning of outliers was justified with hard evidence that such things as transcription errors were the reasons for the cleaning. Outlier removal has the potential to inflate effect sizes.

Differential cleaning of outliers. The lack of detail on the cleaning of outliers leads to a condition in which it cannot be determined if there were any differences across groups in the handling of outliers. Differential cleaning of outliers could distort the original matching and might artificially inflate effect sizes.

Estimation of uncertainty. The reported effect sizes lack suitable measures of uncertainty, such as confidence intervals. When the stakes are low, this is not much of a problem. But in the high-stakes world of public education, there should be estimates for the upper and lower bounds of the reported effect sizes.

Impact of lower variation within control groups. Significant values and somewhat large effect sizes were frequently associated with smaller standard deviations (sometimes substantially smaller) in the control group. The choice of formula for the effect size may be capitalizing on the magnitude and frequency of lower variation within the control groups and may thereby be inflating the overall effect sizes when compared with a formula that accounts for the variation in both groups.

Power analysis. Power analysis is important for two reasons: it informs readers of the magnitude of a difference that researchers claim to be substantive, and it lends greater interpretability to the p values. Although power concerns alone do not influence effect sizes, they do influence their statistical significance and thus their interpretation as differing from zero.

22. Judy Kronholz, "Baltimore Public School Struggles to Improve Its Scores," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 2000, p. A-16.

23. Susan Bodilly et al., *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase: Prospects for Bringing Designs to Multiple Schools* (Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation, 1998).

24. Ross et al., op. cit.

25. One of the other researchers was kind enough to give me a copy of the unpublished study at the University of Memphis.

26. A. Abramson, "2000 Public School Report Card," Tennessee Institute for Public Policy, 2000.

27. The count of elementary schools statewide may be off a bit. The state publishes the lowest 100 schools, and from that list only those that appeared to be elementary schools were counted. A few may have been missed.

28. It was unclear whether a few Memphis schools were elementary or secondary.

29. Mickie Anderson, "Reform Schools Getting Results: Models Adopted Earliest Bear Most Fruit in Study," Memphis Commercial Appeal, 5 June 2000, p. A-1.

30. Abramson, p. 2 of the section on schools.

31. TVASS for grade 6 was an average 137.39, 40% above average, as compared to an average TVASS for grades 3-5 of 93, below the state average.

32. *Quality Counts '98* (Bethesda, Md.: Editorial Projects in Education, January 1998), p. 245.

33. Terrence Stutz, "Passing Rate on TAAS Hits 80% for First Time," Dallas Morning News, 18 May 2000, p. 34. Abby Goodnough, "Reading Scores Rise Significantly: Still, Only 41% Meet Standards," New York Times, 8 June 2000.

35. Transcript of the proceedings before the Honorable Michael King, Supreme Court of New Jersey, M-622, September Term 1997, pp. 118-19.

36. A middle school that was using SFA with some of its students was excluded from my analysis so that only elementary schools were included.

37. Steven Urdeggar, *Evaluation of the Success for All Program: 1998-1999* (Miami: Office of Evaluation and Research, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2000), pp. 26-27.

38. Ross et al., op. cit.

39. Richard Elmore and Deanna Burney, "Continuous Improvement in Community District #2, New York City." Unpublished paper prepared for Learning Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, 1998.

40. Liz Bowie, "City Pupil's Test Scores Surge." Baltimore Sun, 17 May 2000, p. A-1.

41. Stanley Pogrow, "Overcoming the Cognitive Wall: Accelerating the Learning of Title I Students After the Third Grade," in Gary Orfield, ed., *Hard Work for Good Schools: Facts Not Fads in Title I Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, forthcoming).

42. Judy Pasternak, "Department a Haven for Clinton Loyalists," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 October 1999, Home Edition, p. A-1.

43. Steven Urdegar, "Success for all Is Unethical," letter to the editor, *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1999, p. A-25.

44. New Jersey has the resources to become a national model of how to do things right. The top priority must be to reverse the mandate for selecting schoolwide models and pushing SFA. Instead, the schools should be required to submit plans of validated improvement practices (e.g., strategic class size reduction), show how their materials present a balanced pedagogical approach, and provide a detailed analysis of how the combination of materials they are using align with the state test. The state should also impanel a task force to come up with legislative and legal strategies to equalize the quality of teachers, to reduce student mobility via changes in welfare and public housing policies, and to develop a sense of understanding. Finally, the principal of the one Abbott school that met state requirements should be appointed commissioner of education.

45. For example, San Francisco is providing subsidized housing for teachers so that they can afford to live in that beautiful city.

46. Brent Staples, "The 'Mississippification' of California Schools," *New York Times*, 23 June 2000. p. A-24.

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further

Success for All Does Not Produce Success for Students

by

Dr. Stanley Pogrow

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The issue of whether the use of Success for All (SFA) is supported by valid research is probably the most important and relevant research discussion for practitioners in years. The belief in the unique success of SFA has caused Congress to reshape Title I policy in favor of comprehensive schoolwide reform models and approaches, has caused states and courts to mandate such programs, and has caused New Jersey to try to mandate the use of SFA in all high-poverty schools in the state. As SFA and its approach are increasingly favored, the choices that schools and teachers are allowed to consider (to serve educationally disadvantaged students) are increasingly restricted. The belief in the validity of this program has also concentrated funding from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in the hands of a few large organizations that are deemed to be using the right approach. Thus new knowledge and program innovations are also restricted. In other words, the belief that the issue of how best to help students has been settled by the "unassailable" data provided by Robert Slavin, Nancy Madden, and their associates—both in the *Kappan* and elsewhere—makes it inappropriate even to consider alternatives.

Until I and others started to question the data and methodology used to support SFA, criticism was limited to concerns that the program was overstructured and regimented to such an extent that it limited the professional discretion of teachers. Nevertheless, I agree with Slavin and Madden, co-developers of SFA and of Roots & Wings, that, if their data truly show that their approach is overwhelmingly producing success for students, then it is my professional obligation to support its use, regardless of my own philosophical bias.

But suppose the data and conclusions are not valid and that there is no valid evidence of student success. Then we will have lost 10 years of knowledge generation and opportunities for improvement, and we will have imposed an ineffective approach and adopted misguided policies. Even worse, we as a profession are then guilty of mistakenly pushing a mind-numbing form of learning onto large numbers of low-income students.

The perceived success of SFA gave the program extraordinary influence both on its own and as part of the New American Schools (NAS), an organization that promotes the use of SFA, Roots & Wings, and other schoolwide reform models. Everyone agrees that overall school improvement is and always has been the desired goal. The question is how to achieve this end in ways that also improve the performance of educationally disadvantaged students and thereby reduce learning gaps. The perceived success of SFA led Congress to favor the use of "validated" schoolwide models, rather than the targeting of services to Title I students. The expectation is that improving a school's overall performance will increase the achievement of Title I students more greatly than will providing them with special help. Slavin's writings and the work of the research center he heads have played key roles in identifying and promoting the use of validated whole-school reform models.

However, if the research supporting SFA is not valid and if the program does not work, then we have been using the wrong approach to helping disadvantaged students, and they may be falling through the cracks. Indeed, the \$8 billion this nation spends each year to help Title I students may be helping the more advantaged students to reap even

greater benefits— thereby increasing the learning gaps the funds were designed to reduce.

This article will focus on answering some central questions about SFA's success. Do the data say that SFA has been a success for students, teachers, and the profession? Are the results of research on SFA based on a scientifically unbiased process, or do they merely represent "vendor spin" on the data? Does the program actually produce success in the real world? And if SFA and the other schoolwide reform models do not work, then what should practitioners and policy makers do'?

Did Slavin and Madden Really Respond?

On reading the response of Slavin and Madden to my April 2000 *Kappan* article, one can quickly see how congressional staffers, the courts, policy analysts, and academics came to believe that research clearly establishes the success and superiority of SFA. I must admit that I took a few gulps the first time I read through their article and saw their array of data. But do the seemingly endless studies stand up to careful scrutiny, and did Slavin and Madden actually respond to the points that I and other critics have made? Did they document success for students?

This is actually Slavin and Madden's second response to my April 2000 *Kappan* article. The first appeared last May in a *Backtalk* letter. Slavin also responded to my criticisms in a debate that was published in the prestigious and refereed *Educational Researcher*.¹ An exchange of letters between Slavin and co-authors Herbert Walberg and Rebecca Greenberg also appeared in the March 2000 *Backtalk*.² My rebuttal will draw on all these responses.

My article last April made a number of points. First, as the co-developer of SFA as a director of a research center, and as someone who has published a critique of the research base of competing programs,³ and critiqued the research methodology of agencies that support program dissemination, there is a huge potential for conflict of interest for Slavin—and for Madden, who is director of the SFA Foundation. Second, the research center at Johns Hopkins University and the SFA Foundation continue to receive the lion's share of federal R&D and dissemination dollars, despite a lack of valid evidence of success; only a few other organizations share the remainder. Third, Slavin's research center and the people working in it have essentially created a monopoly of information, which has misdirected both practice and knowledge generation in ways that have promoted their own beliefs and SFA. And fourth, the research that supports SFA makes use of highly

biased methodology that has made failure for students look like success.

In terms of conflict of interest, I asked whether it was appropriate for the head of a research organization to be the co-developer of a program, for him to be the evaluator of it and of competing programs, and for his organization to be the conductor of the key policy analysis that forms the basis for related government and judicial actions that mostly benefit his program. I also noted the large sums involved. Last year, Slavin's research center, which was originally funded for \$27 million, was refunded for another five years for \$36.5 million without competition. This center and the SFA Foundation received a dissemination grant and a middle school development grant estimated to be \$23 million over the next five years, and SFA sales were projected to be \$44 million this year.⁴ NAS is also well funded. The NAS Web site reveals that eight organizations have donated at least \$3 million and that 17 have chipped in at least \$1 million. To date, I have received no response from Slavin and Madden to the obvious problem of potential conflict of interest.

In terms of current grantmaking activity at ED, I asked why a large percentage of all new federal R&D and dissemination grants were going to SFA and its related activities. In particular, I asked why SFA was being given dissemination grants at all, since the program is 15 years old, does \$44 million worth of business annually, charges schools a fortune for its programs, and has a business arrangement with a large private company that raises capital in the private sector (Edison Schools, Inc.). There was no response to this question.

I also raised concerns that the concentration of funds on SFA and other schoolwide models was producing a concentration of knowledge generation in the hands of a few interrelated individuals associated with Slavin's research center who conduct all the key research and policy analysis, and I questioned whether such concentration was distorting findings related to how best to help educationally disadvantaged students. When I first made this point in *Educational Researcher*, Slavin responded by offering a series of citations and pointing out how many institutions this body of work represents. I pointed out that every source cited had his and/or Madden's name on it. In this response, Slavin and Madden impressively list all the individuals involved in SFA research to show just how broad the participation is in terms of people and institutions, and they complain that I and others unfairly criticize these individuals simply because they find positive results for SFA.

The affiliations that Slavin and Madden refer to are not as independent as they claim. For example, they mention WestEd. At the time that WestEd did evaluations of SFA, the lab had a large contract to be the regional training center for SFA. Hardly an independent source. Then Slavin and Madden invoke the name of William Sanders of the University of Tennessee. The problem is that Slavin mentioned Sanders in his exchange of letters with Walberg and Greenberg in the Kappan last March. At that time, Walberg and Greenberg pointed out that Sanders had produced his work as an unpublished paper for the University of Memphis, which was listed on the SFA Web site as the "Mid-South distributor for SFA." The paper was also done in collaboration with the senior researcher in Slavin's research center. Another unpublished paper I read from the research group at the University of Memphis (hereafter referred to as SFA South) was commissioned by "SFA developers at Johns Hopkins University."⁵ This is what Slavin and Madden call independent third-party research?

It is troubling that Slavin and Madden again invoke Professor Sanders of the University of Memphis, as though this issue had not already been discussed and dismissed. It is as if they believe that reiteration makes something true. Unfortunately, this is a recurring pattern in their response. In addition, they make it seem as if the work by Sanders and S. Paul Wright was done at the University of Tennessee. In fact, they were collaborators on that same paper produced by the research group at SFA South.

The fact is that all the key studies done in this country that Slavin and Madden cite in support of SFA—with two exceptions—contain one or more of just five names, all of whom are or have been affiliated with Slavin's research center in some fashion.⁶ I showed last April how members of this small group quoted one another to support their points of view on key reform issues—even when alternative views were supported by replicated research. I also noted that ED's key study to determine the best strategy for Title I was conducted by two researchers in Slavin's center.⁷ I questioned the wisdom of awarding this "Special Strategies" policy study to an organization with a clear interest in a particular strategy. Then one of these two researchers became the lead researcher for the American Institute of Research (AIR) study, funded by the five largest professional education associations, which was to identify the programs most strongly validated by research.⁸ The AIR study did not adjust for the methodology problems employed in SFA research and endorsed SFA as one of the few programs strongly supported by research.⁹

Slavin and Madden offer no response to this obvious concentration of funded research in the hands of individuals with affiliations to their particular strategy and program. They blithely continue to pretend that the studies were independent.

But the self-serving use of this knowledge generation monopoly misdirected knowledge in ways that had tangible consequences for the profession and for helping students. Slavin and Madden discuss the conclusion reached by the Special Strategies study for Title I: "Only . . . Success for All and the Comer model showed significantly greater achievement gains than other schools" (p. 61). These schoolwide reform models were thus presumed to offer the best strategy for emphasis in the Title I reauthorization and the subsequent Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program.

However, there is one major problem. There were only two schools using each of these programs in the study, and these were selected from among those recommended by the vendor (i.e., not a representative sample). Even under such a setup, of the two SFA schools, one did better than the national sample of similar schools, and one did worse. Nor did the lowest 20% of students make much gain relative to the national, more representative, sample. (Coincidentally, questions have also been raised recently in the prestigious *American Educational Research Journal* about the ability of the Comer model to increase academic achievement.)¹⁰

Although I had reported in my first *Educational Researcher* article the failure of SFA and the Comer model in the Special Strategies study, Slavin and Madden did not mention this previously published finding and merely requested a self-serving passage from that national study (which had been conducted by researchers at Slavin's center). So the actual limited results of the schoolwide reform models in this study, which should have been an early warning sign that these models were not necessarily going to improve things even under the most favorable of conditions, instead became evidence that this was the most successful strategy. On the basis of this study, educators marched off more convinced than ever before that schoolwide reform models would substantially raise the achievement of high-poverty schools and of low-income students.

