

education **INSIGHTS** news

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH EDUCATION

Public Agenda, IBM Promote Opportunities for Hispanics in STEM Fields

Two key facts shape the nation's future: (1) Hispanics in America are the largest and fastest growing minority and (2) knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and math is more important for 21st century careers than ever before. These two points present IBM and Public Agenda with an important challenge, but also a window of opportunity. Armed with Public Agenda's research and analysis of educational topics important to Hispanic students and parents, IBM recently held a seminal conference. In a two day New York summit titled **America's Competitiveness: Hispanic Participation in Technology Careers**, IBM gathered a group of the nation's business, education and community leaders to explore how to get more Hispanic youth interested in technology careers.

"This summit is a call to action to challenge business leaders to address an issue that could undermine the country's leadership in today's global economy," stated **Nicholas M. Donofrio**, Executive Vice President of Innovation and Technology, who kicked off the two day summit.

Studies released at the summit by Public Agenda and the **Tomas Rivera Policy Institute** detail how, despite the overwhelming demand for talent in STEM careers, America's education system is failing the Hispanic community when it comes to preparation for careers in math and science.

In "**A Matter of Trust: Ten Key Insights From Recent Public Opinion Research on Attitudes About Education Among Hispanic Parents, Students and Young Adults**," Public Agenda reports that Hispanic families and students trust educators but see systemic problems in education. Hispanic parents believe it is problematic that students are not taught enough math and science. Hispanic parents are more likely than all other parents to view college as a prerequisite to a good job and a prosperous future, yet nearly 7 in 10 believe many qualified students don't have the opportunity to attend college. Over half

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Image above: IBM's Executive Vice President of Innovation and Technology Nick Donofrio.

Download a copy of **A Matter of Trust** at www.publicagenda.org/reports/matter-trust

Frank Sesno Moderates Forum on Higher Education Costs

Public Agenda and the **National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE)** recently brought together college students and leaders in education and economic policy to examine the reasons for the rapidly rising costs of higher education.

"Does It Really Have to Cost So Much? A Forum on the Soaring Costs of Higher

We are on the verge of a huge crisis in our country because access to college is essentially the only chance to have a high quality of living and good income.

WILLIAM E. KIRWAN

Chancellor of the University System of Maryland

Education," held at **George Washington University** in February, highlighted research from a recent Public Agenda/NCPPE report, "**Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today**." The research revealed that, while Americans have come to value higher education now more than ever, fears about affordability and access leave many parents and students deeply anxious.

The forum included a broader discussion of the economics of higher education and how cost factors into enrollment decisions. Many panelists shared the view that families, universities and state and federal

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76%

... of new teachers say their training covered teaching an ethnically diverse student body, but only **39%** say that training had actually helped them in the classrooms.

Lessons Learned: Are New Teachers Ready for Diverse Classrooms. **SEE PAGE 3** to read the story.

Public Agenda, IBM Promote Opportunities for Hispanics in STEM Fields

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of Hispanic students who do go to college say they would have gone to a different school if money weren't an issue.

"Out Before the Game Begins: Hispanic Leaders Talk About What's Needed to Bring More Hispanic Youngsters Into Science, Technology and Math Professions" is based on in-depth interviews with 19 key leaders from vastly different fields and backgrounds.



Participants at IBM's Summit

Nearly all of the interviewees said that the educational pipeline is all but broken and isn't serving Hispanic students adequately in science, math and other subject areas as well.

The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans recently highlighted Public Agenda's work to improve education outcomes for Hispanic children and youths throughout the country. 🌐



Download **Out Before the Game Begins** at www.publicagenda.org/citizen/researchstudies/education

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: Just Coping or Truly Transforming?

What exactly does it take to change a troubled school into one where students thrive? What kinds of skills do school leaders need? Once we find leaders, how do we sustain them?

In **"A Mission of the Heart: Leaders in High-Needs Districts Talk about What It Takes to Transform a School,"** Public Agenda and **The Wallace Foundation** attempt to understand the best ways to recruit and support top leaders in high-needs schools.

Public Agenda spoke with principals and superintendents across the country in focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The report offers a detailed look at their daily lives and challenges.

