

Early College High Schools

By Tempestt Adams

The term “college and career readiness” is unquestionably a buzzword in educational discourse, but what exactly does this mean? According to the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), “a student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial or developmental coursework” (2013). Many states, school districts and educators are placing emphasis on ensuring all students graduate ready for college and/or careers, but how exactly is this being done? One specific high school reform movement that directly tackles college and career readiness is early college high schools. They serve underrepresented populations in postsecondary institutions including minority students, first generation college students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, English language learners, and other underrepresented groups (“Overview & FAQs,” 2013). Typically located on a community college or university campus, students are given the opportunity to earn an associate’s degree or up two years of transferrable college credit (NCNS, 2013), while earning high school credit simultaneously (Leonard, 2013).

North Carolina is the national leader for early college high schools with about 76 schools across the state (North Carolina New Schools [NCNS], 2013). The benefits of blending high school and college curriculum and access to college campuses motivates students to continue their education beyond high school (Kuo, 2010). At a time when traditional high schools are failing to prepare students to meet the current job demands and postsecondary education and training are becoming increasingly necessary, there is a direct need to closely examine the successes and failures of early college high schools and the experiences of students. Research supports the model’s success at increasing college credit attainment, postsecondary access, and positive schooling experiences, yet there remains a significant dearth in the literature (“Early College High Schools”, n.d.; Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky & Dallas, 2013). There is a need to continue to examine the models effectiveness. Such studies could be used to inform educational policy and practices surrounding efforts to increase college and career readiness.

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UEC Strong

By Tempestt Adams

Urban Educators for Change is a graduate student organization in the College of Education. We focus our efforts on the advancement of transformative urban education. As a group we volunteer at schools in the local community and within the UNC Charlotte community. Membership is open to all masters and doctoral students throughout the college regardless of their program. UEC is continuing to grow; with 29 paid members this year, this is the largest the group has seen since its existence!!

We started our academic year off strong with two events over the summer—Community & Empowerment Event and West Fest. These events were to help the local community prepare for the start of a new school year.

The executive team has already held many exciting activities this year! We hosted a research poster session, recruitment week, and academic seminars to help students write literature reviews and prepare CVs. We have also hosted meetings virtually to accommodate busy schedules.

This April we are hosting a virtual challenge. Like virtual races that are taking the fitness community by storm, we are hosting our very own “Green & Gold Challenge”. This challenge will be held virtually where participants log their health and fitness activity as well as their volunteerism in the local community. All of the funds raised from registration will be donated to David Cox Elementary school!

We are grateful for continued support from both the College of Education and the University and we are delighted to present the inaugural issue of our newsletter, *Good as Gold*. This publication was created to share the research and scholarly work of the students in the College of Education. The title is inspired by the university’s mascot, the 49ers, and the many wonderful students we work with. We strive to become better educators to serve them.



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We welcome your questions and comments. Please send them to Tempestt Adams at tadams51@unc.edu or Dymilah Hewitt at dhewitt3@unc.edu.
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Good as Gold

The UNC Charlotte Urban Educators for Change
Newsletter



Volume I, Issue 1

The Cellphone

The Challenges and Opportunities of Technology in the Classroom

By Derrick Robinson

As an assistant principal in a local school district, I spend a lot of time talking to teachers about their classroom experiences. From these conversations it would appear that the cellphone has become the greatest threat to the classroom. Even among teachers beyond my school, I discover similar concerns. For some teachers, it is not the sound of the ringtone, or the cellphone conversation, or the sound of music playing through earbuds, but the actual sight of a student holding a cellphone, that is destroying the learning environment. That is not to say that the cellphone is a problem in every classroom. The students who receive discipline referrals for cell phone use are primarily students in standard or lower level courses, and more specifically, students of color in those courses. However, cellphones are being used effectively to enhance student learning in the upper level, Advanced Placement, and International baccalaureate classes that I observe. The cellphone has become a symbol that has led us to a crossroads in the urban classroom.

At the center of the cellphone battle is the threat to the instructor’s control and power in the classroom. Control theories suggest that the fear of *drift*—behavior gaps that occur when social controls have been loosened—has heightened the policy implications for those in authority who fear the loss of control in the classroom and society (Hoffman, 2011). The cellphone causes the classroom to become the symbolic battleground for control. The high numbers of students of color being referred to administration for disciplinary action, suggest a *cultural threat*—an assumption that white middle-class school culture is under attack from minority students that do not buy into the institution of education (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). According to some teachers, in my professional experience, the cellphone is a way for students to disengage from the learning environment—essentially, the teacher-centered classroom. For many students today,

the cellphone represents an extension of their life and a connection to their world.

