



EPEC Update

Education Policy and Evaluation Center
University of Georgia

Impacting education
policy and improving
the quality of
education through
research and
evaluation

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Dr. Sheneka Williams Joins EPEC

Dr. Sheneka Williams has joined the Educational Policy and Evaluation Center. A recent graduate of the Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, she serves as the center's Policy Research Fellow. Her research interests include educational policy and the social context of education, particularly issues of race, socioeconomic status, and gender.

Before coming to the Educational Policy and Evaluation Center at the University of Georgia, Dr. Williams served as a Research and Evaluation Specialist with Edvantia, Inc. During her tenure there, she participated on the company's business development team, co-authored evaluation proposals, and oversaw evaluation projects in Mississippi, Delaware, and Virginia. At the Center, Dr. Williams's research will focus on issues of equity and access in magnet schools during the aftermath of the Supreme Court's 2007 *Meredith* decision on race-based assignment.

NAEd Responds to Supreme Court Cases

In the wake of the two Supreme Court cases that examined the use of race by school districts as a factor for making school assignments, The National Academy of Education convened a committee to review the court briefs filed in support of petitioners and respondents to these cases. Many of the briefs filed contained "substantial discussions of social science research." The committee found the research addressed five key questions which are "informed by the nature of inquiry by courts in equal protection cases and are also central questions for policy makers and scholars." The questions are as follows:

1. Is racial diversity in a school environment associated with improved academic achievement?
2. Is racial diversity in a school environment associated with improved inter-group relations?
3. Is racial diversity in a school environment associated with improved long-term effects?
4. Is there a critical mass (or some counterpart) of racial diversity associated with any benefits of racial diversity?
5. Are there race-neutral alternatives that can yield benefits that are comparable to benefits that we know to be associated with race-conscious policies?

The [full text](#) report from this committee has been published and is available at the NAEd's web site.

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Policy Impact News

DR. TERRENCE ROBERTS ON “RE-SEGREGATION” OF SCHOOLS

During an interview with Tavis Smiley, Dr. Terrence Roberts, one of the Little Rock Nine, responded to questions about his reaction to the “re-segregation of schools across America.” Dr. Roberts stated, “That’s not unusual from my vantage point, because I’m convinced that this country is not really interested in integration.” He went on to say that for over 335 years, this country has practiced discrimination and that 53 years of integration is really too short a period of time to expect a change in attitudes. For the entire transcript of the interview you can visit the [Tavis Smiley](#) web site.

BECAUSE RACE CAN’T BE IGNORED, The Failure of the Colorblind Ideal in American Schools, *Education Week*, Vol. 27, Issue 09, Pages 29,31

Commentary on comments made by Chief Justice Roberts on the recent Meredith Supreme Court case by Zoë Burkholder in *Education Week*: “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.” This is how the chief justice of the United States, John G. Roberts Jr., cites the colorblind ideal to explain why American schools may no longer consider a student’s race as a factor in school placement.

LIFE SENTENCE -- SCHOLARS ARE JUST BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND HOW PRISON IS RESHAPING THE COUNTRY

At one time, prisons were seen as mirroring American social and economic disparities. However, new research suggests that the penal system is not just a reflection of society but a force that shapes it, reports Christopher Shea in the Boston Globe. According to Shea “Black Americans and scholars are interpreting these trends as evidence of stark racism, a justice system rife with inequality -- just look at Jena, LA.” See the full article by Shea on the CNN web site, originally printed in *The Boston Globe*, Sept. 23, 2007. [Read Article](#)

OPPOSITION TO SCHOOL INTEGRATION SURFACES NEAR BOSTON

Last spring, school officials changed the elementary school assignments for 38 streets in the affluent Boston suburb of Milton. This caused an outrage as some white families were reassigned to Tucker, a predominantly black school with the area’s lowest test scores, reports Joseph Pereira in the Wall Street Journal. Among those reassigned, there has been talk of suing to reverse the plan by using the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling that consideration of race in school assignments is unconstitutional. Summary from PEN NewsBlast, [October 19](#) issue.

FIVE MEN, FIVE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON EDUCATING BLACK MALES

Black males have learned that they don’t need a good education to be successful, reports Cassie Chew in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. This seems to partly explain findings of a December 2006 report that found only 42 percent of black males entering the ninth grade will graduate. The perception of education being the foundation for economic stability has been challenged by successes in the music and entertainment businesses and the sale of illegal drugs, which has enabled some young black men without diplomas to have nice homes and cars. Dr. Robert Franklin, president of Morehouse University, remembers his community having a large stake in helping him achieve academically. PEN NewsBlast, [October 19](#) issue.

Excerpts from the PEN Weekly NewsBlast are the property of Public Education Network, <http://www.PublicEducation.org>

Task Groups*—

Contact these people if you are interested in joining a group. It’s not too late!

- **School Finance**
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- **Assessment/Testing**
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- **High School Leavers**
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- **Adolescent Literacy**
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- **School Choice**
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- **School Reform**
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- **Violence Prevention**
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- **English Language Learners**
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*Through a small internal grant, EPEC is facilitating collaboration and program development among faculty through task groups.