By giving school principals the chance to talk about their challenges and priorities in their own words, the report offers a rich and nuanced picture of what these leaders actually do on a day-to-day basis.

The study reveals that principals often fall into two distinct categories: "transformers" or "copers." Transformers bring a "can do" attitude toward their work, with an explicit vision of what they would like their schools to look like. They focus on creating a culture in which each child can learn. Alternatively, copers are characterized as focused on tending to the many day to day needs and are often overwhelmed, "trying to keep their heads above water." Many of them simply do not have the time, freedom, or perhaps inclination, to do more than try to manage their current situation.



Download **A Mission of the Heart** at www.publicagenda.org/reports/mission-heart. Find out additional information about the Wallace Foundation at www.wallacefoundation.org



While we were conducting this research, we saw astonishing human beings working extremely long hours with a passion and single-mindedness that was truly admirable. But how long can we expect these principals to keep up this pace?

JEAN JOHNSON
Director of Education Insights

So what makes the difference between a transformer and a copier? The study found that many of the leaders – transformers and copiers alike – put a lot of emphasis on character and personality. Many agreed that certain skills and character traits are required to be successful in their role in high-need schools. From their perspective, an effective high-needs principal must bring characteristics such as courage, convictions and confidence to the job.

Many respondents questioned whether it is actually possible to teach all of the requisite abilities in a training program. Along with inherited personality traits, respondents also suggest that district policy and working conditions matter as well. Autonomy to select and train staff and make decisions and administrative support were also cited as factors crucial to success. 🌐

Frank Sesno Moderates Forum on Higher Education Costs

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governments need to work together to restrain costs and address the debt burden of students across the country. Experts agreed that while all signals to students say "attend college," more and more people perceive higher education as being out of their reach.

Frank Sesno, CNN correspondent and



Frank Sesno
CNN correspondent

Professor of Media and Public Affairs at **George Washington University**, moderated the session. The panel included two university presidents: **Steven Knapp, President**

of the **George Washington University** and **William E. Kirwan, Chancellor of the University System of Maryland**. Policy experts included James Boyle, president of **College Parents of America**, and Jared Bernstein, senior economist at the **Economic Policy Institute**. 🌐

The event generated intensive media coverage by C-SPAN, *Scripps Howard*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Education Week*, *Inside Higher Education* and others. For more information, visit: www.publicagenda.org/higheredcostforum

LESSONS LEARNED:

Are New Teachers Ready for Diverse Classrooms?



To read the **Lessons Learned** series please visit www.publicagenda.org/educators

How well are new teachers equipped to deal with new realities of a changing classroom? In the final installment of “Lessons Learned,” a three part series of reports based on the experiences of first-year teachers, Education Insights explores the limitations of the training new teachers say they receive.

“**Teaching in Changing Times**” reveals that many new elementary- and secondary-school teachers feel that their training left them unprepared for the challenges of working in ethnically diverse classrooms or teaching

children with special needs.

The study found that while new teachers were generally positive about their overall preparation, there were gaps between teacher training and coping with diverse classrooms and special-needs students. Although 76 percent of new teachers said that teaching an ethnically diverse student body was covered in their training, only 39 percent said that training helped them a lot.

Strikingly, the report also said teachers who worked in affluent/suburban communities

often felt less prepared and were more anxious about teaching diverse groups of students than their counterparts at “high needs” schools. In fact, nearly half (47 percent) of teachers in high needs schools say their training was useful, while only (32 percent) of the new teachers in wealthier schools found their training in this area helpful.

Sabrina Laine, Director of the **National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality**, which commissioned and helped to design the research, said, “The report illustrates the gap between teacher training and the realities of the classroom when it comes to teaching diverse populations and students with special needs.”

The first report in the “Lessons Learned” series described the differences between the views and experiences of new secondary and elementary teachers. The second looked at the views of teachers coming into the field from three prominent alternate route programs. 🌐

Public Agenda Expands “Achieving the Dream” Engagement Efforts

For three years, Public Agenda has been a central player in **Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**, a multi-year national initiative funded by the **Lumina Foundation for Education**. The project aims to help more community college students succeed – especially those who traditionally face the greatest challenges, such as students of color and low-income students.

