

## **Dr. Lawrence Summers, President, Harvard University**

In his opening remarks at the inaugural Young Faculty Leaders Forum, Dr. Summers emphasized the following points:

- Improving America's public schools is our country's greatest domestic challenge.
- From the work and deliberations of this group will hopefully emerge some concrete ideas that will make a real contribution to strengthening our nation's school system.
- Bill Clinton once said, "There is no problem in American education that has not been solved somewhere." Indeed, there are schools and classrooms across the country that have succeeded in unique ways, and the question of how we go from isolated success to much larger impact is extremely important. How we build on success and replace failure is a major issue for the entire social policy sphere, including education.
- We must think carefully about content and performance versus "softer values." The evidence is overwhelming that the average American school devoted too many resources to too many objectives other than achieving contentful knowledge of basic subjects. Measuring contentful knowledge of those basic subjects is a way of redressing that bias.

# **Home-Schooling: Illuminating Authority Over Children's Education**

*Presenter: Rob Reich*

## **Background**

Home-schooling is the education of children by parents, who control when, with whom, and how they learn.

In many cases there is no annual testing of students, no review of curricular materials, and no basic level of educational achievement that the parent has to meet.

Who is home-schooled?

- Berkeley “un-schoolers,” whose parents believe that for pedagogical reasons their children need to be free of a structured environment to “flower” and develop.
- Nearly 75% of home-schoolers are part of the Christian Right, which is responsible for the political clout behind the home-schooling movement. This conservative faction harbors a deep suspicion of the secular bias of curriculum and pedagogy within public schools.
- Secular suburbanites, who use the Internet to develop a curriculum that meets their individual needs.

To date, there has been no accurate data (free from selection bias) of the success of home schooling. We must depend on anecdotal evidence.

## **Major issues**

- Should the state allow parents to have unregulated control over the educational environment of their children? (In almost all states, there is no oversight or follow-up of children who are home-schooled).
- What are the boundaries of parental control of education?

## *Discussion*

The core interest of all children is to become autonomous individuals. This means they should have the ability to reflect critically on their basic commitments, values, desires, and beliefs, and select from a range of meaningful life options. Autonomy is particularly important because it allows the child to escape ethical servility.

The boundaries of parental authority are reached when:

- Parents wish to instill ethical servility in their children (socialization needs to be able to expose and engage children with value diversity).
- Parents wish to prevent their children from recognizing the differing views of equal citizens in society (which undermines liberal democratic citizenship).

### **Conclusion**

Home-schooling should not be banned, but regulated much more vigilantly.

An example:

Jennifer Sanchiel, the middle child in a large Mennonite family, decided she wanted to become a doctor. Unfortunately, her home-school studies denied her the science courses she would eventually need to enter medical school. Jennifer became so angry that she trashed her bedroom and threatened her parents. The police were called and Jennifer was charged with vandalism. A juvenile court judge sided with the young girl, however, ruling that she should attend public school. (The decision was overturned on appeals.)

## **The Relevance (and Irrelevance) Of Summer School**

*Presenter: James Kim*

### **Background**

The summer learning loss by students is a major cause of the school achievement gap.

- Studies suggest that disadvantaged students (minorities and low income) fall further behind their white and middle-class counterparts during summer vacation.
- A study by Entwisle & Alexander (2001) found that “the achievement gap across social lines widens over time for reasons that have nothing at all to do with schools.”

One possible solution to closing this gap is to provide summer school for low-achieving students.

### **Major issues**

- What policies can maximize the effectiveness of summer schools?
- Can summer school narrow the achievement gap?

### *Discussion*

A meta analysis by the presenter of 57 different studies of the impact of summer school revealed that, on average, summer schools had an “effect size” of .20 (1/5<sup>th</sup> of one standard deviation).

Is this deviation small, medium, or large? In a 1999 review of several popular education reforms (including class size reduction, testing and school choice), Mayer and Peterson found that “all the interventions apparently increase test scores by approximately .20 standard deviations.”