Slavin and Madden are correct in saying that, of the four negative studies of SFA that were being quoted, one was done by employees of the Johns Hopkins research center.¹¹ However, the researchers had left before Slavin

became director/co-director of the center. It is, therefore, correct to say that, since Slavin became director of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), there have been no negative conclusions published about SFA use in this country from that center or by outsiders collaborating with individuals currently employed in that center.

On the other hand, the three independent and clearly unaffiliated studies all concluded that SFA was not effective.¹² In addition, two of the unaffiliated studies were done independently of each other in Baltimore—one by the district's research office and the other by Richard Venezky of the University of Delaware. They both concluded that the program was not successful in the city where it was launched. Such independent corroboration undercuts the claims of Slavin and Madden that Venezky's negative conclusion is "subjective." In addition, new confirming results from independent sources will be presented below.

Before I begin my critique of the methodology and conclusions of the SFA research, I want to say something about what constitutes "success" in Title I. I do not know what Slavin and Madden's definition of success is, but here is mine. Title I has always produced gains in K-3, but students level off in grades 3-4, start to decline in grades 4-5, and fall behind thereafter at an accelerating pace. Thus it is not enough just to set goals for grade 3; success in a K-6 program would mean that low-income students make progress toward grade level up to grade 3, continue their progress toward grade level thereafter, and enter grade 6 on the upswing. My definition does not require students to be at grade level by grade 6 but to be getting closer.¹³

Critique of SFA Methodology And Conclusions

I have pointed out in three different published articles that students in Baltimore were entering the sixth grade three years below grade level and falling further behind. Whenever I and others have pointed out this sad outcome, Slavin and Madden have always interpreted the critics as being upset because the students are not on grade level. Given this history, I went to great pains to express in my Kappan article last April that we critics are upset because students are three years below grade level, which is not acceptable in any system of accountability. So what do Slavin and Madden do? Once again they say that "Venezky believed that . . . the program could not be considered successful if it did not bring children up to grade level" (p. 39). It seems clear now that Slavin and Madden are consciously sticking to their script rather than engaging in dialogue.

At the same time, other researchers have gotten upset when SFA students were not at grade level. Consider the following:

In the first year Success for All brought children at all grade levels to almost the 50th percentile on individually administered measures.... This is good, but it does not yet fulfill the commitment to bring every child to grade level in the basic skills. Not until this year's preschoolers have reached third grade can this commitment be assessed.¹⁴

Can you guess who wrote this? It was Slavin, Madden, and their co-authors in 1990. Times have certainly changed.

Claiming success for students who are doing terribly on the basis that they are doing less terribly than others means, as Venezky shows, that Slavin and Madden do not understand that the goal of reform is not to get students to progress from hopeless to hapless. It is to get them to be successful. My conclusion, reported in my first article in *Educational Researcher*, was that there was no evidence of consistent effects at this point for any of the schoolwide reform models.

Slavin and Madden use a wide variety of other spin tactics to dismiss the negative findings. These include a number of excuses.

- *There was a hurricane.* Hurricane Hugo did a great deal of damage in South Carolina. But it also hit the control school. In addition, if a hurricane caused a problem in the first year, one might expect gains in the following years. But there was no subsequent success, and the results were consistent with the findings in Baltimore of a bump in the earliest grades, only in the first year.

- *The schools were very high-poverty.* Where do they think most Title I students are? Slavin and Madden powered their approach to the forefront because of their criticism of the limited effects of prior policy on the achievement of Title I students. Now they want to pass when it comes to having their results count in schools with very high poverty? In the *Educational Researcher* debate, when Slavin claimed success in a lower-poverty school after the third grade, I showed how he was misrepresenting the grade levels at which the data were generated.¹⁵ Moreover, according to transcripts of his New Jersey testimony, he did not reveal his reservations about producing success in schools with very high poverty levels.

• *The superintendent left.* The superintendent in urban districts almost always leaves. The average tenure for urban superintendents is 2 1/3 years.¹⁶ If making the program effective requires that the superintendent stay longer, then maybe SFA should require an 80% vote of the community to keep the superintendent for at least six years.

• *The program was not implemented properly.* Slavin and Madden claim that the reason why Dade County (the high profile urban district using SFA after the bust in Baltimore) did not find any advantage to using SFA was that the program was not properly implemented. However, the Dade County report concluded that the program was properly implemented. Data are starting to come in from other urban districts that are corroborating the conclusion of Dade County.

The Baltimore findings of SFA students doing poorly would be bad enough if that were all there was to the story. But the severe methodological problems in the research that I pointed out resulted in unfair advantages for the SFA groups and thereby inflated effect sizes (the difference between the SFA schools and comparison schools). I noted that, when Venezky reanalyzed the Baltimore data, he found that Slavin and Madden counted in their final analysis only those students who had participated in SFA for five years, which means they dropped large numbers of students and ended up with a non representative—and stable—group of students.¹⁷ Even more problematic is that the vast majority of special education students disappeared from the SFA schools during the course of the study, while far more remained in the comparison schools. Moreover, the SFA schools in Baltimore received up to \$400,000 in additional funding. As a result, the fact that SFA students did better in the comparison seems a clear result of a deck stacked in favor of the SFA schools.

As researchers engaged in scholarly debate, Slavin and Madden had the responsibility to reanalyze their data to see if the effect sizes resulted from not counting all students or from the disappearance of special education students. They did not do that. Instead, Slavin's response in his May 2000 Backtalk letter was, "The Baltimore study met the highest standards of rigor. . ." (p. 720). This is obviously not true.

Even worse, in their current article Slavin and Madden try to deflect Venezky's conclusion from the Baltimore data that SFA was not the solution for the reading problems of inner-city children by noting with pride: "SFA substantially reduced. . . special education placements" (p. 39). That is true, but only because the special education

students disappeared from the SFA sample. Now that the cat is out of the bag, instead of admitting the problem, they spin it into a positive and actually claim success for the resultant lower level of special education students. This is a novel way of dealing with special education students and indicates a troubling willingness to say anything in an effort to cover up the failure of the program in Baltimore. This is spin, not research.

The methodological problems in Baltimore are continued in the other studies. For example, the results displayed in Figure I look impressive until you read the fine print saying that students who were not in the school in the first grade were not counted because they did not receive the full impact of the program. Well, in your typical urban school, what percentage of fifth-graders started first grade in that school and remained there? Unfortunately, that number is quite small. Madden and Slavin need to establish that SFA works in the real world; they cannot continue to tailor unrepresentative conditions in their research.

Even worse, given the conclusions of the analysis in South Carolina and the reanalysis of the Baltimore data showing that almost all of the gain and relative advantage occurs in a first-grade bump, their decision to eliminate students who were not in the program since the first grade is not as innocent it appears. Without this bump, they cannot make effect sizes appear. Since students who were not in SFA in the first grade do not contribute to producing effect sizes and so make it more difficult to show gains, they are dropped from the analysis. This sophisticated methodological misdirection is found throughout their work. Ultimately, this is about making numbers successful—not students.

Another methodological way that SFA research stacks the deck is by not reporting if students in the control group are spending as much time reading. Given that SFA students spend 90 minutes a day reading, it is possible that increased reading time, not SFA, is producing the gains. I agree with the researcher who eloquently described the problem of not accounting for differences in instructional time as follows:

But as a question of experimental design, the extra time given to . . . classes is a serious problem. It is virtually unheard-of in educational research...to systematically allocate an experimental group more time than a control group....Presumably, any sensible instructional program would produce significantly greater achievement than a control method that allocated 20%-33% less instructional time. Studies that fail

to hold time constant across treatments essentially confound treatment effects with effects of additional time.¹⁸

The researcher quoted here is Slavin, criticizing another program, mastery learning. Unfortunately, Slavin and Madden do not apply a similar standard of evidence to their own programs or research.

There are other ways that SFA research stacks the deck in comparisons. I noted in both *Educational Researcher* and the *Kappan* that research conducted by Memphis researchers at SFA South had found effects favoring SFA only after control schools were dropped from the sample. I reported that schools were dropped in one such study because the control schools implemented a good practice, which interfered with the researchers' chosen methodology. What were the control schools guilty of? They were guilty of reducing class size and tutoring the students.¹⁹ In addition, current research at SFA South also drops a site after the start of the research (see the discussion under Memphis, below).²⁰

Slavin and Madden respond with the claim that they have never dropped a control school. However, that is not the issue I raised. The issue is that, instead of acknowledging the problem of sites being dropped in the SFA South study and dealing with it appropriately (especially since the study was funded by Slavin's research center), Slavin and Madden again cite this very same "drop the control school" study in their article as proof of the effectiveness of SFA. Furthermore, every study they cite in their "Comparison" section to show SFA's superiority to other schoolwide models or to programs such as Reading Recovery has involved the SFA South researchers. They are not doing anything about the reported problem of schools being dropped—and are trying to benefit from the reported results.

In addition, SFA schools have a lot more money to spend than regular control schools or other NAS models. Most of this extra money appears to be used to reduce class size during reading. Leonard Walstad, who has a Ph.D. in applied math from Harvard University and has been a mathematician and oceanographer at the University of Maryland, looked into SFA's research as an interested parent and as someone running for the school board. His conclusion, expressed in an e-mail, is:

The results Slavin reports for SFA are consistent with previous studies that only reduced class size. This strongly suggests that SFA has no effect. This is like replacing the engine of a

family sedan with a race car engine and then painting a racing stripe on the car, then reporting that racing stripes make cars go faster.

In other words, as a result of the failure to equate resources between SFA and control schools, there is no evidence of added clear value from the SFA curriculum or from the program itself.

The research presented by Slavin and Madden also makes use of the oldest trick in the program vendor's book. Vendors select a test that their curriculum is linked to, and lo and behold their students do better than controls who were not taught to the test. Then they give the tests repeatedly to demonstrate progress; school administrators are impressed by the printouts showing progress. Unfortunately, these results almost never transfer to real-world tests.

The clear picture that emerges is that researchers at Johns Hopkins and at SFA South have sought to keep the control schools as hapless as possible and to advantage the SFA schools in all respects. Between the dropping of students by Slavin and Madden and the dropping of control schools by SFA South, no comparison program has a chance.

While the overall design of SFA research obviously stacks the deck, I was curious as to what an evaluation of the statistical and methodological fine points would show. Since this was beyond my expertise, I enlisted the aid of Dana Keller, chief statistician for a multi-state medical foundation, who has designed statistical formulas for the Johns Hopkins research center. (Keller was not involved in analysis of data for Slavin.)

Keller concluded that key information needed to assess the methodological rigor of the analyses in the articles he reviewed was generally missing in six important areas of sampling and statistical analysis.²¹ Based on what he read in his limited review of both recent and older research papers by Slavin, Keller was not comfortable with the support for the methodological validity of the conclusions. Therefore, he concluded that the articles he read had insufficient methodological rigor to be taken seriously for high-stakes purposes—at least not without more methodological clarification—and thus could not be used to justify supporting the widespread use of Success for All.

A Review of Slavin And Madden's Research

Baltimore. After all the criticism of their use of effect sizes, what do Slavin and Madden do? They present their same effect sizes again. It does not seem to matter to them

that the students are failing, as long as they can show an effect size. Then they proudly reveal a new effect size. They are proud that, two years after the students left the program, there was still an effect size in the seventh grade. However, the effect size is now less than half of others. This means that the former SFA students are now probably four years below grade level. This is success?

It is ironic that, as I was writing this article, the Wall Street Journal carried an article about Abbottston School in Baltimore. This school had just contracted with Edison Schools, Inc. The article described the struggles of the principal to raise test scores in this highly impoverished school in a low performing district. The Edison model essentially uses the SFA approach and materials. Guess which Baltimore school was the original SFA site? Yes, it was Abbottston. While I feel sorry for the plight of the principal, I have no sympathy for those who ignore history. After receiving an additional \$144,000 for this project from the state of Maryland, the principal laments the low scores but pluckily asserts that the scores would be even lower without this program and boldly predicts that the reading program "will raise scores to the state average by the time today's kindergartners take the fifth-grade exam."²² It sounds as if the principal does not know what happened to the students who spent five years in SFA in that school the last time around.

Memphis. Memphis is significant because it was the pioneer of the "each school adopt an NAS schoolwide reform model of its choice" approach to school reform. Lots of additional funds were devoted to this effort (although no one could give me an exact figure as to how much). Memphis became the poster city for the NAS, and RAND researchers referred to it as one of the two most advanced districts nationally in implementing NAS designs.²³ The majority of restructuring schools chose SFA. Memphis was also hailed as the prototype district for the Obey-Porter (CSRD) legislation and for the "new" approach to Title I.

Figure 2 of Slavin and Madden's article apparently shows huge advantages for SFA schools over control schools and the state average of 100, with SFA schools doing almost 38% better than controls in reading and exceeding the state average by almost 30%. An unpublished paper out of SFA South by Steven Ross and his colleagues concluded that schools using schoolwide reform models outperformed matched controls and that across the schoolwide reform models, SFA/Roots & Wings did best.²⁴

Once again, the reality is very different. An e-mail to the district's research office from a third party (not from me)

attempting to get district data elicited the following response from a knowledgeable source who wishes to remain anonymous:

I have forwarded your request to our Executive Director of Research. He will probably tell you to contact [Steven] Ross directly at the University of Memphis.... The Memphis City School R&E staff was kept far, far 'out of the loop' on SFA. Only as of now have our staff Title I evaluators been allowed to dolly into the picture for a closer look. As for the reasons why, I refer you to critical articles by Stanley Pogrow (in the Educational Researcher...and...in the Phi Delta Kappan)....I believe more scrutiny is needed.

The director of research for the Memphis Public Schools, John Nunnery, was a former employee of the Johns Hopkins research center. He did not respond. Steven Ross at the University of Memphis (SFA South), said that the study was confidential and that it would be necessary to contact the superintendent to get a copy.²⁵

Clearly, there was no point in contacting the superintendent. She had left two months earlier for a cushy job with a foundation. Before leaving, she announced tremendous gains, declared victory for the reform strategy, and was named national Superintendent of the Year. Would all of this have been possible without SFA South's having control of the flow of information? Or did a miracle of reform actually occur in Memphis?

Shortly after I received the e-mail quoted above, the state released rankings of the districts.²⁶ Guess where Memphis ranked? Next to last. Of course, the low rating could have been a function of high poverty. But Tennessee also has its value-added system (the TVASS statistic that Slavin and Madden's Figure 2 reports), and it independently ranks districts in terms of gains produced. In terms of gains produced in reading, Memphis ranked fifth from the bottom of 137 districts in the state.

