

Coppola Publishes Book on Teaching Well with Technology

Dr. Eileen Coppola, Researcher and Lecturer at the Center for Education, has published her first book, *Powering Up: Learning to Teach Well with Technology*, Teachers College Press, 2004. The book is an ethnographic study of a high school in which technology was successfully implemented. It traces narratives of five teachers in core subjects from when they first learned how to use the technology, through the use in classrooms. The study focuses on the teacher culture and educational values present at the school that allowed the technology to be used successfully. This important new book links constructivist teaching to the teaching of technology. It will be a perfect companion to Dr. Elnora Harcombe's *Science Teaching/Science Learning*, also published by Teachers College Press.



Dr. Eileen Coppola

“Despite many powerful visions of how technology can improve teaching and learning, the use of computers in schools continues to be limited. This in-depth study of a computer-using school analyzes the relationships among teacher’s knowledge, their ongoing learning, school organizational culture, and policy to understand how the school developed high-quality use of computers. The author traces the experiences of five teachers in a large public high school who have all used technology to augment core elements of their teaching, with particular attention to the use of computers for constructivist teaching.” (Used by permission from Teachers College Press.)

“Eileen Coppola has given us a powerful new way of understanding the meaning of technology in the practice of teaching.” -- From the forward by Richard F. Elmore

“*Powering Up* will be valuable for anyone interested in how schools operate, how teachers learn on the job, and how new ideas are used by schools to improve their practice.” -- Thomas W. Payzant, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools.

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School Writing Project Teacher Wins Educator of Distinction Award

Priscilla Fish, an English teacher at Bellaire High School and School Writing Project Teacher, has won a Coca-Cola Educator of Distinction Award. The award is given to 250 outstanding teachers nationally each year who are dedicated to educating “with an enhanced purpose.”

Students who receive scholarships from the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation are given the opportunity to nominate a teacher for the award. Ben Fong, a graduate of Bellaire High, seized upon the chance to recognize Priscilla Fish, a teacher who made an important difference in his education.

Ms. Fish’s colleagues also recognize her accomplishments and talents as a teacher. “Watching Priscilla teach is an eye-opening experience to instructional excellence,” says Terri Goodman, former School Writing Project director and current English teacher at Challenge Early College Academy. “She combines academic rigor with a highly personalized setting. Students do not have the option to be disengaged, nor do they want to [be disengaged] in one of Priscilla’s classes. [She] always encouraged me to think more deeply about both my students and the curriculum.”

“Not only has Priscilla Fish been vital to the School Writing Project, but she has also been willing and eager to invite Rice education students into her classrooms to observe her and her students in lively exchanges about ideas and books,” says Dr. Linda McNeil.



Coppola, continued

“Coppola debunks myths and tells how to meet challenges head-on to reach ambitious goals. Her advice is detailed and practical for teachers, administrators, and policymakers.” -- Stone Wiske, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Powering Up

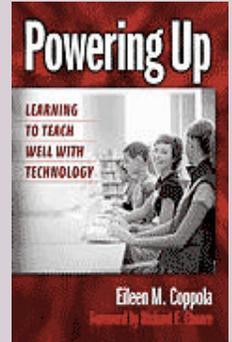
- Provides real-life examples of teachers who are successfully using technology,
- Demonstrates a solution to the problem of how to “get teachers to use computers in the classroom,”
- Shows how teaching and learning must be at the center of computer use, helping new and established teachers develop creative ways to enhance curriculum with technology, and
- Examines how the policies, structure, and culture of a school can support teachers who are learning new practices.

From Dr. Coppola’s introduction:

On a visit to an inner-city high school in the mid-1990s, I conversed with a technology teacher as she surveyed a room full of brand-new, cutting-edge computers. She spoke about how she was teaching a computer applications course by collaborating with an English teacher, so that her students would experience interesting, important content at the same time as they learned word processing and desktop publishing. As our conversation deepened, she described her dream of integrating these computers throughout the curriculum, but admitted she was struggling with how to do it. She motioned to all the new hardware and declared: “So much power, and not a clue how to use it.”

New technologies certainly seem to hold bright promise for education. Computers, in particular, are so shiny, so fast, and can do such amazing things that the possibilities seem truly awesome. But what exactly can we do with computers in schools. And how? And will what we do be better than what came before?