The meta analysis also pinpointed a number of policies that make summer school effective at boosting achievement in the short run. More specifically, larger effects were evident when:

- Instructors were not K-12 teachers.
- Instructor training is given before and during the summer program.
- There is a link between summer and school-year curriculum (i.e., year-round learning).

- Summer school is used as a “Head Start” bridge program for rising high school freshman to prevent high dropout rates.

Which students benefit the most from summer school over the long run? The study identified students who are:

- considered low-achieving
- from low-income families
- minority members
- the subjects of long-term evaluations

### **Conclusion**

Provide summer school only for disadvantaged students.

Lengthen the school year to prevent the summer learning loss.

## **Developmental Technology**

*Presenter: Marina Bers*

### **Major Issues**

- How can new technology enable new ways of thinking and learning (consciously not using the word *teaching*)?
- How do we design technological learning environments (not talking about software or tools)?
- How do we evaluate these environments?

### **Challenges**

- constructionism vs. instructionism
- system approach vs. technocentrism
- new tools vs. old ways of thinking
- technological fluency vs. instrumentalism
- some day vs. today

### *Constructionism vs. instructionism*

Do we learn by doing or by being instructed?

Piaget's constructionism involves children learning by doing, designing, programming, building meaningful projects, and sharing them with their communities. (A constant theme in each project is technology for identity and values). Here, the computer is an ideal medium for sharing ideas, for building, for collaborating, and for communicating.

Constructionism allows the use of:

- Physical things (like designing robots, such as Lego Mindstorm).
- Interactive story tellers that children can create.
- Participation in a virtual community (multiple schools participating, sharing ideas about role models and values).

- Designing and navigating a virtual city.

*System Approach vs. technocentrism*

We often give too much centrality to the computer, thinking it will change the system, instead of seeing it as part of the system.

A system approach involves working with different stakeholders within the educational process, including parents, peer-mentors and people who take the role of teachers. It also involves working with educational communities that have a strong desire to learn. In this context, professional training, resources, and support are critical.

*New tools vs. old ways of thinking*

Through the use of new tools, we are able to teach new content, particularly to new populations. This approach involves rethinking:

- the places where learning occurs
- who the learners are
- the learning content (why not integrate the different learning disciplines?)
- the learning process (how do you go about learning?)

*Technological fluency vs. instrumentalist*

The key question is, what do we want people to learn about technology? Do we want them to see technology as an instrument, or do we want them to be able to creatively express themselves through technology (almost like a second language)?

*Some day vs. today*

We worry too much about what we are doing today at the expense of thinking about what is possible tomorrow.

## **Structural Change Is Not Enough: The Complexities of Improving Urban Schools**

*Presenter: Lisa Rosen*

### **Main Issue**

How do you improve schools in disadvantaged areas?

An Example:

The North Kenwood Oakland professional development charter school (NKO) was started four years ago, and has since become a “best-case” study. NKO:

- Serves a representative population of Chicago public schools.
- Selects students by lottery.
- Is a pre-K-8<sup>th</sup> grade school of approximately 308 students.
- Is free from some of the constraints of public schools (like length of school day) thanks to its role as a charter school.
- Is designed like a teaching hospital, where teachers also act as guides and mentors for other teachers

*Typical school problems addressed by NKO:*

- Crisis of imagination (“things can’t change”)  
Designed to prove that things can be different.
- Bureaucratic constraints (preventive regulations)  
Designed to liberate teachers and school leaders from typical constraints.
- Research-practice-training disconnect  
Teaching hospital model is designed to closely connect the university, teacher training, and the teaching faculty of the NKO. NKO also started pre-service teacher training.
- No opportunity for teachers to advance  
Teachers are given a hybrid role that enables them to develop tools, and work with the University of Chicago’s Center for School Improvement (CSI) and with visiting teachers.
- No shared professional standards of practice

There is a comprehensive shared framework for instruction at the school.