But perhaps within these awful district results SFA was a success, and the problem was that not enough Memphis schools had adopted SFA. No! Twenty-four of the 77 lowest-achieving elementary schools in Tennessee are Memphis SFA schools.²⁷ While SFA is in use in about 36% of Memphis elementary schools,²⁸ it constitutes about 52% of the Memphis elementary schools ranked in the lowest 77 in the state. No success here.

Once these terrible scores were published, Ross, the lead researcher at SFA South, was quoted in the newspaper as

urging the districts to keep the whole-school reform models going because the ones that had been implemented earlier were doing better than those that had just been implemented.²⁹ However, more than half of both the oldest and the newest SFA sites are among the state's lowest 77 schools in reading.

Once again, we have fancy statistics and charts that do not mirror reality. How were the impressive results in Figure 2 generated, and how did the study by Ross and his colleagues conclude that SFA and Roots & Wings were producing superior results? First, the unpublished Ross paper dropped a control school for being an "outlier." No other explanation was offered, so no one can tell what the impact of that action was on the results. Indeed, two of the 37 SFA schools were doing well. If we dropped them from the analysis as outliers, then SFA schools would have been way below the others. (We did not do this.)

A second and more significant problem is with the TVASS calculations themselves. Currently, the statistics work differently for grades 3-5 than for grade 6. Small gains produce huge value-added scores in grade 6, but only small ones in grades 3-5. For example, the state manual gives an example of a non-Memphis school in which the gains for grades 3-5 are "relatively" low, while the gains for grade 6 are 688, almost seven times the national average. One huge number like this at the sixth grade can clearly skew the results for a group of schools. The report concludes that, with respect to sixth grade, "these scores have a much wider distribution . . . than other scores. Thus, schools with sixth-graders may have substantially higher or lower cumulative scores than schools that don't have those grades."³⁰

In other words, under no conditions should sixth-grade gain results be combined with those of grades 3-5, for they have totally different characteristics. My own analysis with current data shows that the only way to produce high TVASS (e.g., gain) scores for the SFA schools is to mix in grade 6.³¹

What is the reality? Let's make it simple by looking at the test from which the TVASS scores were generated. From 1998 to 1999, average reading scores were actually down for grades 3-5 across all the SFA schools, and they were down for grade 6 in those SFA schools with a sixth grade. The bottom line is that the actual reading scores for SFA schools went down at all grade levels.

Without looking at the raw data, one would not know what is going on. This situation is the same as when Venezky analyzed the case of Baltimore. What was not revealed in

the unpublished reports by SFA South and quoted by Slavin and Madden was more important than what was revealed, and the new information clearly documents failure—not success.

What is even worse in the case of Memphis is that there was apparently a conscious effort to keep school district researchers from getting anywhere near the data. While this manipulation was going on, Slavin was busy spinning: "When people ask me, 'Where is an urban system with a vision of where it is going, and a plausible plan of how to get there?' then Memphis would be at the top of my list."³² In their article, Slavin and Madden call the Memphis evaluation "a completely independent evaluation" (p. 59). Now you know the rest of the story.

Texas. The latest results from Texas show that a record 80% of students are passing the TAAS tests and that black students are up to 76%.³³ (Results for the Spanish TAAS are lower.) This clearly has nothing to do with SFA but is a result of teaching to the test. A whole industry has developed in Texas that produces sample tests and test related curriculum materials at much lower cost per school than SFA. The Texas results have been produced by a single-minded focus on raising test scores and by careful attention to the progress of minorities.

Not having had the time to examine the Texas study Slavin and Madden cite, I can only speculate on how the effects in Figure 3 were produced. For example, I wonder why Slavin and Madden reported data in Texas for all sites that had ever used SFA at any time during the period. I wonder how many of the schools had dropped or reduced the use of SFA in favor of a more efficient and direct test-prep approach, as I found in other states. And I wonder if these schools ended up doing better and were needed to produce the effect sizes. Did Slavin and Madden drop students (as they did in Figure I and Baltimore) who had not been in the first grade or who did not remain at a given SFA school for the time listed—say, four years?

New York City. Scores just released for 1999 show all districts in New York City making gains, including the Chancellor's District, a set of low-performing schools taken over by the chancellor. Data presented by Slavin and Madden in Figure 6 show SFA schools doing better for the period 1997-98. Aside from the fact that more money would have been spent on the SFA schools, it is important to know whether the gains merely represent the initial bump suggested by other studies of SFA. Unfortunately, no follow-up data on further student progress are presented. Slavin and Madden explain this omission as due to a change in the test. While that is true, New York City

did publish equating norms designed to link the two tests; thus the analysis could have been extended to show student progress. Unfortunately, that wasn't done. An opportunity to determine whether student success was actually occurring was lost. In addition, I do not know how to relate their impressive results in Figure 6 to the latest results that show the Chancellor's District doing less well than the city as a whole.³⁴

International. I did contact one of the international groups mentioned by Slavin and Madden. I do not want to identify which one because the researchers were early into their research and seemed sincere. At the same time, they could not tell me how the control groups were doing or whether there were differences in costs between SFA and control groups. Nor did I inquire as to whether their group was a regional SFA distributor.

New SFA/NAS Results And Political Mayhem

Memphis demonstrated once again that SFA studies misrepresent the reality of failure. There are now more and more districts and schools reporting problems with SFA and with the political process associated with it. Let's visit some of these other places.

New Jersey. Given the huge amounts of money being focused on high-poverty schools, New Jersey probably has the greatest potential to make reform work. The state has done much well, but it has made one terrible mistake. A quick review of New Jersey history is needed.

It took almost three decades of legal action and threats by the state supreme court that it would close the schools before New Jersey equalized school funding. After providing some sort of foundational support, in 1997-98 New Jersey allocated approximately \$250 million per year to bring some 440 poor urban schools up to the funding level of the wealthiest. These schools are called Abbott schools. On the positive side, the court ruling specified that the funds had to be used for a wide range of educational services, including preschool, all-day kindergarten, integrated social services, family support teams, and instructional technology. It also directed the state commissioner to develop recommendations for an educational plan for getting students to meet New Jersey standards.

The state commissioner recommended to the court that all 277 Abbott elementary schools adopt Success for All and said that his department would do everything to ensure that this happened. In effect, this would create a monopoly. When Slavin pointed out that SFA could not serve so

many schools, the commissioner added four other NAS schoolwide models as ones that schools could adopt, but he said that SFA was to be the presumptive model and that schools choosing another schoolwide reform model would have to justify the choice to the education department. The consultant to the state supreme court, Allan Odden of the University of Wisconsin, concurred with this approach.

What was the rationale for imposing this near monopoly? Careful analysis? Hardly! What is interesting is what was not done. At the time the commissioner made his decision, 14 of the Abbott schools were already using SFA. Did he investigate how the program was performing in these schools before recommending a monopoly be awarded? No. According to court transcripts, in response to direct questions, the commissioner said that he did not know if anyone on his staff had evaluated the results of SFA in those schools, he had not personally examined any results from that program, and he did not believe that it was essential to examine the performance of students in the 14 SFA schools.³⁵ Go figure!

So how did things go? In the first year of implementation, only 13 additional Abbott schools chose SFA. (The existing 14 SFA Abbott sites were not allowed to switch to another model.) Test results from the first year of implementation showed that only one of the 277 Abbott elementary schools met state requirements. Now in all fairness, this was a new test, and most of the Abbott schools had not yet implemented a schoolwide reform model of any kind, so it is too early to reach any conclusions.

How did the court and commissioner react to the initial disappointing news? It was decided that the way to improve scores was to get more Abbott schools to use SFA (even though the one Abbott school that met state requirements was not an SFA school). This past June, the new commissioner announced that any Abbott site that adopted SFA would be eligible for up to \$220,000 in additional funds. Educators in New Jersey recognized that this was, in effect, a bribe.

San Antonio. San Antonio was the second site that RAND researchers said was doing advanced implementation of the "each school adopt an NAS schoolwide reform model of its choice" approach. The report on the board meeting of the San Antonio School District for 27 March 2000 indicates that the director of research for the district concluded that "non-NAS schools [were] showing slightly higher gains.... There is no evidence that NAS designs have had a measurable value-added impact on TAAS scores." Of the 25 SFA schools,³⁶ the scores of 11 went

down, while 10 went up, and four remained unchanged. There was no overall effect on school performance.

Once again we have the case of a high profile implementation of a schoolwide reform model by a district that allows its research office to conduct reasonable and independent studies and comes to the conclusion that SFA and other NAS models in general are not doing as well as other alternatives.

Dade and Putnam Counties, Florida. Dade County just released its newest study of SFA, which confirmed the findings of its earlier study: "The gains in English language proficiency for students in schools implementing the SFA program were found to be generally inferior to those of other schools in the District.... The academic performance of the students attending schools which implemented the SFA program was no different from that of other schools in the District."³⁷

These results are confirmed by reports from Putnam County. According to information gleaned from Web sites, six schools indicated that they use SFA. Between 1996 and 1998, the scores on the Florida state test went down in five of these schools and up in just one.

Baltimore County Public Schools. Adjacent to the oft-discussed Baltimore City Public Schools is the even larger Baltimore County School District (BCPS), in which one-third of the 105 elementary schools are high-poverty. In 1996, BCPS had the SFA reform model in place in 21 schools. Concerned about the poor results, in 1996 the district developed its own reading intervention that combined in-house materials with a commercial product. However, the SFA schools were allowed to retain SFA. The number of schools that subsequently chose to stay with SFA dropped to 11, and these schools are limiting the use of SFA to a few grade levels and have had to modify the program to meet their needs.

According to a district curriculum specialist, 1998-99 data show that the SFA schools remained in the bottom one-fifth of schools on the reading performance of students in grades 1-3. The district recently identified its low-performing/high-minority schools. Of 14 such sites identified, four were SFA schools. All decided to switch to the district curriculum, confessing that they had cut back on their use of SFA because of dissatisfaction. The reaction to SFA in this district is very different from the rosy picture presented by Slavin and Madden. Moreover, it illustrates SFA schools cutting back on implementation of the model because of its limited effects. In addition, of the

four schools that had dropped SFA at least a year earlier, three made large gains this year.

State of Washington. Recent scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading test for grade 3 in Washington reveal that, for 13 schools with CSRD grants that are using SFA, the percentage of students in the lowest quartile of ITBS actually increased 1% between 1999 and 2000. Eight of these 13 schools either made no improvement or did worse, while five improved. No success for students here. On the fourth grade Washington state tests, there were data for 12 SFA schools with CSRD grants. The percentage of students meeting state standards increased a negligible .79%. Of these 12 schools, scores for six schools went up, one stayed even, and five declined. What is interesting in these data is that two different tests essentially paint the same picture: SFA is a wash in Washington! There is no overall increase in success, even with the extra funding and planning requirements that go along with CSRD grants. However, what is troubling is the finding that, despite the promise that schoolwide reform models would raise the lowest students, the number in the lowest quartile actually increased.

Beyond Data: A Grassroots Look at SFA

Data analysis and methodology aside, what is really happening from the point of view of teachers? Clearly, many feel that SFA is making them better teachers. This point of view has been voiced in many newspaper articles that have appeared around the country. However, there is another side.

The most recent media stories note with surprise that there is an anti-SFA Web site. In the course of my investigation, I began to communicate with the two founders of this Web site (www.alt-sfa.com), both of whom have taught at SFA schools. Fred Roemer is still a fifth-grade teacher in a Florida SFA school, and Georgia Hedrick is a former nun who taught in a Nevada school district. They estimate that the site has received more than a million hits in the past year, suggesting that there is a great deal of pent-up grassroots frustration with SFA.

Once I established that both were teachers who believed in a balanced and comprehensive approach to teaching, worked hard at their craft, and did not have some ideological ax to grind, I began to wonder why they use their own money and spend every spare moment maintaining the Web site.

Roemer has been teaching at his current school for 12 years. Previously, he says he respected Slavin's work and had read several of his books. Thus he was willing to give

SFA a try, even though he had misgivings. Roemer's school had a low rating on the state assessment when it adopted the program. Shortly after the school adopted SFA, Roemer felt that the program was destroying his students' interest in reading. After the first year of the program, his school's rating fell. Roemer hopes that his school will vote out SFA next year.

He runs the alt-SFA Web site because he believes that SFA is hurting students all over the country and that no one is able to get that message out. "Most days," he says, "I feel like David with a frayed slingshot"—a reference to the site's outdated and unreliable equipment. This past summer, he worked three jobs to keep the Web site up.

Georgia Hedrick just retired from teaching after 37 years of service. She retired earlier than planned because of SFA. Data she collected from her district office reports reveal that last year scores in four of the five SFA schools in her district went down; they went up slightly in one. Hedrick reports that, in the school that went up, nine people are transferring out, including four teachers, a secretary, a custodian, a tutor with a teaching credential, a clinical aide, and a nurse. Four more teachers are on the transfer list awaiting appropriate openings. Care to predict this school's scores for next year?

Why is Hedrick so upset with SFA? In her own words from an e-mail she sent to me:

All I ever wanted to do was teach, that's all. And it is getting harder and harder every year, because I have to fight just to be able to teach as I know how. This year was the greatest insult of all: I was not only told how to teach, but precisely what to say while I teach, and how long to take while saying each thing that I must say.... SFA is much like a microwaved meal . . . it is packaged, it is precise . . . and it is never filling. It simply doesn't reach everywhere the child needs to be reached. That sort of reaching takes time, sensitivity, awareness of differences, and a stockpile of strategies to explore to reach that child. SFA can't do that; it is prescriptive and boring.

The bottom line is that your school cannot have both SFA and teachers like Roemer and Hedrick.

Why are schoolwide reform models performing so poorly? There are three strikes against them.

The Problem with Schoolwide Reform Models

Despite the glowing portrayal of how SFA and the other NAS schoolwide reform models are progressing, new data coming in from other lighthouse reform experiments and from other schools and districts are consistently showing no effects. This suggests that the poor results in Baltimore and Dade County—already documented by "critics"—were not flukes.

Why are schoolwide reform models performing so poorly? There are three strikes against them. The first strike is that, by trying to be everything, they end up providing the best of nothing. SFA is not really a schoolwide model; it is a reading program. Wings is a math program. Are they the best ones available? If my theory is correct that helping students after grade 3 requires different approaches for part of the day than those used in the early grades, then it is unlikely that any one program will provide the best for both age groups.