This book makes a spare and simple argument: Developing high-quality uses of computers in schools depends on keeping high-quality teaching at the core of the school. Only when sound pedagogical ideas are at the center of a school’s culture, when they drive the hundreds – or thousands – of decisions made by educators on a daily basis, can they foster intelligent, high-quality uses of new technologies. The success of the school in this regard lies in its ability to keep its most important ideas central and put technology at the service of those ideas.



And from Chapter One:

The study of a whole school organization and how it learns to use computers for instruction requires a holistic approach....When the point is improvement and the topic is schools, a fully interdisciplinary perspective requires that researchers begin from the actuality of schooling and extend their analysis to include valuable ways of thinking about the problem. If the question is how teachers learn powerful new instructional practices, then we must consider such factors as the teachers themselves, their backgrounds and educational histories, and how they learn in the workplace. We must catalog and analyze the demands and supports emanating from the policy environments and structures of the school, such as time, student load, course preparation, and grouping. And finally, we must do the difficult job of unearthing the tacit cultural norms and reigning ideas of the school -- which turns out to be the most interesting task of all.

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Banks Addresses Multiculturalism and Social Justice at 2004 Creekmore Symposium

by Jonathan M. Hamrick

"Unconscionable acts have been done by highly literate individuals. Nazi Germany was one of the most literate nations in the world...and it was responsible for the murders of twelve million people." This was one of the most unsettling points that **Dr. James A. Banks**, Russell F. Stark University Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Washington, Seattle, made during his lecture titled *Teaching for Multicultural Literacy, Global Citizenship, and Social Justice* at the 2004 Hazel Creekmore Symposium.



Dr. Banks signs an autograph

Dr. Banks examined how the American system of education, and particularly some of the ways in which the No Child Left Behind Act has been implemented, places a narrow focus on literacy and math skills, leaving to the side matters such as teaching children how to be moral and just citizens. Dr. Banks recognized the importance of basic skills, but pointed out, using the Nazi example, that having such skills are not sufficient to be a citizen in a global world. "To know, to care, and to act", says Dr. Banks, "are three skills that can and must be developed in children to instill in them a sense of morality and social justice."

This is especially important in the United States, which is becoming one of the most multi-ethnic nations in the world. Each year, one million new people immigrate to the United States, most of them from Asia and Latin America. At the same time, the United States is going to the world, via globalization, commercialism, and war.

Dr. Banks discussed how, in such a world, it is not sufficient to educate children to identify with a single group, e.g. only as citizens of the United States, or only as members of the African-American cultural group. Children must learn to be citizens on three levels of identification: cultural, national, and global. In other words, children must learn to recognize themselves as citizens of a culture, citizens of a nation, and citizens of the world. To explain the point, Dr. Banks related an anecdote by Gloria Ladson-Billings. Years ago, Dr. Ladson-Billings asked her middle school class of African-American children if they cared about the American hostages taken in Iran. The children responded that they did not care because, "all of the Black hostages had been released." Dr. Ladson-Billings then asked the children what did they care about. The children said they cared about the Black children who, at that time, were being murdered in Atlanta. Likewise, today we hear daily about the number of American casualties in Iraq. Yet we hear not a single word about Iraqi casualties, evidence of a lack of identity as a citizen of the world.

Dr. Banks concluded by explaining the concepts, "to know, to care, and to act." *To know* means to become aware of the truth of history. It means recognizing women's voices in history. It means recognizing, for instance, that Rosa Parks did not sit in the front of the bus because she was tired, but because she was an activist who wanted to make a statement. The way the story is commonly told in schools strips Ms. Parks of her voice, of her power. Similarly, teachers must tell children the truth about the "discovery" of America, and about westward expansion. "The west for whom?" Dr. Banks asked. "For the Mexicans, it was the north; for the Eskimos, it was south; for the Asians, it was the east."

To care means to want to envision a better world. As Dr. Banks pointed out, the worst place in Dante's hell was reserved for those who remained neutral in a time of crisis.

To act means to stand up for social justice in the face of great and potentially fearful opposition. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," said Dr. Banks, quoting Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Banks, continued



Dr. Banks and Dr. Harcombe with teachers from the High School Model Science Lab at Lee High School

Dr. Banks ended his talk with a quote from James Baldwin that he said “summarized the points I have been trying to make.” The source of the quote is an extemporaneous speech Baldwin delivered to a group of New York City teachers called “A Talk to Teachers.”