- Egg crate structure of schools (teachers are isolated without the opportunity to interact)  
Support is provided for a school-based professional community (including offices for teachers and ongoing dialogue about common standards of practice). There is a realization that the professional community alone will not be enough to revitalize the teaching profession; it needs to be a community based on shared standards and an understanding of what constitutes good practice.
- Lack of focus on *evidence* of student learning  
Diagnostic tools enable teachers to focus on evidence-based instruction (in other words, they get immediate feedback on student learning and thus are able to be more strategic in their lesson planning).

*Improvements are still needed in the NKO structure to:*

- Allow teachers to better handle their hybrid role of developing tools and working with the CSI staff and visiting teachers.
- Overcome mistrust of the teaching university.
- Ease the discomfort with critical dialogue (this addresses the problem of “cultural lag,” where new roles and structures are interpreted through the lens of people’s prior understandings).

## **Conclusions**

Cultural processes and practices mediate between individuals and structures.

Developing new institutions like charter schools entails complex change on multiple, interacting levels, including:

- Individual, involving technical and cultural learning.
- Organizational, involving technical, structural and cultural/political change.

The implications for the future are that structural change can serve as a “scaffold” for cultural change. This requires strong leadership, however. Research can provide support as part of an iterative and dialogic process.

## **Accountability, Incentives and Behavior: Evidence from High-Stakes Testing in Chicago**

*Presenter: Brian Jacob*

### **Background**

Chicago is one of the first urban school districts to institute high-stakes testing.

Chicago instituted its accountability policy in 1996-1997 with two basic components:

- School based accountability, holding that schools in which 15% of students did not meet national norms in reading would be placed on academic probation. Without any improvement, principals of those schools could be subject to dismissal, teachers could be transferred or dismissed, and the school could be reconstituted.
- Student based accountability, holding that students would have to attend summer school if they did not meet minimum reading and math score requirements.

### **Major Issues**

- Is there an association between the implementation of high-stakes testing and student achievement? Is there evidence this relationship is causal?
- What is driving changes in student achievement?
- Have teachers responded strategically to high-stakes testing? (Were students excluded from testing or placed in special education? Was there preemptive grade retention?)

### *Discussion*

There are a number of reasons why student achievement over time may not be linked to high-stakes testing. They include changes in the composition of Chicago public schools, changes in state or national education policy, and the implementation of other programs and policies in Chicago.

Changes in student achievement were examined throughout the 1990s, with the following observations:

- ITBS Math Achievement: There was some evidence of increased achievement before high-stakes testing, but a clear jump in achievement during the implementation of the new policy (effect size=.3).

- Reading: An increase in achievement occurred with the implementation of high-stakes testing.

When Chicago is compared to other large cities, we continue to see a big jump in reading and math achievement, providing further evidence of a causal relationship between student achievement and high-stakes testing.

What is driving changes in student achievement? To help answer this, we compared the results of district administered high-stakes testing (ITBS) to the state administered relatively low-stakes testing (IGAP). We found that Chicago improved throughout the 1990s as measured by low-stakes testing, with no observable change in that trend upon implementation of high-stakes testing. Thus, the gains through high-stakes testing do not appear to be transferable.

Have teachers responded strategically to high stakes testing? The answer is that there does appear to be some response by teachers based on increases in special education placement of students, along with preemptive grade retention.

## Day 2

### **Exploring Pedagogy through Poetry**

*Presenter: Jeff Dolven*

#### **Background**

Pedagogy and poetry were discussed using Edwin Spencer's poem *Epic Romance*, published between 1590-1596 (which may have been written in response to school reform in England at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

#### *Conditions of school reform at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in England*

Education changed radically in England in the 1530s as a result of King Henry's divorce. The Catholic Church (the Church of Rome, which had run the schools to that point) was ejected from England. The new sponsors of English schools were merchants, guilds, aristocrats and new churchmen. The curriculum was an outgrowth of the emerging ideology of humanism, which was closely tied to Protestantism and to the study of Latin and Greek classics. As such, the texts and poetry of ancient Greece and Rome were studied in the classrooms.