The second strike is that most of the schoolwide reform models are processes for decision making without curriculum. They end up being very inefficient, and decisions that traditionally were made by committees over several months now take years, with no evidence that better decisions are made.

The third strike is that researchers have estimated that it takes three to 10 years to produce results.³⁸ That means that, on average, by the time a schoolwide restructuring model produces results at the elementary level, all the students will have left. Ultimate success unrealistically requires that all the key pieces remain in place. As such, the implementation assumptions of schoolwide models are simply not viable on a large scale in the real world.

The problems with each individual NAS model are compounded, especially in large districts, by the approach that allows every school to "adopt the NAS model of its choice." You end up with each school having a different approach and training that has to be arranged and paid for. This ends up being very expensive and incoherent for students and teachers who move between schools. And the more mobility in a district, the less sense this approach makes.

SFA has some special problems, particularly its inability to build upon early gains. Why does this happen? Clearly, there are some teachers who benefit from SFA's very structured approach. But just as certainly, teachers who prefer to make their own diagnoses and judgments while teaching—and are good at doing so—feel that SFA limits their ability to perform. If they opt to leave SFA schools in

disproportionate numbers, their leaving will limit the overall benefits of SFA.

Those few SFA schools that were making large gains were invariably using other literacy programs as well. This points to two problems. SFA is supposed to be a schoolwide literacy model. If schools have to use other literacy programs in addition to SFA to produce large gains, then SFA is not what it is advertised to be. The second problem is that Slavin and Madden have no evidence that, in such situations, it is not the supplementary literacy program in combination with reduced class size that produces the gains they attribute to SFA.

What Should Practitioners Do?

The bottom line for practitioners is that, if you want your school to improve substantially, SFA by itself will not do the job. You'll have to add lots of other literacy-enhancing things, and then it is quite possible that the other things are what produce the gains. So it seems reasonable to try to make the other things—e.g., better teachers, focus on literacy, curriculum alignment, reduced class size—work first.

SFA does incorporate some excellent principles of instruction. These include strategic class-size reduction, starting with a structured approach to reading, increasing reading time, some individualized tutoring, and some use of homogeneous grouping. These are generally good ideas that all schools should consider, regardless of the specific curriculum they are using. The lesson of SFA is that schools should view principles of organizing instruction and the actual curriculum they adopt as separate processes. Once the principles of organizing instruction have been agreed upon, then a school or district should identify the best content curriculum and staff development. Most schools and districts should adopt SFA or Roots & Wings only if they feel that it has the best reading or math curriculum available—not because it is a research-based, schoolwide reform model. The same goes for all the other schoolwide reform models.

While the attention and money were being focused on comprehensive school reform and the strategy whereby each school adopts a chosen NAS schoolwide reform model, a less glamorous reform approach has quietly been gaining ground. In this approach, a district or region identifies a few key priorities—e.g., the development of literacy—and brings to bear in a coordinated fashion the best curriculum and training it can find, while leveraging all sources of funding to implement these techniques effectively. (Schools remain free to determine their

approach in other areas.) To make this focused approach work, however, you need the best of curriculum and staff development.

The effectiveness of this traditional sounding approach was first documented by researchers in District 2 in New York City.³⁹ It is also being used in Sacramento, California, and in Baltimore County. The superiority of the more focused approach appears to hold true even in Baltimore City—birthplace of SFA.

Despite all the disappointments and problems in Baltimore, there was a recent story of a success there.⁴⁰ According to a story in the *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore had been piloting an approach that is similar to that being used in Sacramento: a new reading series consistently used with appropriate staff development and class-size reduction. The story quotes a school board member, Sam Stringfield, as saying: "These gains are the kind that professional educators hope to see once in a lifetime." According to this board member, the gains were some of the largest he had seen in his 25 years of working with urban school systems. This view was seconded by the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools.

Who is this board member? Alert readers will recognize him as the Johns Hopkins researcher who was the lead author for the analysis section of the Special Strategies study discussed above, which concluded that schoolwide reform models produce the best results. I applaud Baltimore's success, Stringfield's civic service, and his accomplishments as a researcher. However, this success was the result of Baltimore's using an approach that is not a schoolwide reform model. This result also supports the contention that good curricular expertise within a district or region and focused and coordinated curricular leadership will outperform SFA—or any other existing schoolwide model.

And now we have come full circle. Slavin and Madden quote a conclusion from a study, done by a researcher from the Johns Hopkins center, who later discovers a better—once-in-a-lifetime—way of reforming schools.

The Effect of Schoolwide Models on Title I Students

It is clear that SFA does not generally raise overall school performance. But what is happening to the Title I students in these schools? Are the Title I students benefiting more than they did previously? This is an important question, since most of the cost of schoolwide reform models is being paid for with Title I funds.

The answer is that we really do not know what is happening to the Title I students. The results from ED's Special Strategies study did not show the lowest students making substantially more progress than previously. The results from the state of Washington show the numbers for the lowest quartile of students in CSRD schools using SFA increasing slightly. Clearly, when a school with very high levels of poverty among its students increases its scores, then the Title I students' scores are also increasing. However, we have no reliable evidence at this point that in the high- to mid-poverty schools using schoolwide reform models the Title I students are making substantial progress. Indeed, it is possible that, if the extra funds used for the schoolwide program had been spent for conventional improvement strategies, the low-income students would be doing even better. To this point, I see no credible, independent evidence that SFA or any of the schoolwide reform models is raising the performance of the lowest students in a school, which is the goal of Title I. We know less about the progress of Title I students now than at any point in recent history.

Unfortunately, Congress is considering further dropping the cutoff for using Title I funds for schoolwide models—this time making schools with only 40% low-income students eligible. Will this minority receive needed services? While such liberalization of targeting requirements over the last 10 to 12 years has benefited the vendors of schoolwide models, progress in reducing the learning gap has stalled, and there is some evidence of regression.

I have prepared more detailed recommendations on the future of Title I for the Harvard Civil Rights Project, and I will make them available to readers via e-mail.⁴¹ Suffice it to say here that I hope Congress will not consider further liberalizing the use of schoolwide models until further evidence is available on whether they substantially raise the performance of Title I students in all but the highest-poverty schools.

How Could This Have Happened?

How could a program and an approach that lack solid, independent evidence of success come to such prominence? First, the profession did not demand independent corroborating evidence. It also ignored the negative conclusions reached by the research departments of the school systems in Baltimore City and Dade County. These failures cost the profession 10 years of misdirected policy, lost opportunity for helping students, billions of wasted dollars, and a distortion of the knowledge generation process.

The second problem is that key officials and organizations did not exercise proper diligence in choosing programs. In New Jersey, the department of education sought to impose a program without first analyzing existing results within the state. This illustrates how the presumption that solid scientific evidence supported SFA actually provided cover for laziness and incompetence among public officials. The decision of the New Jersey commissioner (who is no longer in office) is just one example of a situation in which an administrator under pressure to produce quick results turned in desperation to a savior—in this case, SFA.

Nor has ED exercised proper diligence. My first article questioning the validity of the research behind SFA appeared in a leading research journal in 1998. The following year, Slavin's research center was re-funded by ED for \$36.5 million, without competition. No one in ED investigated whether there really was a problem. Indeed, this lack of diligence appears to be part of a more general problem. According to a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, ED has the highest proportion of political appointees of any federal agency, and that ratio is increasing.⁴²

A third problem is how a few people behind the scenes influenced the selection of programs deemed to be validated in the Obey-Porter CSRD legislation, which listed 17 supposedly validated and mostly schoolwide programs. These were then grandfathered into the Northwest Regional Education Lab's database of research-validated programs without any formal review. This initial head start created a de facto monopoly for these programs for several years—both for CSRD funds and for Title I funds in general. With its large base of funding, SFA was best able to take advantage of the opportunity. Steven Urdegar, the Dade County researcher who was one of the whistle blowers, was correct when he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*:

Success for All's claims of universal effectiveness are not supported by the research, and to use Congress, through the Obey-Porter Reading Excellence Act, to force schools to adopt only those programs which Mr. Slavin deems acceptable is unethical and irresponsible.⁴³

Finally, Slavin and Madden took advantage of two real problems that had caused a vacuum. The first was the stalling of real progress on reducing the learning gap. They promised that they knew how to produce success. The second problem was a major flaw in the progressive education movement (of which I am a member), which

historically has failed to recognize that *you cannot impose grandiose and idealistic conceptions of teaching, learning, and freedom onto organizations that cannot do basic, simple things well*. SFA was responsive to a system that was stressed by the combination of 1) teachers' discomfort with the largely unstructured teaching approaches in vogue, 2) a stripping away of coordinated curriculum expertise and authority (at the district level) in the name of site-based management, and 3) an infrastructure for training teachers and administrators that focused more on philosophical advocacy than on the transmission of skills.

Now What?

The big issue for the profession is not that SFA doesn't produce success. Of far greater concern is the dominating influence it exercises over current policy and practice because of the belief that SFA is highly successful. We need to wipe the slate clean and undo many of the steps we have taken in the past decade. We need to restart the conversation on how to do reform.

Right away, teachers and administrators should stop feeling embarrassed or ashamed if they have not been able to make SFA produce success in their schools. In addition, dissatisfied teachers and administrators need to come out of the closet and speak up. Share your experience and data with others on the ALT-SFA Web site and with your legislative representatives. Places such as New Jersey⁴⁴ and Memphis need to reverse course. In addition, we need to break up the R&D funding monopoly held by schoolwide models. We have to rebuild a democratizing infrastructure of smaller grants for R&D, for dissemination, and for research in general on students placed at risk.

We can also learn from this experience that, when everyone in the profession agrees on a course of action, it is probably wrong. It is still too easy to seduce almost everyone in education into once again pursuing a fad. The profession—construed broadly to include teacher unions, Congress, state and local officials, the judiciary, and the research community—was led to believe in the superiority of SFA and acted accordingly. The result is that at-risk students are even more at risk today.

Any new conversation on how to do reform right has to focus on improving the quality of teachers generally and equalizing the distribution of good teachers between low- and high-income students.⁴⁵ Indeed, providing access to high-quality teachers is one of the most important civil rights issues of this decade. It makes no sense to equalize funding if that does not result in an increase in high-quality

teachers in low-income schools. States must also seek to reduce student mobility by modifying welfare and public housing policies, and the profession needs to work to provide more sophisticated interventions that are capable of enhancing cognitive functioning and accelerating learning after the third grade. Reforms that do not make substantive progress in these areas are merely Band-Aids. (More extensive ideas on school reform for the nation and New Jersey, along with advice to practitioners on research validated reforms, can be found on my Web site, www.HOTS.org.)

Conclusion: There Never Was Success

Slavin and Madden's forthcoming book is titled: *One Million Children: Success for All*. But the reality is that there never was scientific evidence of the success of SFA. The studies supporting SFA and other NAS schoolwide models are anything but sound. On close examination, the apparent successes in Baltimore and Memphis become stories of failure. And many additional reports of such failure are now surfacing. The striking thing is that the evidence of a major problem with the claims made for SFA was there all along, begging to be tapped, but almost no one looked. It is also striking how little real information there is about student success amid the welter of SFA data. Information about all those things that indicate true educational success is virtually absent. How are students progressing after the third grade? Are they graduating, dropping out, or going on to college? The RAND studies for NAS are not yet even looking at such matters.

There is now strong evidence that the research behind SFA never used valid methodology or appropriate reporting of results. While everyone makes methodological mistakes, the problem is that Slavin and Madden have never responded as researchers when mistakes were pointed out. Instead of full disclosure, they impugn the motives of the critics and launch bizarre defenses that they have stuck to over and over again despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. I admire their tenacity, but what they have engaged in is clearly not science but vendor spin and spin control. The numbers presented by Slavin and Madden generally misdirect attention from reality or tell only part of a story. Above all, the inescapable conclusion remains that research done by them and their affiliates (at least in this country) finds success, while school districts and independent researchers have reported conclusions that have been universally negative.

All the advocacy by Slavin and Madden is simply that—advocacy, not science. The work is not that of researchers but of marketers with a lot at stake. They provide no new insight into the nature of learning or testing, nor do they

even recognize alternative perspectives on reform and student progress. Rather than ushering in a "revolution," SFA is another in a long line of programs that have failed to accelerate student learning after the third grade. In terms of results, it is the same old, same old—with lots of bucks and political influence behind it.

We failed as a profession in our efforts to make use of the best research-based programs because no one was asking the right questions. The people at the top wanted strongly to believe that there was an easily replicable and effective intervention that would produce high levels of success. But they had no idea of the psychic toll it was exacting on teachers or the negative effect it was having on the creativity of students. And judging from the reaction that I got when I started down this path three years ago, no one wanted to know. We wanted saviors, and we needed to believe in them.

How much sense does all this reform effort, with all its sophisticated philosophical underpinnings and brave rhetoric, make when held up against the insight of 12 year-old Silas Moutrie, a California student?

You can't take books home because we don't have enough....Instead, we have to come to class to do the same thing we could have done at home. We're probably behind other schools because they get homework, and they get to take their books home.⁴⁶

His words point clearly to the many basic and necessary things for substantive change that are not in place. We are overlooking these obvious needs and problems in our haste to be postmodernistic, visionary, and in Slavin and Madden's words, "revolutionary." Silas is smart enough to know that, with all the sophisticated reform initiatives of the last decade and all the money spent on expensive programs, he still must function on a very unlevel playing field. He also reflects the possibility that Title I funds designed to help him are helping others instead.

The story I have told is not a pretty one. The basic norms of our profession have been compromised, perhaps even corrupted. Please keep in mind that Slavin and Madden have not disputed a single fact that I and other critics have brought forth. It is time for leaders in our profession to step forth and start corrective action.

However, I want to end by emphasizing the positives. Society is increasingly aware that education is the key to economic, social, and cultural progress and is willing to increase funding for education. In addition, many brave

practitioners at the grassroots level used their instincts for helping students to buck the trend and start moving in a different direction when they realized that the current fad was not working. Whatever mistakes our profession made were made out of a love for children and a desire to do better by them.

It is now time to move forward—to support a diversity of approaches to success, to stop demeaning traditional approaches to reform, to make sure that at risk low-income students get access to high-quality instruction and the special help they need. There is a tremendous amount of commitment, expertise, and good will in our profession. The reforms we need to make will not be easy or glamorous and will require new forms of interaction among existing interest groups. But if we succeed, we can resume the progress we have made in reducing the learning gap since the institution of Title I 35 years ago. By reopening competition and true experimentation between models and approaches and re-democratizing the funding and program-validation processes, we can give voice to a wider variety of high-potential ideas and practices. The bottom line is that there is huge untapped potential in low-income students—and the vast majority wants to be successful and do respond to high-quality education. We can produce much higher levels of real success.