Working in partnership with **Making Diversity Count (MDC)**, a non-profit that helps organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunity, Public Agenda recently launched a pilot project designed to augment community dialogue and engagement work with the creation of campus/community leadership teams.

Public Agenda and MDC have implemented the pilot program with the **University of New Mexico-Gallup (UNM-G)** and **South Texas College** to improve student achievement.

Located in the high desert region, **UNM-G** has special challenges serving a state well



known for its diversity and large Native American population.

Social and economic disparities are prevalent and success rates for college students are low. Recently more than 150 parents, students, local officials, business leaders and other stakeholders participated in a “Community Talking Circle”

organized in Gallup to collaborate on the creation of more specific educational pathways for achievement for both prospective and current students.

Similarly, **South Texas College’s** setting in a low income community means that many students in the McAllen region face numerous hurdles in their attempt to attain a college degree. Recently two community conversations were convened to identify and discuss the continuing education needs of the community. Key players at the conversations included educational leaders from colleges and public schools and families from the region. 🌐

New Research on Midwest School Leadership

Public Agenda continues its four-year investigation for the Regional Education Laboratory of the Midwest (REL-Midwest) at **Learning Point Associates** on how different populations in the Midwest rate schools in their district and state.

Public Agenda commenced this project in 2006 by conducting interviews with REL-Midwest board members and convening meetings with different educational stakeholders. In its third year, its efforts are focused on garnering views of superintendents and school board members. The results will be used by REL-Midwest to guide future research and will be provided to the Department of Education to use as a response to inquiries from federal legislators and other policy leaders seeking enhanced investments in education research and development. 🌐



Find out additional information about the Learning Point Associates at www.learningpt.org

COMING SOON:

Higher Education Leaders Talk About Costs

In association with the **National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education**, Education Insights will release a follow up to its widely lauded “**Squeeze Play**” report. While “**Squeeze Play**” took a close look at Americans’ perception of post-secondary education, the forthcoming report will examine the views of presidents and chancellors who lead these institutions for a top-down look at our nation’s institutions of higher learning. The report will present the perspectives of over two dozen college presidents who are faced with daunting challenges such as an influx of over 20 million new college students in the next 10 years, rising tuition costs and increasing international competition. The report will delve into how presidents view the intrinsic links between cost, access and quality in American education and what can be done to maintain the value of Americans’ investment in higher education.


The College Affordability Conversation: Adding New Voices, Framing the Debate

Alongside the report culling perspectives of university presidents, the voices of high level financial officers and faculty will also be heard as Public Agenda completes a new project for **Making Opportunity Affordable** and the **Lumina Foundation for Education**. This new report will be based on a series of in depth interviews with state higher executive officers as well as formal conversations with groups of part-time and full-time instructors from public universities and two-year colleges. The report will concentrate on ways to help address the rising costs of higher education and increase access and opportunity for college students, as well as ways to frame and facilitate the policy debate so states are better able to sort through their options and make progress on the issue.

Do Gen Y Teachers Have Distinctive Views?

Generation Y teachers, described as between the ages of 22-28, make up about one-fifth of the current teaching population, and this proportion is likely to grow larger as Baby Boomer teachers reach retirement age. However, data on teacher retention suggests

that turnover for teachers who are under 30 is higher than the average teacher turnover rate. Public Agenda and **Learning Point Associates** have joined forces and expertise to explore Gen Y teachers’ career expectations and experiences – including their views on teachers unions, alternate forms of compensation, and performance management.

The study hopes to provide guidance for organizations to build strategic human capital management systems responsive to the needs of Gen Y teachers. The research is being supported by the **Joyce Foundation**. 

In the News

Articles by Public Agenda’s Vice President and Director of Education Insights, **JEAN JOHNSON**

- **Education Week**, ‘Copers’ and ‘Transformers,’ Aug 13, 2008
- **Education Leadership**, *The Principle’s Priority 1*, September 2008

Article by Public Agenda’s Vice President and Director of Communications, **MICHAEL REMALEY**

- **Newsday**, *Teachers Challenge: Diverse 21st Century Class*, September 2, 2008



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