The continued growth of England in terms of size and centralization resulted in a greater demand for literate young men. This, in turn, touched off an explosion in school construction, with more schools per capita resulting than at any other time until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Standard Latin grammar was taught in every classroom.

#### **Major Issue**

Why was poetry believed to play such an important educational role in the fields of ethics and politics?

#### *Discussion*

Roger Ascham captured the thinking of the times. He connected eloquence with virtue, literary style with character. Furthermore, Ascham believed that the way one writes is the best window into the kind of citizen they are. To be sure, virtue lives in language.

In practice however, text and poetry were dissected into smaller maxims that students could use in their own writings later on, instead of requiring them to comprehend the ethical and political meaning of the entire text. Erasmus suggested a pedagogy model in which the teacher protects the minds of the students by prefacing the readings with correct moral interpretations.

*The Faerie Queene*, an allegory, demonstrated instruction by moral maxims that were handed down to every classroom. For example, it suggested the difficulty of recalling

traumatic experience, but also showed that the experience could be transformed into a useful lesson (maxim). *The Faerie Queene* highlighted the pedagogical impulse of the time: “I want to make falsehood plain to you.” (Which is criticized later in the poem on the grounds falsehood is never easy to detect).

### **Conclusion**

When considering future policy, we must think about all the ways in which transforming experience into lessons is vulnerable. Poetry has something special to offer since it is already trying to teach.

## **Investigating the Application of Management Theory in Education Reform: Managerial Decision Making in Public School Districts**

*Presenter: Stig Leschly*

### **Major Issues**

- What is the extent of management uniformity in public education?
- What are the sources of management uniformity in public education?
- What are the advantages and drawbacks of attempting to transition from the business sector to public education?

### *Discussion*

Schools and school districts are incredibly uniform, a fact that is often overlooked. They are staffed in similar ways, their buildings are essentially the same, they employ similar financing, and their success is measured the same way (even though the system is arbitrary).

What are the sources of that uniformity?

- Public financing, which comes with great incentives and constraints.
- Labor contracts (virtually every role is defined by a contract -- a decisive factor in limiting managerial control).

Among the dangers and limitations of trying to apply business knowledge to public schools is the fact people in business are not well informed about education. In addition, certain aspects of public education are arbitrarily defined.

Reform will require freeing up managerial control by principals and superintendents. That, in turn, will mean dismantling organized labor and creating lump sum funding.

### **Conclusions**

Any process for transforming business thought into education reform must include:

- Universal access (it is lacking in the business sector, but present in public education).
- Tolerance for failure (it is encouraged in business, but not in public education).
- A definition of success comparable to shareholder return in the private sector.

## **Who Should be Permitted to Teach?**

*Presenter: Rick Hess*

### **Background**

We assume employers consider training along with experience, aptitude, diligence and energy in awarding teaching jobs.

Even though licensure presumes all teachers should be certified, it only shows they've been able to demonstrate a minimal level of ability and skills.

### **Major Issues**

- Should teachers who do not pass a certification program be barred from the classroom?
- Why is teacher certification problematic?
- What can be done to improve teacher certification?

### *Discussion*

The skills that teachers and educators deem most important (listening, caring, motivating) cannot be subjected to standardized quality control.

We have been unable to agree upon what teachers need to know. Content knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient.

Certification can actually discourage prospective teachers with talent. In practice, certification:

- does not ensure mastery of essential skills or knowledge
- does little to weed out unsuitable applicants
- is an unconvincing and ineffective way to bolster respect for teachers or teaching

Moreover, the cost of certification is high (approximately \$35,000) and rests fully on the teacher.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher certification needs a radical overhaul.