1. The original debate between Robert Slavin and me on how to evaluate program effectiveness and whether research supports the use of Success for All took place in the following publications: Stanley Pogrow, "What Is an Exemplary Program, and Why Should Anyone Care? A Reaction to Slavin and Klein," *Educational Researcher*, October 1998, pp. 22-29; Robert E. Slavin, "Rejoinder: Yes, Control Groups Are Essential in Program Evaluation: A Response to Pogrow," *Educational Researcher*, April 1999, pp. 36-38; and Stanley Pogrow, "Rejoinder: Consistent Large Gains and High Levels of Achievement Are the Best Measures of Program Quality: Pogrow Responds to Slavin," *Educational Researcher*, November 1999, pp. 24-26, 31.

2. There was also another debate about SFA in fall 1999. Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, "The Diogenes Factor," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 127-28; Bruce R. Joyce, "The Great Literacy Problem and Success for All," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 129-31 and Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, "Educators Should Require Evidence," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1999, pp. 132-35.

3. Robert E. Slavin, "IBM's Writing to Read: Is It Right for Reading?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1990, pp. 214-16; and Olatokunbo S. Fashola and Robert E. Slavin, "Schoolwide Reform Models: What Works?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1998, pp. 370-79.
4. William Bulkeley, "Now Johnny Can Read if Teacher Just Keeps Doing What He's Told," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 July 1999, pp. A-1, A-9.
5. Lana Smith, Steven Ross, and Jason Casey, "Multi-Site Comparison of Success for All on Reading Achievement," Unpublished manuscript, University of Memphis, undated.
6. The common names are Robert Slavin, Nancy Madden, Rebecca Herman, Sam Stringfield, and Steven Ross.
7. Sam Stringfield et al., *Urban and Suburban/Rural Strategies for Educationally Disadvantaged Students: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1997).
8. Rebecca Herman et al., *An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Research, 1999).
9. The discussion of SFA in the summary section of this report made no mention of the concerns raised by a number of researchers about the data for the past year, the extent of the supposed gains, or the grade levels at which the gains occurred. Nor was there any concern for what was going on in the control schools or whether they were placed at a disadvantage.
10. Thomas D. Cook et al., "Comer's School Development Program in Prince George's County, Maryland: A Theory-Based Evaluation," *American Educational Research Journal*, Fall 1999, pp. 543-97. A defense of the program was also included in the same issue: James P. Comer and Norris M. Haynes, "The Dynamics of School Change: Response to the Article 'Comer's School Development Program in Prince George's County, Maryland: A Theory Based Evaluation'," pp. 599-607.
11. Elizabeth M. Jones, Gary D. Gottfredson, and Denise C. Gottfredson, "Success for Some: An Evaluation of the Success for All Program," *Evaluation Review*, vol. 21, 1997, pp. 643-70.
12. One independent evaluation is Richard L. Venezky, "An Alternative Perspective on Success for All," in Kenneth Wong, ed., *Advances in Educational Policy Vol. 4* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, forthcoming). The two independent unpublished studies are Stephen Ruffini et al., "Assessment of Success for All," Baltimore City Public Schools, 1992; and Steven Urdegar, "Evaluation of the Success for All Program, 1997-98," Miami Public Schools, 1998.
13. Obviously, at some point a definition of success should include graduation from middle school and high school and enrollment in college.
14. Robert E. Slavin et al., "Success for All: First Year Outcomes of a Comprehensive Plan for Reforming Urban Education," *American Educational Research Journal*, Summer 1990, pp. 255-78.
15. Slavin, "Rejoinder: Yes, Control Groups Are Essential in Program Evaluation."
16. Council of the Great City Schools, www.cgcs.org.
17. It makes no sense to count only those students who were in school for all five years unless Slavin and Madden believe that it takes five years to produce results and advertise the fact that SFA is only for students who attend for five years.
18. Robert E. Slavin, "Mastery Learning Reconsidered," *Review of Educational Research*, Summer 1987, 175-213.
19. Smith, Ross, and Casey, op. cit.
20. Steven Ross et al., "Two- and Three-Year Achievement Results from the Memphis Restructuring Initiative," Unpublished paper, University of Memphis, 2000.
21. Keller's six concerns about inadequate information for assessing whether possible methodological anomalies produced or inflated the effect sizes or statistical significance in favor of SFA include:
 - Matching.* There was not enough information to tell if the researchers' matching techniques balanced the problem of potentially different effects from regression to the mean, which could lead to overstated effect sizes if regression to the mean occurred and was greater in the experimental groups than in the control groups.
 - Data cleaning of outliers.* The articles lack evidence about the extent of a "cleaning of outliers" and about whether the cleaning of outliers was justified with hard evidence that such things as transcription errors were the reasons for the cleaning. Outlier removal has the potential to inflate effect sizes.

Differential cleaning of outliers. The lack of detail on the cleaning of outliers leads to a condition in which it cannot be determined if there were any differences across groups in the handling of outliers. Differential cleaning of outliers could distort the original matching and might artificially inflate effect sizes.

Estimation of uncertainty. The reported effect sizes lack suitable measures of uncertainty, such as confidence intervals. When the stakes are low, this is not much of a problem. But in the high-stakes world of public education, there should be estimates for the upper and lower bounds of the reported effect sizes.

Impact of lower variation within control groups. Significant values and somewhat large effect sizes were frequently associated with smaller standard deviations (sometimes substantially smaller) in the control group. The choice of formula for the effect size may be capitalizing on the magnitude and frequency of lower variation within the control groups and may thereby be inflating the overall effect sizes when compared with a formula that accounts for the variation in both groups.

Power analysis. Power analysis is important for two reasons: it informs readers of the magnitude of a difference that researchers claim to be substantive, and it lends greater interpretability to the p values. Although power concerns alone do not influence effect sizes, they do influence their statistical significance and thus their interpretation as differing from zero.

22. Judy Kronholz, "Baltimore Public School Struggles to Improve Its Scores," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 2000, p. A-16.

23. Susan Bodilly et al., *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase: Prospects for Bringing Designs to Multiple Schools* (Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation, 1998).

24. Ross et al., op. cit.

25. One of the other researchers was kind enough to give me a copy of the unpublished study at the University of Memphis.

26. A. Abramson, "2000 Public School Report Card," Tennessee Institute for Public Policy, 2000.

27. The count of elementary schools statewide may be off a bit. The state publishes the lowest 100 schools, and from that list only those that appeared to be elementary schools were counted. A few may have been missed.

28. It was unclear whether a few Memphis schools were elementary or secondary.

29. Mickie Anderson, "Reform Schools Getting Results: Models Adopted Earliest Bear Most Fruit in Study," Memphis Commercial Appeal, 5 June 2000, p. A-1.

30. Abramson, p. 2 of the section on schools.

31. TVASS for grade 6 was an average 137.39, 40% above average, as compared to an average TVASS for grades 3-5 of 93, below the state average.

32. *Quality Counts '98* (Bethesda, Md.: Editorial Projects in Education, January 1998), p. 245.

33. Terrence Stutz, "Passing Rate on TAAS Hits 80% for First Time," Dallas Morning News, 18 May 2000, p. 34. Abby Goodnough, "Reading Scores Rise Significantly: Still, Only 41% Meet Standards," New York Times, 8 June 2000.

35. Transcript of the proceedings before the Honorable Michael King, Supreme Court of New Jersey, M-622, September Term 1997, pp. 118- 19.

36. A middle school that was using SFA with some of its students was excluded from my analysis so that only elementary schools were included.

37. Steven Urdegar, *Evaluation of the Success for All Program: 1998-1999* (Miami: Office of Evaluation and Research, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2000), pp. 26-27.

38. Ross et al., op cit.

39. Richard Elmore and Deanna Burney, "Continuous Improvement in Community District #2, New York City." Unpublished paper prepared for Learning Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, 1998.

40. Liz Bowie, "City Pupil's Test Scores Surge." Baltimore Sun, 17 May 2000, p. A- I.

41. Stanley Pogrow, "Overcoming the Cognitive Wall: Accelerating the Learning of Title I Students After the Third Grade," in Gary Orfield, ed., *Hard Work for Good Schools: Facts Not Fads in Title I Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, forthcoming).

42. Judy Pasternak, "Department a Haven for Clinton Loyalists," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 October 1999, Home Edition, p. A-1.

43. Steven Urdegar, "Success for all Is Unethical," letter to the editor, *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1999, p. A-25.

44. New Jersey has the resources to become a national model of how to do things right. The top priority must be to reverse the mandate for selecting schoolwide models and pushing SFA. Instead, the schools should be required to submit plans of validated improvement practices (e.g., strategic class size reduction), show how their materials present a balanced pedagogical approach, and provide a detailed analysis of how the combination of materials they are using align with the state test. The state should also impanel a task force to come up with legislative and legal strategies to equalize the quality of teachers, to reduce student mobility via changes in welfare and public housing policies, and to develop a sense of understanding. Finally, the principal of the one Abbott school that met state requirements should be appointed commissioner of education.

45. For example, San Francisco is providing subsidized housing for teachers so that they can afford to live in that beautiful city.

46. Brent Staples, "The 'Mississippification' of California Schools," *New York Times*, 23 June 2000. p. A-24.

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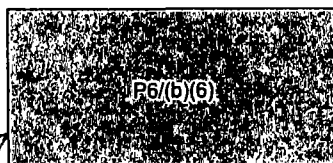
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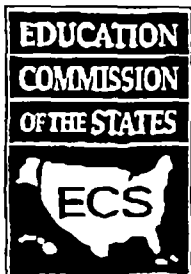
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(St. Marys interfaith
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homeless) } Transitional learning
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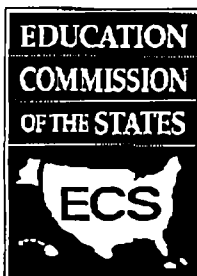
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- more can really tell you how many there are*
- some states require registration some don't*
- Distance learning "pay tuition and member of school" yet tuition credit*
- depend on vouchers are written* *Cleveland, Milwaukee*
- California (note this fall) just hand you a check*



Clearinghouse Notes

CHOICE

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CHOICE OF SCHOOLS: STATE ACTIONS

Parental choice of schools is one of today's most discussed public education issues. "Choice" as a descriptor takes on several meanings. Narrow use of the word (e.g., assuming that choice equals only open enrollment or vouchers) often confuses the debate. In this document, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) uses "choice" as a broad descriptor covering many different ideas, including:

Charter schools:

- Charter schools are semi-autonomous public schools, founded by educators, parents, community groups or private organizations that operate under a written contract with a state, district or other entity. This contract, or charter, details how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve, and how success will be measured. Many charter schools enjoy freedom from rules and regulations affecting other public schools, as long as they continue to meet terms of their charters. Charter schools can be closed for failing to satisfy these terms.

Open enrollment:

- "Interdistrict" open enrollment programs allow choice of public schools across and within district boundaries.
- "Intradistrict" open enrollment programs allow choice of public schools within district boundaries.
- "Mandatory" open enrollment programs require districts within a state to participate in the program, given that space is available in the district.
- "Voluntary" open enrollment programs allow districts to choose whether to participate, given that space is available in the district.

Publicly funded vouchers:

- A publicly funded voucher is a payment the government makes to a parent, or an institution on a parent's behalf, to be used for a child's education expenses.

Tax credits:

- A tax credit provides direct reductions to an individual's tax liability. For example, Jack owes \$1,000 in income taxes. He is eligible, however, for a given state's \$500 tax credit. He subtracts the \$500 tax credit from the \$1,000 tax liability, and now owes \$500 in income taxes.

Tax deductions:

- A tax deduction is a reduction in taxable income made prior to the calculation of tax liability. For instance, Jill has a taxable income of \$100,000. She, however, is eligible for a given state's \$1,500 tax deduction. She subtracts the \$1,500 from her income of \$100,000, and now has \$98,500 in taxable income.

Postsecondary enrollment:

- Postsecondary enrollment programs allow secondary school students to enroll in postsecondary courses and apply course credit at the secondary school, a postsecondary institution or both.
- "Comprehensive" postsecondary enrollment programs allow students to enroll in postsecondary courses at minimal or no cost, permit course credit to be applied at both the high school and postsecondary institutions and contain few restrictions on eligible courses for student enrollment.
- "Limited" postsecondary enrollment programs restrict which students can participate, require students to pay tuition costs of postsecondary classes, restrict where course credit may be applied and/or contain stringent criteria on eligible courses for student enrollment.