“The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself or herself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What society really, ideally, wants is a citizenry that will obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish.”

Stories at The Arbor School

by Julie Oudin

*Mentor Teacher, School Literacy and Culture Project
Preschool Principal, Beth Yeshurun Day School*

In the spring of 2004 I had the privilege of visiting The Arbor School, serving children with special needs, to take stories from the children in three classrooms. The children I met with ranged in age from six to twelve years, and had various developmental disabilities including Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, as well as a variety of genetic disorders. Although I have a social work background myself, and have had a variety of experiences working with special-needs children, I must admit that I was somewhat apprehensive about my ability to take dictation from these children. Would I be able to understand what they said, and, more importantly, would they understand what I was asking of them?

What I learned (which should not have surprised me so) was that these children are not very different from all others. They have a need to be listened to and to be understood. They yearn to feel a connection with their peers, so they borrow from one another’s stories, retell familiar tales, and carefully choose classmates to act in their stories as a way to solidify friendships. Like all children, they have painful memories – a grandfather’s illness, a doctor’s visit, a goodbye to a dear friend – that need to be worked through. Like all children, they have fanciful imaginations that need to soar, and the dictation and dramatization activities provide the perfect vehicle through which fantasy can become reality. So, a young girl who is both blind and immobile can suddenly become a dancing princess, and a young boy with Down syndrome can be the superhero who saves the day.



Tessa, Julie, and Carson after a story dramatization

Whether by way of their own verbal abilities, the use of signs and gestures, or technology, the children were remarkable in getting their ideas across to me. They delighted as I wrote down their words and relished in the experience as the drama unfolded. I think I may be forever changed as a result of my visits to The Arbor School; never before had I seen such extraordinary examples of the power of the human spirit.

Carson’s Story, May 20, 2004

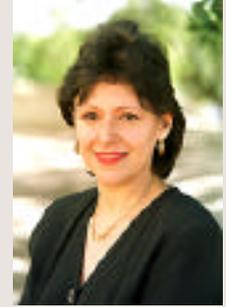
This is a student’s story dictated to Ms. Oudin in one of her Arbor School classrooms.

Papa eating beans. Papa coughs. Papa doctor. Mommy takes him. Papa crying at the doctor. His throat hurts. Daddy hurt his arm pit. Daddy crying. Doctor helps daddy. Daddy says, “Ooow ooow.”

The End

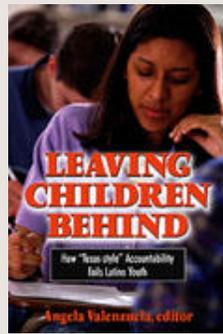
Leaving Children Behind: Valenzuela Edits New Book on Losing Latinos from Public Schools

Dr. Angela Valenzuela, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin, and Chair of the Education Committee for the Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) has recently published her second book, *Leaving Children Behind: How "Texas-Style" Accountability Fails Latino Youth*, (SUNY Series, The Social Context of Education). The book, a collection of studies by prominent education scholars and edited by Dr. Valenzuela, "may be the first in-depth qualitative case study of accountability and high-stakes testing in a single state," says Dr. Valenzuela. "It is certainly so from a Latina/o perspective. As such, it is a model for researchers in other states to follow."



Dr. Angela Valenzuela

"The federal government has based much of its education policies on those adopted in Texas. This book examines how 'Texas-style' accountability – the notion that decisions governing retention, promotion, and graduation should be based on a single test score – fails Latina/o youth and their communities. The contributors, many of them from Texas, scrutinize state policies concerning high-stakes testing



and provide new data that demonstrate how Texas' current system of testing results in a plethora of new inequalities. They argue that Texas policies exacerbate historic inequities, fail to accommodate the needs and abilities of English language learners, and that the dramatic educational improvement attributed to Texas' system of accountability is itself questionable. The book proposes a more valid and democratic approach to assessment and accountability that would combine standardized examinations with multiple sources of information about a student's academic performance." (Used by permission from SUNY press.

Valenzuela, who began studying these issues while a professor and researcher at Rice, is already being lauded for this pathbreaking collection.