Suggested safeguards:

- rigorous criminal background checks
- BA or BS degree
- basic competency in essential knowledge or skills

Anyone who meets these criteria should be able to apply for a teaching position. The more people who apply, the more competitive the position, resulting in the best applicants being selected. And highly qualified applicants play a particularly important role in urban school districts.

How does society pay for this? By shifting resources. New district expenses, for example, could be funded by reducing compensation for starting teachers.

## **Acting on What Others Know: Distributed Knowledge and Team Performance**

*Presenter: Martine Haas*

### **Background**

The distribution of knowledge and its impact on working groups (teams) for the World Bank were studied. This effort encompassed:

- Drawbacks of using distributed knowledge: political pressure, time demands, and interpretation difficulties.
- Problems for teams: may be derailed or torn apart; may not process distributed knowledge or incur opportunity costs; may be misled or confused.

### **Major Issue**

What team conditions will improve outcomes?

### *Discussion*

- The combination of distributed knowledge and high autonomy leads to an increase in quality, while distributed knowledge and low autonomy leads to a decline in quality.
- The combination of distributed knowledge and a low workload leads to an increase in quality, while distributed knowledge in combination with a high workload leads to a decrease in quality.
- Distributed knowledge in combination with members of the group who are from the local area leads to an increase in quality.
- Distributed knowledge in combination with members of the group who are considered cosmopolitan (they have lived in, worked in, and speak the languages of at least three countries, and are not local) leads to an increase in quality.

The presenter used a stratified random sample of projects to evaluate the impact of distributed knowledge in combination with various group characteristics on the project quality ratings. Support for the above propositions was found: distributed knowledge increases project quality when the groups have high autonomy, a low workload, and local or cosmopolitan team members.

## **Conclusion**

### Applications to education

- Important to consider when structuring task forces on education policy, or administration and reform issues, in order to achieve high quality results.
- Sharing knowledge across organizations.
- Learning networks, communities of practice.
- Codifying best practices and lessons in electronic data bases.
- Sharing knowledge within organizations.
- Organizational structure and designs.
- Mentoring and apprenticeship, intranet, directories of experts.
- Introducing and supplying teamwork in the classroom.

## **Civic and Multicultural Education**

*Presenter: Meira Levinson*

### **Background**

- Greater than one-third of black and Hispanic students attend schools that have more than 90% minority populations.
- In many urban school districts at least 50% of students qualify for free or reduced lunches.
- This is not a problem confined to the U.S.

### **Major Issues**

- What issues need to be considered when delivering civic education to minority students?
- What would a good multicultural education program look like? What would it accomplish?

### *Discussion*

There is a common assumption that civic and multicultural education can be discussed in a vacuum. However, it must be contextualized (which Ms. Levinson did within segregated minority and disenfranchised schools).

In civic education, the common goal for all students is to make use of their rights and to fulfill their duties and responsibilities as citizens in a liberal democratic society.

It has been Ms. Levinson's experience that in minority settings students typically have antagonistic relationships with symbols of American government or police power. There is also a deep suspicion of founding documents.

In minority or disenfranchised schools, teachers are faced with a different set of presuppositions. Research shows, for example, the dramatic differences in how African Americans and white Americans view many issues. (Some of Ms. Levinson's minority students believed that O.J. Simpson was innocent; that AIDS is spread in the inner city by the CIA; and that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were sponsored by George Bush).

To get students to appreciate and fulfill their duties as citizens requires very different teaching and curriculum models, as well as a different civic narrative and motivation.

If curriculum needs to be adjusted based upon demographics, it creates a problematic situation in which state institutions and state employees (public school teachers) will be differentiating instruction and curriculum based upon their perceptions of students' race and identity.

What would a good multicultural education program look like, or accomplish?  
Although civic education has a common goal, the kinds of issues that may surface in a segregated school are very different when it comes to multicultural education.

It is important that minority students possess the cultural "capital" to be able to communicate with the rest of society.

### **Conclusion**

Though there has been a strong movement toward common standards in educational reform, the concept that common outcomes are the result of common curriculum is problematic.