State	Charter School Law ¹	Number of Charter Schools ²	Open Enrollment Law ³	Publicly Funded Voucher Law ⁴	Tax Credit/Tax Deduction Law ⁵	Postsecondary Enrollment Options Law ⁶
Alabama	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alaska	X	18	-	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Arizona	X	348	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	\$500 and \$200 (income tax credits) ⁷	X (Limited)
Arkansas	X	0	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Limited)
California	X	234	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Limited)
Colorado	X	68	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)			X (Comprehensive)
Connecticut	X	17	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory) ⁸	-	-	-
Delaware	X	5	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	-
District of Columbia	X	28	-	-	-	-
Florida	X	112	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	X ⁹	-	X (Comprehensive)
Georgia	X	32	-	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Hawaii	X	2	-	-	-	-
Idaho	X	8	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Illinois	X	19	-	-	X ¹⁰	-
Indiana	-	-	X (Intradistrict/Mandatory ¹¹ and Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Limited)
Iowa	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	\$250 (income tax credit)	X (Limited)
Kansas	X	15	-	-	-	X (Limited)
Kentucky	-	-	-	-	-	-
Louisiana	X	17	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Limited)
Maine	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	X ¹²	-	X (Comprehensive)
Maryland	-	-	-	-	-	-
Massachusetts	X	39	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Michigan	X	175	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Minnesota	X	57	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	\$1,000 - \$2,000 (income tax credits) ¹³ \$1,625 - \$2,500 (income tax deductions) ¹⁴	X (Comprehensive)
Mississippi	X	1	-	-	-	X (Limited)
Missouri	X	14	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Montana	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nebraska	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	-
Nevada	X	5	-	-	-	X (Limited)
New Hampshire	X	0	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	-
New Jersey	X	52	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
New Mexico	X	3	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	-
New York	X	3	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	-
North Carolina	X	83	-	-	-	-

State	Charter School Law ¹	Number of Charter Schools ²	Open Enrollment Law ³	Publicly Funded Voucher Law ⁴	Tax Credit/Tax Deduction Law ⁵	Postsecondary Enrollment Options Law ⁶
North Dakota	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Limited)
Ohio	X	48	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	X ¹⁵	-	X (Comprehensive)
Oklahoma	X	0	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Limited)
Oregon	X	1	-	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Pennsylvania	X	45	-	-	-	
Puerto Rico	X	NA ¹⁶	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	\$250 and \$500 (income tax credits) ¹⁷	X (Limited)
Rhode Island	X	2	-	-	-	-
South Carolina	X	10	-	-	-	-
South Dakota	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Limited)
Tennessee	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Limited)
Texas	X	168	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	-
Utah	X	8	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
Vermont	-	-	-	X ¹⁸	-	-
Virginia	X	0	-	-	-	-
Washington	-	-	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)
West Virginia	-	-	X (Intradistrict/Mandatory)	-	-	-
Wisconsin	X	45	X (Interdistrict/Mandatory)	X ¹⁹	-	X (Comprehensive)
Wyoming	X	0	X (Interdistrict/Voluntary)	-	-	X (Comprehensive)

NOTES

- 1 States with charter school laws as of March 2000.
- 2 Number of charter schools in operation or approved to open in each state as of August 1999. The total number is 1,682. [Source: The Center For Education Reform at www.edreform.com]
- 3 Most states have enacted laws that accommodate the attendance needs of students. In this *Clearinghouse Note*, however, we have only included those states with laws as of March 2000 that encourage and support enrollment in public schools of choice.
- 4 States with publicly funded voucher laws as of March 2000.
- 5 States that provide for income tax credits and/or income tax deductions for various education-related expenses as of March 2000.
- 6 States that allow secondary school students to enroll in postsecondary courses and apply course credit at the secondary school, a postsecondary institution or both as of March 2000.
- 7 Arizona law allows residents to claim an income tax credit of \$500 for their donations to charitable organizations providing scholarships to children to attend private or religious school. The law also allows residents to claim an income tax credit for up to \$200 of activity fees at Arizona public schools. Arizona's tax credit law was challenged in court. In January 1999, the Arizona Supreme Court ruled that the law does not violate state and federal constitutional prohibitions against government aid to religion. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In October 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Arizona Supreme Court's ruling that the program is constitutional to stand.
- 8 In the 1998-1999 school year, Connecticut began phasing in an open enrollment program. By the 2001-2002 school year, the program shall be in operation in every priority school district in the state, as well as in those school districts in the area of a priority school district as determined by the regional educational service center.

- 9 In 1999, Florida lawmakers passed the first statewide voucher program in the nation. Under the enacted legislation, each public school will receive a grade from A to F. Top-performing and improving schools will receive additional state funding. In F-graded schools, students will be able to move to a higher-scoring public school or attend a private or parochial school with an opportunity scholarship worth at least \$4,000. At first, the opportunity scholarships will be limited to students in no more than four schools. It is projected, however, that these scholarships may be extended to students in up to 170 public schools within the next two years. The private and parochial schools that accept these students will not be able to collect additional tuition and will be barred from requiring them to participate in religious instruction, prayer or worship. Florida's voucher program is being challenged in court.
- 10 In 1999, Illinois lawmakers enacted legislation granting tax credits to parents of children in public, private or parochial schools. Under the law, parents may reduce their state income tax bill by 25% of whatever they spend for their children's tuition, books and lab fees. In order to be eligible for the tax credit, parents must spend at least \$250, and the tax credit may not exceed \$500 per family. A court challenge is likely to occur.
- 11 Indiana law requires the Indianapolis school district to offer a parental choice program that allows parents the opportunity to choose the school within the school district that the parents' child will attend.
- 12 If no public school exists to serve secondary school students, Maine allows districts to send students to private schools and pay their tuition. In Maine, a U.S. District Court judge, the Supreme Judicial Court of Maine and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit, in two different cases, ruled that the state's exclusion of parochial schools from the program is constitutional. The U.S. District Court judge issued his ruling in August 1998. The Maine Supreme Judicial Court issued its ruling in April 1999, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit upheld this ruling in May 1999. The U.S. Supreme Court, in October 1999, declined to review both cases, thus allowing the lower courts' rulings to stand.
- 13 Minnesota law permits a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,000 per student or \$2,000 per family for families with incomes under \$33,500. The maximum credit per child is reduced by \$1.00 for each \$4.00 of household income over \$33,500, and the maximum credit per family is reduced by \$2.00 for each \$4.00 of household income over \$33,500, but in no case is the credit less than zero. No credit is allowed for education-related expenses for claimants with income greater than \$37,500. Eligible education expenses include textbooks, transportation, computer hardware and education software costs up to \$200, summer camps and summer school. It does not cover the cost of tuition.
- 14 Minnesota law permits families to take a tax deduction for school expenses, even if their children attend a private or parochial school. The tax deduction ranges from \$1,625 per child in kindergarten through 6th grades to \$2,500 per child in 7th through 12th grades. Deductible expenses include tuition, textbooks, transportation, academic summer camps, summer school and personal computer and education software costs up to \$200.
- 15 In 1995, Ohio policymakers created a pilot scholarship/voucher program in Cleveland. As of the 1998-99 school year, 3,678 students in grades K-5 were using vouchers of up to \$2,500 for tuition at a private, public or religious school of their choice, although up to 4,000 are allowed to participate. Ohio's program was challenged in court. In May 1999, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Cleveland program was unconstitutional, but only on a technical issue. According to the court, the program was improperly enacted by the legislature, when it approved the original voucher legislation as part of a 1,000-page general appropriations bill in 1995. According to the court, this action violated a provision in the state constitution that requires each bill to address only one subject. The court, however, also stated that the program did not breach the separation of church and state in either Ohio or federal law. As a result, Ohio policymakers passed legislation in June 1999 that reinstates the voucher program and expands it to grade 6 in September 1999 and to grade 7 in September 2000. In this instance, the program was enacted as part of the state's education budget, as opposed to the state's general appropriations bill. Ohio's reinstated voucher program is being challenged in court.
- 16 The number of charter schools in Puerto Rico was not available.
- 17 In 1995, Puerto Rico policymakers established the "Educational Foundation for the Free Selection of Schools, Inc.," a nonprofit corporation that provides financial aid for elementary and high school students in public or private schools. The program includes the following provisions: the annual income of a student's family cannot exceed \$18,000; the amount of education financial aid shall not exceed \$1,500 per student; the funds necessary to provide the aid come from donations by individuals or private institutions; individual and institutional donors are eligible for a tax credit for their donations to the Educational Foundation; the amount of the credit cannot exceed \$250 for individual taxpayers or \$500

for corporations and partnerships; the amount of donations in excess of the credit can be used as a tax deduction; and participating schools must be licensed by the General Council of Education and have an admission policy free of discrimination.

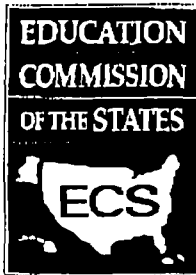
- 18 Vermont students who reside in towns without public schools may attend public or approved independent private secondary schools selected by their parents and located either within or outside of Vermont. Their hometown school board must pay the full tuition charged by a public school, but private schools receive only an amount equal to the average tuition charged by the state's high school districts. If a selected private school charges more than this amount for tuition, the school district may pay the greater amount, but it is not required to do so. If the school district chooses to pay the lesser of the two amounts, parents must cover the difference. In 1996, the town of Chittenden, Vermont agreed to pay the tuition for about a dozen families who send their children to parochial school. This action was challenged in court. In June 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that Chittenden's efforts are unconstitutional. According to the court, Chittenden's efforts violate the clause of the Vermont constitution that prohibits "compelled support" of places of religious worship. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In December 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Vermont Supreme Court's ruling to stand.
- 19 Wisconsin policymakers approved the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1990, and last amended it in 1995. As of the 1999-2000 school year, approximately 8,000 students are attending private and parochial schools through the program. The amount of the voucher is the lesser of two numbers: either a nonpublic school's operating costs (or tuition) or the state's per-pupil schools aid to Milwaukee Public Schools. In June 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the program is constitutional. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In November 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling to stand.

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Policy Brief

VOUCHERS

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VOUCHERS, TAX CREDITS AND TAX DEDUCTIONS

Introduction

Parental choice of schools is one of today's more controversial education issues. The term "choice" encompasses a range of options, including home schools, magnet schools, interdistrict and intradistrict transfer programs, postsecondary enrollment programs, charter schools, vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions. Probably the most contentious school choice option is the use of public money in private and parochial schools, usually through a voucher, tax credit or tax deduction. For some, these options threaten the very existence of the public education system. For others, these options provide greater educational opportunities for students and, by introducing competition into the system, improve the public education system's performance.

Whatever one's position on vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions, it is clear that these options merit continued scrutiny, especially given that recent survey data show that public support for the use of tax dollars for private or parochial education has grown over the past few years. In fact, a 1998 Gallup poll found that a majority of all adults, for the first time, would support partial government payment of tuition at private or parochial schools. In an effort to provide such scrutiny, this policy brief defines the terms of the debate, provides public and private examples, presents opposing views, reviews the effects of vouchers, tax credits, and tax deductions and offers key questions.

Definitions

- A publicly funded voucher is a payment the government makes to a parent, or an institution on a parent's behalf, to be used for a child's education expenses.
- A privately funded voucher is a payment that a private organization makes to a parent, or an institution on a parent's behalf, to be used for a child's education expenses.
- A tax credit provides direct reductions to an individual's tax liability. For example, Jack owes \$1,000 in income taxes. He is eligible, however, for a given state's \$500 tax credit. He subtracts the \$500 tax credit from the \$1,000 tax liability, and now owes \$500 in income taxes.
- A tax deduction is a reduction in taxable income made prior to the calculation of tax liability. For instance, Jill has a taxable income of \$100,000. She, however, is eligible for a given state's \$1,500 tax deduction. She subtracts the \$1,500 from her income of \$100,000, and now has \$98,500 in taxable income.

Public Examples

The following states and territories have either voucher, tax credit or tax deduction programs: Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Puerto Rico and Wisconsin. In addition, Vermont and Maine have long-standing variants of a voucher program. Several other states have recently presented legislative proposals to provide tax breaks for K-12 education costs, and voucher bills have been recently debated in several legislatures. No state ballot initiative concerning vouchers, tax credits or tax deductions has passed to date.

Arizona (enacted in 1997)

In 1997, Arizona policymakers established two nonrefundable individual income tax credits. As provided by Arizona policymakers:

- Taxpayers may claim a tax credit of up to \$500 for a cash contribution of up to \$500 to a nonprofit organization that distributes scholarships or tuition grants to private and parochial schools which do not discriminate on the basis of several characteristics. This contribution cannot directly benefit the taxpayer's own child, and tuition organizations cannot designate the money to benefit students of only one private or parochial school.
- Taxpayers may claim a tax credit of up to \$200 as reimbursement for fees paid to a public school for extracurricular activities (i.e., school-sponsored activities that require enrolled students to pay a fee to participate, including fees for band uniforms or equipment, uniforms for varsity athletic activities and scientific laboratory materials).

If the amount of the tax credit exceeds the amount of tax liability, then the taxpayer may carry the unused amount of the tax credit forward for up to five consecutive taxable years. For example, John makes a cash contribution of \$500 to an eligible nonprofit organization and is thus eligible for a \$500 tax credit. Because he owes only \$300 in taxes in 1999, he may carry the remaining \$200 forward until 2004 to offset his future tax liability.

Arizona's tax credit law was challenged in court. In January 1999, the Arizona Supreme Court ruled that the law does not violate state and federal constitutional prohibitions against government aid to religion. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In October 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Arizona Supreme Court's ruling that the program is constitutional to stand.

Florida (enacted in 1999)

Florida lawmakers passed the first statewide voucher program in the nation during their 1999 session. Under the enacted legislation, each public school will receive a grade, from A to F. Top-performing and improving schools will receive additional state funding. In F-graded schools, students will be able to move to a higher-scoring public school or attend a private or parochial school with an opportunity scholarship worth at least \$4,000.

At first, the opportunity scholarships will be limited to students in no more than four schools. However, it is projected that these scholarships may be extended to students in up to 170 public schools within the next two years. The private and parochial schools that accept these students are prohibited from collecting additional tuition, and are barred from requiring these students to participate in religious instruction, prayer or worship. Florida's voucher program is being challenged in court.

Illinois (enacted in 1999)

In their 1999 session, Illinois lawmakers enacted legislation granting tax credits to parents of children in public, private or parochial schools. Under the law, parents may reduce their state income tax bill by 25 percent of whatever they spend for their children's tuition, books and lab fees. In order to be eligible for the tax credit, parents must spend at least \$250, and the tax credit may not exceed \$500 per family. Illinois' tax credit program is being challenged in court.

Iowa (enacted in 1987; last amended in 1998)

In 1987, Iowa policymakers enacted a law that allowed parents to claim a tax deduction of up to \$1,000 for each dependent's acceptable education expenses, which were defined as tuition and textbooks (excluding the costs of religious materials and extracurricular activities). Taxpayers who did not itemize their deductions could take the benefit in the form of a tax credit equal to 5% of the first \$1,000 paid for each dependent's acceptable education expenses. Neither the deduction nor the credit applied to taxpayers whose net income was more than \$45,000.

Since that time, Iowa policymakers have eliminated the tax deduction, and have revised the tax credit provision, most recently in 1998. As a result of the most recent revisions, parents are allowed to claim a tax credit of up to 25% of the first \$1,000 for each dependent's acceptable education expenses, which now include public school extracurricular activities. In addition, the most recent revisions removed the \$45,000 income ceiling on eligible taxpayers.

Iowa's initial program was challenged in court. In 1992, a U.S. District Court judge ruled the tax deductions and credits for parents who send their children to private and parochial schools do not violate the federal constitution's ban on government establishment of religion. The program, the court said, "does not create any kind of direct aid to parochial schools, nor does it create any kind of relationship between the state government and the parochial schools. The sole relationship is between the state and its taxpayers."

Minnesota (enacted in 1955; major amendments enacted in 1976 and 1984; last amended in 1999)

In 1955, Minnesota policymakers enacted a law that allowed parents to claim a tax deduction of up to \$200 for tuition and other school expenses. Over the years, Minnesota lawmakers have enacted a variety of changes to this law. For example, in 1976, the maximum deduction was raised to \$500 per child for elementary school expenses and \$700 per child for secondary school expenses. In 1984, the maximum deduction was again raised, this time to \$650 for elementary school expenses and \$1,000 for secondary school expenses.