"With all of the emphasis on accountability and testing in our schools, too many of us have forgotten to ask what the real effects of such movements actually are. *Leaving Children Behind* is a powerful analysis of why such questions must be asked by anyone who cares about the relationship between current school reforms and the production of inequalities."
– Michael W. Apple, author of *Ideology and Curriculum* (Routledge)

"U.S. schools have been engaged in a gigantic effort to impose Texas-style test-driven reform on all U.S. schools. This book reports things are very different than they seem in Texas and helps explain the major problems in implementing President Bush's No Child Left Behind law. The richness of the contributions by major Latino scholars to this analysis should help us understand the tremendous need to diversify our faculties if we are to understand our changing society and its schools." – Gary Orfield, Harvard Civil Rights Project

"Important and timely, this book reveals the 'real story' in Texas, which has become the model for the nation. There is much to be learned from this book about implementing federal policy based on the Texas model."
– Patricia Gandara, coeditor of *School Connections: U.S. Mexican Youth, Peers, and School Achievement*

"The topic is of great importance, and it is covered from many different perspectives here, giving a rich picture of the situation." – Maria Estela Brisk, coauthor of *Situational Context of Education: A Window into the World of Bilingual Learners*

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Valenzuela, continued

Leaving Children Behind documents the way the Texas system of educational accountability, using high-stakes tests for children to rate administrators and schools as well as children, is harming the quality of education provided to Latino youth. In addition, the studies in this book show that Latino children, the fastest growing “minority” group in the state and in the nation, are being pushed out of schools by the tens of thousands, often because they are seen as a liability to the school ratings based on student test scores. *Leaving Children Behind* shows that the system which has now become the model for the nation’s educational system fails to build on the rich assets of language and culture that Latino children bring to school. Instead, the system often marginalizes those children who by language heritage, national origin, and family culture do not readily fit a standardized model of learning.

For those interested in the policy debate over accountability in public education, **Angela Valenzuela’s** opening essay frames the arguments by advocates and critics of the system and introduces a way of looking at its effects that incorporates the values and perspectives of Latino youth and their families. Her powerful closing chapter, “Accountability and the Privatization Agenda,” examines the political uses being made of the accountability and testing system’s ratings of schools to justify using public dollars for private, for-profit schooling.

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco discusses the federal role in an increasingly diverse school population. **Linda McNeil**, in a chapter entitled “Faking Equity,” discusses the flaws of single-indicator systems as measures of accountability (see story, this page).

Chapters by **Kris Sloan** and **Elaine Hampton** take the analysis of the accountability system into classrooms to examine its effects on children. “Texas’ Second Wave of High-Stakes Testing” by **Valencia and Villareal** examines the adverse effects of the anti-social promotion (“reading by third grade”) policy on minority children.

The critical issue of language in the education of children under high-stakes testing is addressed both by **Alamillo et al.**, who look at California’s English-only policy and in a study by **Bustos Flores** and **Riojas Clark** that shows the gate-keeping function of high-stakes testing for bilingual teacher candidates.

Ray Padilla writes about educational accountability as a social construction.

Leaving Children Behind is an invaluable resource for any teacher or parent of Latino children, and for the parents and teachers of all children in Texas public schools.

“Faking Equity: High-Stakes Testing and the Education of Latino Youth,”

by Center for Education Co-director Linda McNeil, in *Leaving Children Behind*, examines how the Texas accountability system produces educational losses and new inequalities. Her data show that the emphasis placed on student scores on the TAAS test causes the crowding out of other curricular possibilities. As a result, many students learn how to take the TAAS test, but little else. In addition, young people are being lost from public schools at a rate that is beyond alarming. “[F]or 1998, five years into the accountability system, that state was losing 67,893 students from its high schools every year; these students left before ever enrolling in 12th grade, so the number of actual school leavers would be closer to 75,000 each year.” Even more alarming is the fact that this is evidence of a system performing as it is meant to: Children who drop out of school before taking the TAAS test do not represent a risk to the school or school district. In other words, as far as a school’s rating is concerned, it is better for a low-achieving student to drop out and not take the test, than to have all students take the test and risk a low school rating.

McNeil shows the system’s main flaw to be its reliance on a single-indicator system: when administrators’ pay is based on school ratings and school ratings are based on children’s test scores, then the school’s program shifts to producing those test scores. As a result, over the last ten years, TAAS scores have risen. But attention to this single indicator tends to blind the public to other measures, on which Texas children do poorly. While TAAS scores have risen, SAT, ACT, and TASP scores have not improved. “Did high TAAS scores mean more learning, higher academic performance? Other indicators provide less basis for optimism. During the time of the school’s dramatic rise in TAAS scores, the number of students at Longview High [a pseudonym for a Houston area high school] taking the SAT declined, from 33% of the senior class in 1998 to 28% in 2000. Of these only 7% of those tested scored above 1000. The average score declined from 836 (combined math and verbal) to 772.”