Dates, etc....

Task Group proposals are due to Andy Horne by Nov. 15.

NSF Presentation on Educational Research by Dr. Paola Sztajn, Nov 2, 9:30—11:30, Rm 418 Aderhold. Everyone is invited!

Policy Impact News (continued)

PARENTS PLAY BIG ROLE IN ACADEMIC SUCCESS, by Greg Toppo

A study conducted by the Center on Education Policy found that the biggest factors determining a student's academic success are whether their parents take part in their education, earn enough money to offer enriching experiences and have high aspirations for their kids are more. [Read Article](#)

GEORGIA'S GRADUATION-COACH TEAM TO GROW by Linda Jacobson, *Education Week*, Vol. 27, Issue 08, Page 16

The state is now recruiting private-sector volunteers to reduce the number of dropouts in their communities. The initiative, which is intended to supplement a statewide graduation-coach program begun in the 2006-07 school year, was sparked by a challenge to the Georgia Chamber of Commerce from Gov. Sonny Perdue in January, as well as by a desire by some members of the corporate world to play a more active role in improving education. Local chambers of commerce, Kiwanis Clubs, and other groups have also stepped up to the plate.

NEW LEGISLATION DEMONSTRATES CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR

READING FIRST and clarifies the term "proven program." According to the web site of Senator Lugar of Indiana, the **Proven Programs for the Future of Education Act**, S. 2118, provides schools that use a research-proven program in their Reading First grant proposal "a competitive preference of 10 percent of the total points." The bill also provides language intended to clarify what is meant by "research-proven" programs. According to Dr. Norman Stahl, President-Elect, National Reading Conference, who assisted with the drafting of the legislation, programs would be considered research-proven if they have been evaluated in at least two studies that used "a traditional or alternative control group, studied for a minimum of two weeks; a program and a control group that were equivalent in pretest reading levels; standardized post tests that weren't created by the program's authors, and a sample size of no fewer than five classes or 125 students." This definition is the same used by the federal government in the What Works Clearinghouse and the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center with the exception of required randomized assignment. The **Education Research and Development to Improve Achievement Act**, S. 2117, also introduced by Senator Lugar, would provide funds for the development of more "research-proven" programs. The same definition of scientifically-based research outlined in S. 2118 is used in this bill as well. Click sources for more: [Senator Lugar's website](#), The National Reading Conference Listserv mailing for Oct. 16, 2007 (membership required for access) and [The Assoc. of Educational Publishers' Government Relations website](#).

LANGUAGE-LEARNING SURPRISE -- IMMERSION MAY PAY OFF FOR KIDS ACQUIRING ENGLISH By Nancy Mitchell, Rocky Mountain News September 24, 2007

The study found that low-income English learners made virtually no progress in schools where more than 60 percent of the students come from low-income families, while in the wealthiest schools, English learners almost caught up with English speakers in the poorest schools. These findings were expected, although the research showed that the major difference between poor and wealthy schools is that the former instructs students in their native language, generally Spanish, while the latter requires students to be immersed in English. [Full article](#)

Excerpts from the PEN Weekly NewsBlast are the property of Public Education Network, <http://www.PublicEducation.org>

Quick Facts at the National Level ...

Fourth Graders Reading at Grade Level:

White 41%

Latino 15%

Black 13%

Eighth Graders Performing at Grade level in Math

White 37%

Latino 12%

Black 7%

Academic failure in elementary grades increases risk for later violent behavior. Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely than their peers to drop out of school altogether. High school dropouts are almost 3 times as likely to be incarcerated as youths who have graduated from high school. In 1999, 52% of Black men who had dropped out of high school had prison records by their early thirties.

Source: Youth Development Research, Children's Defense Fund. [Link to full article](#)-The Road to Dropping Out: Minority Students and Academic Factors Correlated with Failure to Complete High School.

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About EPEC

Policy Research Group

The Policy Research Group within EPEC aims to provide resources to faculty seeking to share the results of their research studies with the policy community in the state. Dr. Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot (edebray@uga.edu), Associate Director, and Dr. Sheneka Williams (smwill@uga.edu), Policy Research Fellow, are available to faculty to assist with writing policy briefs for prospective posting on the Center website and distribution to state policymakers.

The Policy Research Group is currently soliciting faculty members' working papers for posting on the Center website. These are generally papers that have been submitted to a scholarly journal for review or have been presented at a conference. The PRG is also interested in talking to faculty conducting policy-related research that could be featured in the policy section of the website.

Program Evaluation Group

The Program Evaluation Group within EPEC offers rigorous program evaluation, technical assistance, data collection, and information analysis for a variety of public and private stakeholder agencies, foundations, and institutions on local, state, national, and international levels. PEG core staff, under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Harnish, is comprised of professional staff skilled in carrying out multiple projects utilizing various research methods to assess the need for educational programs and their impact and effectiveness.

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