The most recent changes were enacted in 1997, during a special session held at the governor's insistence, and in 1999. Based on these changes, Minnesota law permits:

- A tax deduction worth up to \$1,625 for elementary school expenses and up to \$2,500 for secondary school expenses. The types of expenses that the deduction covers includes tuition, textbooks, transportation, academic summer camps, summer school and up to \$200 of the cost of a personal computer and education software. The deduction is available to persons who do not itemize deductions on their federal income tax form.
- A refundable tax credit worth up to \$1,000 per student or \$2,000 per family for families with incomes under \$33,500. The maximum credit per child is reduced by \$1.00 for each \$4.00 of household income over \$33,500, and the maximum credit per family is reduced by \$2.00 for each \$4.00 of household income over \$33,500, but in no case is the credit less than zero. No credit is allowed for education-related expenses for claimants with income greater than \$37,500. Eligible education expenses include textbooks, transportation, computer hardware and education software costs up to \$200, summer camps and summer school. It does not cover the cost of tuition. If a family owes no taxes or owes less than the amount of the credit, they receive the difference as a refund. Expenses that exceed the credit amount may be used for the deduction.

Minnesota's original tax deduction program was challenged in court. In 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the program was constitutional. According to the court, the programs had the secular purposes of ensuring that Minnesota's citizenry is well-educated and that private and parochial schools' financial health remains sound, did not primarily advance sectarian aims of parochial schools and did not excessively entangle the state in religion.

Ohio (enacted in 1995; last amended in 1999)

In 1995, Ohio policymakers created a pilot scholarship and tutoring program in Cleveland. The program includes the following provisions:

- The amount of the scholarship is the lesser of two numbers: the public, private or parochial school's tuition or a state-established amount not in excess of \$2,500.
- Students whose family income is below 200% of the maximum level established by the state superintendent of public instruction for low-income families qualify for 90% of the scholarship amount. Students whose family income is at or above 200% of that level qualify for 75% of the scholarship amount.
- Students may use the vouchers at the public, private or parochial school of their choice.
- Once a student enrolls in the program, he or she may remain in it through the 8th grade.
- Participating schools must register with the state superintendent of public instruction.
- No more than 25% of the scholarships can be awarded to students enrolled in a private or parochial school at the time they apply for a scholarship, although the enabling legislation allows that proportion to rise to 50%.

As of the 1998-1999 school year, 3,678 students in grades K-5 were participating in the program, although up to 4,000 are allowed to participate.

Ohio's program was challenged in court. In May 1999, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Cleveland program was unconstitutional, but only on a technical issue. According to the court, the program was improperly enacted by the legislature, when it approved the original voucher legislation as part of a 1,000-page general appropriations bill in 1995. According to the court, this action violated a provision in the state constitution that requires each bill to address only one subject. The court, however, also stated that the program did not breach the separation of church and state in either Ohio or federal law.

As a result, Ohio policymakers passed legislation in June 1999 that reinstates the voucher program, and expands it to grade 6 in September 1999 and to grade 7 in September 2000. In this instance, the program was enacted as part of the state's education budget, as opposed to the state's general appropriations bill. Ohio's reinstated voucher program is being challenged in court.

Puerto Rico (enacted in 1993; last amended in 1995)

In 1993, Puerto Rico policymakers enacted a pilot voucher program. The \$10 million project enabled parents with annual incomes of less than \$18,000 to receive vouchers for up to \$1,500 toward tuition at the public, private or parochial school of their choice.

The Puerto Rico program was challenged in court. In 1994, the Puerto Rico Supreme Court ruled the pilot voucher program was unconstitutional. Because the decision was based solely on Puerto Rico's constitution, the case was not appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The program continues to operate, but students can move only to other public schools, meaning the voucher program has essentially become the equivalent of a public school open enrollment program.

In 1995, Puerto Rico policymakers established the "Educational Foundation for the Free Selection of Schools, Inc," a nonprofit corporation which provides financial aid for elementary and high school students in public, private or parochial schools. The program includes the following provisions:

- The annual income of a student's family cannot exceed \$18,000.
- The amount of education financial aid cannot exceed \$1,500 per student.
- The funds necessary to provide the aid come from donations by individuals or private institutions.
- Individual and institutional donors are eligible for a tax credit for their donations to the Educational Foundation. The amount of the credit cannot exceed \$250 for individual taxpayers or \$500 for corporations and partnerships. The amount of donations in excess of the credit can be used as a tax deduction.
- Participating schools must be licensed by the General Council of Education and have an admission policy free of discrimination.

Wisconsin (enacted in 1989; last amended in 1997)

Wisconsin policymakers approved the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1989 and last amended it in 1997. The program includes the following provisions:

- The amount of the voucher is the lesser of two numbers: the private or parochial school's operating and debt service cost per pupil or the state's per-pupil aid to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) (about \$4,373 in 1996-97).
- Students qualify for vouchers if their family income is not greater than 1.75 times the poverty level and if they meet certain enrollment requirements (e.g., during the previous school year, they were enrolled either in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), in a private school in Milwaukee, in grades K-3 in a private school outside of Milwaukee or were not enrolled in school).
- Students may use the voucher at the private or parochial school of their choice.
- Once a student enrolls in the program, he or she may remain in it through the 12th grade.
- Participating schools must notify the state of their intention to participate in the program, comply with certain laws and meet at least one of four legislatively established performance standards.
- No more than 15% of the school district's enrollment may attend participating schools in any school year.

As of the 1998-1999 school year, 6,194 students were participating in the program, although up to 15,000 are allowed to participate.

Wisconsin's program was challenged in court. In 1997, the Wisconsin Supreme Court blocked the expansion pending its ruling, but later was deadlocked and sent the case back to district court, where it was ruled unconstitutional. In June 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled on appeal that the program is constitutional. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In November 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling that the program is constitutional to stand.

Vermont and Maine

If no public school exists to serve secondary school students in Vermont and Maine, these states allow districts to send students to private schools and pay their tuition. However, districts cannot send students to parochial schools.

Both programs have been challenged in court. In 1996, the town of Chittenden, Vermont agreed to pay the tuition for about a dozen families to send their children to parochial school. This action was challenged in court. In June 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that Chittenden's efforts are unconstitutional. According to the court, Chittenden's efforts violate the clause of the Vermont constitution that prohibits "compelled support" of places of religious worship.

In Maine, the Supreme Judicial Court of Maine and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit, in two separate cases, ruled that the inclusion of religious schools in the program would violate the federal constitution's establishment clause and the exclusion of parochial schools from the program does not violate parents' right of free exercise of religion. The Maine Supreme Judicial Court issued its ruling in April 1999,

and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit issued its ruling in May 1999. The U.S. Supreme Court, in October 1999, declined to review both cases, thus allowing the lower courts' rulings that the program is unconstitutional to stand.

Private Examples

A new wrinkle in the evolving public policy debate about tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers is the implementation of private voucher programs. Although there are several private organizations that provide scholarships for students to attend private and parochial schools, two of the more notable privately funded efforts are the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) America Foundation or the Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF).

Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) America Foundation

The Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation was founded in 1992 in Texas, with the purpose of increasing the number of educational opportunities available to low-income children through the provision of privately funded vouchers. In May of 1994, the CEO Foundation board established the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) America Foundation, or CEO America, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, with the purpose of establishing privately funded voucher programs across the nation. At the present time, CEO America is affiliated with approximately 40 privately funded voucher programs throughout the country.

Perhaps CEO America's most controversial endeavor is the Horizon Program, which it started in the Edgewood School District in San Antonio, Texas in the fall of 1998. The purpose of this program is to offer every low-income student within the Edgewood School District the opportunity to attend the public, private or parochial school of his or her choice. Approximately 96 percent of the children within the Edgewood School District qualify for the Horizon Program's vouchers, which are worth up to \$4,000. CEO America is providing up to \$50 million over 10 years for this program. In the 1998-1999 school year, 837 students are participating in the program. Of these students, 566 had been in the Edgewood School District the previous year. 116 were starting in kindergarten, 50 had been attending private schools the previous year and another 105 had been attending public schools outside the Edgewood School District the previous year.

Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF)

The Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) was created in 1998 by New York City investor Theodore J. Forstmann and Wal-Mart heir John Walton, who together pledged \$100 million to help low-income parents send their children to private and parochial schools. The initial donation of \$100 million drew \$70 million in matching funds from other private sources.

In April 1999, CSF announced the names of 40,000 children that will receive scholarships from \$600 to \$1,600 a year for four years. According to CSF, 1,237,360 children applied for the scholarships, which amounts to about one out of every 50 schoolchildren in the country. CSF is also backing statewide programs in Arkansas, Michigan and New Hampshire, and is reserving 5,000 scholarships for applicants in an at-large pool.

Opposing Views

Proponents of vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions argue that these options will:

- *Enable more families to take advantage of a wide range of education opportunities.* Currently, only relatively wealthy families can afford to send their children to private and parochial schools. Less-advantaged families who want to enroll their children in such schools often must make a considerable financial sacrifice. Vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions make private and parochial schools more affordable for these families, providing them with a greater number of education opportunities.

- *Improve public schools through competition.* This argument is drawn directly from free market economics, which stresses the benefits of market competition. Under this view, vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions will encourage competition between public, private and parochial schools and force the public schools to improve to retain their students.
- *Financially strengthen private and parochial schools.* An increase in private and parochial school enrollment will increase the flow of revenues into these schools, allowing financially struggling ones to remain open. An increase in demand for private and parochial education also could lead to the establishment of new schools.
- *Lower taxes for parents of school-age children, letting them keep more of their own money to spend as they see fit.* Tax credits and tax deductions may reduce the amount of state income taxes that parents of school-age children owe. Furthermore, with refundable tax credits, parents who owe no taxes or owe less than the amount of the tax credit will receive a check for the difference, thus allowing even the poorest families to benefit.

Opponents of vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions maintain that these options will:

- *Divert dollars from publicly accountable schools to private and parochial schools.* Public schools are required to maintain accountability with their taxpayers through a variety of measures, such as elections and open-meeting laws. Among other things, these measures allow taxpayers to know how their schools spend public dollars and what results their schools produce with these dollars. Within the private and parochial school setting, such safeguards do not exist. If funds go to private and parochial schools, taxpayers lose their right to know how public dollars are spent and what results these dollars produce.
- *Lower the quality of public education by easing the departure of students and families who are most informed about education choices.* Students who most often take advantage of public school choices tend to be from better-educated families. This trend may continue and could increasingly segregate the public, private and parochial schools along socioeconomic lines.
- *Increase the state's involvement in religious matters.* Through the implementation of vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions, the state may inappropriately endorse one religion over another, and unduly cross the tenuous line within both state constitutions' and the federal constitution's separation of church and state.
- *Help wealthy families more than low-income families.* Tax credits and tax deductions require families to pay the private or parochial school tuition before they are reimbursed (via the tax credit and/or tax deduction) on their next tax return — a requirement that low-income families may be unable to meet. Low-income families also may not be able to afford transportation to and from private and parochial schools. In addition, the tax credit may not cover the full cost of private or parochial school tuition or may provide only limited options of low-tuition schools. Also, if the supply of private and parochial schools is insufficient, existing tuition levels may increase, further limiting the options for lower-income students.

Effects of Vouchers, Tax Credits and Tax Deductions

There is little information available about the effects of tax credits and tax deductions. A number of different studies, however, have examined the effects of vouchers. Although it is difficult to make any definitive statements about the effects of vouchers, these studies have shed some light on who is participating in voucher programs and how satisfied these participants are with the programs. Critical unresolved issues, though, remain, and include the breadth of expanded options, especially for the poor, the impact on student performance and the effects on school quality.

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program

In 1998, University of Wisconsin at Madison professor John Witte released a review of the results of the first five years of the program (1990-1995). This study focused on the program in its original form, before the state expanded the number of students eligible to receive a voucher and allowed students to use vouchers at religious schools, and drew the following conclusions:

- Black and Hispanic pupils of very low income were the predominant participants, and 75% of applicants and enrollees were from single-parent households (a far higher percentage than that of the control group, made up of low-income public school students). Parental background data also indicated higher levels of educational attainment and support for education, and of dissatisfaction with prior public schooling, than prevailed among control group parents. In sum, the program did facilitate enhanced options for the most disadvantaged pupils.
- The data on the performance outcomes of students in the program was mixed. Pupils' aggregate scores over the life of the program remained consistently similar to those of the low-income control group, and significantly below national norms. However, unlike most inner city pupils, average scores did not substantially decline over the higher grades.
- Annual student attrition rates remained very high (over 30%), which is consistent with public elementary school mobility rates.
- Fewer than half of the eligible secular private schools participated in the program. This limited the number of available seats, but the applicant pool was correspondingly small, partly due to the apparent attraction of parochial schools in the area. A large private fund in Milwaukee offered scholarships to parochial schools, and drew three times the number of applicants.
- Four private schools closed, three in mid-year.
- The program engendered positive effects in the areas of program expansion, facility improvement and faculty turnover, seniority, diversity and certification.
- Satisfaction and support levels of parents participating in the program were consistently high, with levels of parental involvement increasing over time.

In the end, according to Witte, although the study's various methodological constraints caution against the drawing of any overly broad conclusions, this study reveals a successful targeting of very low-income minority pupils, and substantial gains in parental satisfaction and involvement. Moreover, the achievement data, though not marked as of yet by any significant improvement in scores (pending analysis of longer term data), does reveal some increased stability of student outcomes over time.

Two other studies have reached different conclusions on the issue of student achievement in the program. One study, by Harvard University professor Paul Peterson and his colleagues, finds that by the third and fourth year of the voucher program, students participating in the program had made sizable gains relative to their public school counterparts in both reading and math. The other study, by Princeton University professor Cecilia Rouse, finds gains in math but not in reading. There are several reasons for these differences, including how each research team selected its control or comparison group and how they chose to adjust for any remaining differences between students who took advantage of the voucher and those who remained in the public schools.

Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program

In 1997, the Indiana Center for Evaluation released its evaluation of the first year of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Grant Program. Results of the Center's evaluation indicated that scholarship students:

- Were much like their public school peers in terms of gender, ethnicity, family income and proportion of single-parent homes.
- Were achieving at significantly higher levels than their public school classmates prior to entering the scholarship program.
- Did not appear to have made greater or lesser academic progress than they would have made had they remained in public schools.