Finally, McNeil points out how the educational losses and inequalities are also a threat to democracy. “In a democracy, claiming a voice in children’s schooling is ultimately a political act. It challenges a power structure which depends on compliance and silence for survival. The critique of high-stakes testing can begin with making public the fraud behind the numbers. Then it must move quickly beyond reaction. It must actively, and with urgency, claim the authority to redefine and assert the rich and complex purposes of public schooling our children are eager to believe in. To do less is to risk losing more of our children and to put democracy itself at risk.”



The Power of Exclusion: Stories Behind the Numbers

By Judy Radigan, Researcher and Lecturer, Center for Education

*Why do kids drop out of school?
Most kids who drop out are lazy. They don't care.*

These were the initial responses given by students in two junior classes at Furr High School to the question of why kids drop out. When these students began to investigate the lives of dropouts, however, they realized they were living excluded lives that forced them to find power in activities that their school life did not sanction. They had attendance problems because they translated for their Spanish-speaking parents at the doctor or because they worked evenings to support their families. Some were involved, for a variety of reasons, in gang activity. In fact, gang membership defined many students' identities in their neighborhoods. This identity, along with the identities of family provider and interpreter, were excluded from their lives in school.

This research project is a reaction to a problem in Houston schools that has been receiving attention in such national publications as the New York Times. Almost half of Houston Independent School District's students are dropping out of school.

We initiated the research at the request of Dr. Bertie Simmons, the Furr High School principal. As I reported in the spring edition of the CenterPiece, Furr High School, along with other city high schools with high minority populations, has come under state scrutiny for underreporting the number of dropouts in the previous year. This principal and the teachers at this marginal school wanted to learn the stories behind the numbers of dropouts and to give a voice to the students who knew these stories.



Dr. Judy Radigan and her students at an HISD conference on dropouts

an identity on the street. These behaviors were not (and still are not) recognized as acceptable in school. Consequently, great conflicts of identity and obligation began to emerge in the individual students. How could they exist in the "real world," but also succeed in school? Because of the school's strict policy regarding absences and acceptable behavior in school, the students were branded failures and delinquents without any consideration of the danger, conflict, and importance of their lives outside of school.

After considering what they had learned from interviewing friends and family members who had dropped out, the students presented a series of recommendations to then superintendent Dr. Kaye Stripling and to Andrea White, the wife of Houston mayor Bill White. Included in the recommendations was the fact that many aspects of standard curriculum are not relevant to students who live very adult lives outside of schools. Academic rigor is not unimportant, but core subjects should be taught with a view to possible application to the students' community lives. Also, policies like zero tolerance and referral to alternate schools, in addition to the criminalization of student behavior and attendance policies hurt students who are in danger of dropping out, but who very much want an education.

The students are eager to see how their recommendations will be addressed.



•Upcoming Events•

January 15, 2005 , 8 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. – 6th Annual Early Literacy Conference, Rice University

Is Reading Instruction Really Enough? Nurturing a Thinking Child The School Literacy and Culture Project's 2005 mini-conference will focus on ways to provide reading instruction while also supporting children's reasoning abilities, social needs, and imaginations. Vivian Gussin Paley and Patsy Cooper will be the featured speakers.

Vivian Gussin Paley, author of *White Teacher* and *You Can't Play* and recipient of the MacArthur "genius" award, taught young children for over thirty years. As a featured speaker at conferences all over the world, Paley promotes early childhood education that nurtures children's inherent curiosity and imagination.

Patsy Cooper, professor of education at New York University, has long been a student of Paley's work. From founding the School Literacy and Culture Project in the Rice University Center for Education, to conducting research on effective White teachers of Black children, Cooper has been an outspoken advocate for thoughtful, child-centered practices in the early childhood classroom.

To register, see www.rice.edu/education or call the Center at (713) 348-5145

To learn more about the Center's teacher development programs, its publications and its research activities, see our website at <http://www.rice.edu/education>

To learn how to participate in one of the Center's teacher development programs, contact Glenda White at the Center for Education at (713) 348-5145.



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