In 1998, the Indiana Center for Evaluation released its evaluation of the second year of the Cleveland program. The Center found that:

- Students who continue in the program for at least two years are comparable to their public school peers in demographic characteristics and previous academic achievement. The scholarship program appears to

provide additional educational options to low-income, minority, single-parent families, and seems to successfully meet the goal of educational choice without drawing only the best students from public schools.

- Students who use a scholarship to attend private and parochial schools experience a somewhat different classroom than their public school classmates. Scholarship classes are smaller than public school classes by about three students. Both public and scholarship classroom teachers possess at least an undergraduate degree, with public school teachers more likely to have taken some additional coursework. Public school teachers also had significantly more teaching experience than the scholarship class teachers.
- After approximately two years in the scholarship program, the impact of the program on students' achievement remains unclear. In general, scholarship students perform better than their public school classmates in language, but there are no significant differences in reading, science, mathematics or social studies. However, the academic performance of students in the two newly created schools, intended to focus on serving scholarship students, was significantly lower in each tested area than their public school peers or scholarship students who attend established private and parochial schools.

In September 1997, Harvard University professor Paul Peterson and his colleagues released another study of the program. This study reported the results of a survey of a random sample of parents who applied for a scholarship, including both parents of scholarship recipients and parents of non-recipients. It also reported test-score results for students attending two schools established in response to the creation of the program.

Key findings include:

- The average family income of scholarship recipients from public schools was less than that of non-recipients who remained in public school. Similarly, the average family income of scholarship recipients from private schools was less than that of non-recipients who remained in private school. In other respects, scholarship recipients new to choice schools closely resembled non-recipients remaining in public schools.
- Parents of scholarship students who previously attended public schools were much more satisfied with every aspect of their choice school than applicants who did not receive a scholarship, but attended public school instead.
- Between September 1996 and May 1997, students at the two schools established in response to the creation of the program, on average, gained relative to the national norm five percentile points in reading and 15 percentile points in math. However, scores declined five percentile points in language skills.
- 7 percent of all scholarship recipients reported that they did not attend the same school for the entire year. Among recipients new to choice schools the percentage was 10 percent.
- When applicants remaining in public schools were asked why they did not participate in the program, parents most frequently mentioned transportation and financial factors as well as admission to a desired public school.
- 85 percent of the scholarship recipients from public schools said a "very important" reason for applying to the program was to enhance the "academic quality" of their child's education, followed by the "greater safety" to be found at a choice school (79 percent), "location" (59 percent), "religion" (37 percent) and "friends" (19 percent).

Once again, controversies exist between the Indiana Center and Harvard University evaluations of the Cleveland program, especially regarding the quality of the available test data and the appropriate statistical techniques used in analyzing it.

New York School Choice Scholarships Program

In October 1998, Harvard University professor Paul Peterson and his colleagues released their study of the first year of the New York School Choice Scholarships Program. Through this program, about 1,300 students received scholarships worth up to \$1,400, to be used at the private or parochial school of their choice. These students were selected out of over 20,000 applicants through a lottery. The study takes advantage of the fact that the use of the lottery allowed for the conduct of a natural randomized experiment, in which students were allocated randomly to scholarship and control groups. According to the study, after

one year, students who received a scholarship scored higher in math and reading tests than control group students, and parents of scholarship users are much more satisfied with their children's education than control group parents.

Key Questions

In evaluating vouchers, tax credit and tax deduction programs, state policymakers, educators and citizens may want to consider the following questions:

- *How much will the program cost? How will the program costs be covered?* It is difficult to estimate the total cost of these programs because the total number of families (within public, private and parochial schools) that will take advantage of this opportunity is unknown. Whatever the total cost of the program, the source of its funding needs to be defined clearly.
- *How will parents respond to the program?* Each parent's decision will hinge on a variety of factors, such as his or her knowledge about the available choices. Predictions of how many students will leave public schools are inconsistent and most likely only educated guesses. No one knows how many families are sufficiently discouraged with the public schools to enroll in a private or parochial school, if given the opportunity. Unless the amount of the voucher, tax credit or tax deduction is high relative to the average cost of attending a private or parochial school, these programs may stimulate little movement of children from public to private and parochial schools. Also, parents who want to switch schools through the program will be unsuccessful if the necessary spaces in private and parochial schools are unavailable.
- *How will institutions respond to the program?* The impact of these options on public, private and parochial institutions is unknown. If public school staffs believe parents might send their children elsewhere, they may work harder to accommodate parent expectations. In the private and parochial setting, schools may raise tuition, thus nullifying any benefit to parents. In addition, vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions may affect the degree to which private and parochial schools are self-regulated or state-regulated.
- *How does the program affect the relationship between church and state?* There is continuing debate about the appropriate links between government and religion, particularly within education. To determine any law's constitutionality, it must first be examined in light of individual state constitutions and then the federal constitution. The current U.S. Supreme Court's test for determining the constitutionality of state assistance to private schools was established in 1971 in *Lemon v. Kurtzman*. In that case, the court ruled that for a government program to be constitutional, it must have a secular purpose, have a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion and must not lead to excessive entanglement between church and state.

Other relevant questions include:

- Who will receive the voucher, tax credit or tax deduction? Will every parent, regardless of income level and school setting (i.e., public, private, parochial, home), receive the same benefit?
- How many private and parochial schools have open seats, and are those available in urban, suburban and/or rural areas?
- Will private and parochial schools be allowed to deny admission to a student for certain reasons, such as discipline problems?
- Who will determine whether private and parochial schools are failing to admit lower-achieving students? If they do fail to admit such students, how will it be handled?
- Do private and parochial schools favor voucher, tax credit and tax deduction programs? Which ones favor these programs? Which ones do not?
- How will racial-balance issues be handled?
- Who will administer the program? Who will evaluate the program? Where will the funds for the administration and evaluation of the program come from?
- How will the state verify each taxpayer request? Will this cause the state to create a uniform student identification system?
- If a court challenge occurs, what is the potential cost to the taxpayer?

Conclusion

It is likely that publicly funded vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions will continue to be proposed, debated and possibly enacted in state capitols throughout the country over the next few years. In addition, given the unmet demand for privately funded vouchers, the use of such vouchers may increase in many parts of the country, particularly in urban areas.

Still, significant questions about vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions remain unanswered. As a limited number of states and districts move forward on implementing these options, many hope that clear and consistent answers emerge around the following questions: Under what circumstances are these programs constitutional? Do these programs increase the number of educational opportunities available to children? Do these programs improve the achievement of children? How do public schools react to these programs?

Notwithstanding the current absence of clarity on the effects of vouchers, tax credits and tax deductions, the usually heated discussion around these options is forcing states and communities to reexamine how to fulfill the American dream of an equal educational opportunity for all children. In short, these programs, in combination with other reforms such as charter schools and mayoral control of school districts, are altering the definition of public education in the United States at the close of the twentieth century.

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State Capitals

Calif. Rules Hitting Home for Charter Schools

By Jessica L. Sandham

Many California charter schools are facing declining enrollments and tighter regulations this academic year, following the passage of new restrictions on schools that cater to home-schooled students.

Roughly one-third of the state's 156 charter schools will be affected by the changes when they take effect in January. Under a law signed by Gov. Gray Davis in July, schools that rely on instruction that is not classroom-based will have to limit their enrollments to students living in the county that granted their charters or any contiguous counties.

The law also requires that the schools provide the same amount of instructional time as traditional schools, and that they comply with the rules for the state's long-standing independent-study program.

The rules were part of a compromise reached after lawmakers backed away from an earlier plan to cut state funding of non-classroom-based charter schools altogether. (See *Education Week*, June 16, 1999.)

Currently, only California and Alaska have charter school laws that allow for charter schools that are mainly home-based; nine states have charter laws that don't address home-based education, and 26 states prohibit state-supported home-based education programs.

Justification Debated

Home-schooled students enrolled in charter programs often do their schoolwork through some combination of home study with computers and textbooks, time in a more traditional class, and one-on-one time with a teacher or tutor.

Part of the original impetus for



Jayna Gaskell of the Prosser Creek Charter School in Truckee says 80 students could not return this year because of the law.

the changes in California law were concerns that some charter schools and their sponsoring districts were benefiting financially from such home-school-oriented charter schools. For example, some reports said schools were enrolling students from other districts and extracting administrative fees that exceeded actual overhead costs.

Some lawmakers were also concerned that some home-based programs lacked adequate instructional oversight, said California Secretary of Education Gary K. Hart, an appointee of the Democratic governor.

"There were some anecdotes and rumors—just a general concern that there were abuses that were not consistent with what a public education system should be," Mr. Hart said. "Home schooling was not something we contemplated in the original charter school law."

But many of the state's charter school advocates say that abiding

by the state's independent-study regulations could hamper the academic freedoms that make current non-classroom-based programs appealing to students and families. The independent-study rules give districts the authority to determine curriculum, for example, and mandate that students have access to regular classrooms—a potentially troublesome requirement for charter schools that provide most of their instruction through distance learning.

And while the effects of the new regulations won't become fully known until January, charter schools whose student populations extend beyond their contiguous counties are already grappling with dropping enrollments.

At the 350-student Prosser Creek Charter School in Truckee, for example, 80 students who attended the school last year won't be able to this year because they live outside Nevada County or its surrounding counties. Those students will likely have few orga-

nized educational options because there are no charter schools that serve home-based students in the counties where they live, said Jayna Gaskell, the head of school at Prosser.

'Quick Fix' Attempt Seen

Moreover, Ms. Gaskell argued, the mandate that non-classroom-based charter programs work under the independent-study rules is a "quick fix" that doesn't take into account the individualized curricula many such schools use.

"I agree with the lawmakers' intent that there needs to be a mechanism for accountability in home-based programs," Ms. Gaskell said. "But they didn't take into account the reasons why these kids 350 miles away would want to enroll in a little charter school in Truckee. They took a pre-existing program and stuffed us into it."

Ultimately, much of the impact of the regulatory changes hinges on how the state board of education applies the language of the independent-study law to non-classroom-based charter schools—a process that won't likely be completed for several months.

Until that time, advocates for the nontraditional but publicly funded schools say they are working to counteract what they see as one of the main reasons the legislature opted for a crackdown in the first place: an image problem.

"This is not about some kid in a dark room turning on a computer for 10 minutes a day," David Patterson, the director of governmental affairs for the California Network of Educational Charters, said of the charter programs for home-based students. "The bottom line is that we have to demonstrate that this is a valid educational approach."

STATE JOURNAL

Sharing the wealth

For almost a decade, a rural Minnesota district has been practicing an unusual form of workers' compensation: When it posts a healthy budget surplus, it rewards school employees by handing out bonuses.

If the 1,100-student St. Charles district near Rochester, Minn., ends the fiscal year with more than a set amount—currently \$500,000—the remainder is divided up among all its 100 employees except the superintendent.

The arrangement was written into employee contracts in 1991, but until this summer no one paid much attention. Now the practice, apparently unique among Minnesota districts, is under attack.

In July, after an investigation prompted by a complaint, state Auditor Judith H. Dutcher



Judith H. Dutcher

questioned the bonuses. In a letter to legislative leaders, she wrote that while the deal appeared to be legal, it created potential conflicts of

interest. "It's a situation where you don't want the perception that you're not going to buy a new computer in order to preserve a surplus," she said.

The district started the bonuses when, by state law, any surplus over a certain amount collectively had to be returned to the state. That law was recently repealed, but St. Charles Superintendent Tom Ames says he still favors the plan.

Bonuses help retain teachers without salary hikes the district can't afford, helping avoid midyear budget cuts and layoffs, Mr. Ames said. They have been given every year since 1991, with the total pot ranging from a low of about \$90,400 in 1991-92 to a high of \$317,400 in 1996-97.

As for conflicts of interest, the superintendent noted that he or the school board makes most spending decisions, and neither stands to gain from a surplus.

Henry M. Levin, an education economist at Teachers College, Columbia University, called the bonuses legitimate. But he said that tying them to teacher performance might do more to improve student achievement.

Since the auditor's criticism hit the press, Mr. Ames has had some explaining to do. "We're gearing up for a building referendum this fall," he said, "and some people say this will really hurt."

—BESS KELLER

Most Virginia Schools Fall Short on High-Stakes Tests

By Jessica Portner

A month after the Virginia education department reported that most schools in the state flunked the second round of rigorous new tests, many teachers and principals are still shaken, wondering whether it's possible to raise students' scores by the deadline.

Only 6.6 percent of the state's schools met the state's performance benchmarks on the Standards of Learning tests administered last spring. Scores on the tests, first given in 1998, will eventually determine whether schools can keep their accreditation and whether students can graduate.

The new scores were, however, better than last year's, when just 2.2 percent—or 39 of the state's 1,900 schools—met the performance goals on the initial round.

ing program is being watched nationally as a prime example of the trend toward stricter academic standards and "high stakes" assessments.

The tests are given annually in grades 3, 6, and 8. They are also administered in high school, where students can take them in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade.

Starting in 2007, 70 percent of a school's students in each grade will have to pass tests in four subject areas—English, mathematics, history, and science—or the school will be subject to losing its state accreditation.

By 2004, students will have to pass tests in the four subject areas in order to graduate from high school. On some tests, students only need to answer 50 percent of the questions correctly to pass.

Despite another high failure rate this year, Virginia officials

described the second round of test scores as a "marked improvement," noting that students in many grades raised their scores over last year's. On the 5th grade writing test, for example, 93 percent of the students taking the test improved their showings.

Scores Called Misleading

State education leaders also said the overall school passing rates were misleading, because 9 percent of the schools came close to passing all four tests—missing the goal by one subject.

"A lot of schools would have reached full accreditation except for history," Kirk T. Schröder, the president of the state board of education, said after the scores were released this summer. "Given that this is only the second year, I am encouraged. We are clearly moving in the right direction."

But the second round of test scores prompted many principals and teachers to argue that passing scores ought to be lowered to take into account the challenges poorer districts face. Some district leaders in both affluent and disadvantaged areas, meanwhile, contend that the tests in any case are too fact-based and require too much memorization.

In Richmond—one of Virginia's lowest-scoring systems—none of the district's 55 schools passed. But Roger Gray, the president of the Richmond Education Association, an affiliate of the National Education Association, said he wasn't surprised.

"You have to question the test," Mr. Gray said. He added that such logistical problems as late delivery of teaching materials hampered teachers' efforts.

"Things came in piecemeal, if they came in at all," he said.

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