A potential outcome of the cellphone debate is a pedagogical and ideological paradigm shift. There are teachers that have openly embraced the cellphone and intellectualized it. I observe and participate in classrooms where teachers employ their own websites, apps, YouTube videos, and student photography to drive instruction through cellphones. These teachers are able to engage the *third space*—the area of a student’s life between the classroom and the household (Morrell, 2012; Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013).

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Reading, Writing and Relationships

By Tiffany Hollis

How can teachers and service providers optimize learning in today's classroom setting when they are unprepared to manage behavior? Wilson and Corbett (2001) and Delpit (1995) noted that today's classroom environments should be places in which expectations are clearly stated and inappropriate behaviors are dealt with immediately. To meet the needs of students, teachers and service providers must be prepared to explicitly respond to the students' ethnic, cultural, social, emotional, and cognitive characteristics (Brown, 2003). Delpit (1995) indicated that some children expect more direct verbal commands than their teachers give. When students interpret commands as questions or suggestions and choose not to comply, teachers and administrators often perceive them as uncooperative and insubordinate without understanding their failure to comprehend what is expected (Delpit, 1995). Gaining student cooperation in today's classrooms, requires the establishment of a classroom atmosphere in which teachers are aware of, and address, students' cultural, linguistic, social, emotional, and cognitive needs (Brown, 2004). The physical features, emotional tone, and quality of interactions among students and between students and teachers have a tremendous impact on how or whether learning occurs.

Classroom climates that are "cold," hostile, uninviting, and negative are not conducive to the learning environment for students, and students with behavioral concerns tend to perform better in emotionally warm, caring, and supportive classroom climates (Howard, 2006). As Howard discovered, students preferred "teachers who displayed caring bonds and attitudes towards them, and teachers who establish community-and family-type classroom environments" (p. 131).

Student misbehavior can be attributed to ineffective classroom management and the inability of the teacher to create a rapport with the students in an effort to create a welcoming environment that is conducive to learning. Within the right environment, students can begin to feel engaged and productive. As engagement increases, misbehavior tends to decrease which allows teachers to teach and students to learn.

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Book Review

Martha Bireda's *Cultures in Conflict*

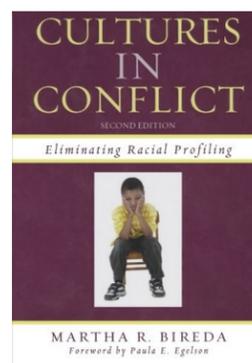
By Tiffany Hollis

The disproportionality of referrals, suspensions, and expulsions of African American students, especially males is not a new issue or phenomenon, but Martha Bireda's work *Cultures in Conflict*, makes a significant contribution to the relevant literature. In the text she successfully connects theory with practical application to address the root causes of racial disparity in discipline. Dr. Bireda shows how culturally conditioned beliefs and cultural misunderstandings, as well as, negative teacher-student interactions can lead to a disproportionate amount of African-American males being suspended or expelled. Dr. Bireda brings a fresh perspective to the school culture debate by combining theory and practical experience in her discussion of school discipline.

In summary, Bireda's book provides teachers and administrators with tools to be effective in the fight for equity in disciplinary practices among all children, particularly minority children. This book is beneficial to aspiring educators, veteran teachers, and administrators. Since the majority of urban youth is taught by white teachers, this book will be helpful. It encourages them to examine their personal cultural biases and faulty assumptions so they can help close the discipline gap. Although there are many books in circulation about on this topic, this book is one of the few that actually provides readers with recommendations that can be implemented and surveys that can be administered to staff to help eliminate racial disparities in urban schools. This book provides insight into the factors that impact African American academic achievement, suggests strategies to implement in the classroom, and acknowledges effective instructional models that improve academic gains made by urban students. Bireda's book provides teachers and administrators with tools to be effective in the fight for equity in disciplinary practices among all children, particularly minority children.

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Tiffany Hollis

In Search of Transformative 21st Century Pedagogy

By Laura Handler

Given the significant contextual shifts in current education, there is an increased emphasis on the utilization of curricula and pedagogical methods that are multi-faceted and comprehensive to effectively improve not only the cognitive, academic performance of students, but also adequately address their social and emotional development (Barber, 1991; Billig, 2004; Kuh, 2008). Furthermore, divisions along racial, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic lines implore the holistic education of students to extend beyond the betterment of the students themselves. Their learning should be embedded within a greater purpose of creating a more just and fair global community (Alexander, 2014; Freire, 1994; Vally & Spreen, 2014). While this perspective of the functions of schools and education is not revolutionary, in the sense of offering original insight, it is revolutionary, in the sense of inciting controversy and challenging the status quo.

In recent decades, service-learning has emerged as a popular methodology that specifically addresses these current needs in education. Its theoretical foundations can be traced back to the social and educational theories of Dewey (1916), who recognized the "problematic distinctions between doing and knowing, emotions and intellect, experience and knowledge, work and play, individual and the world, among other forced dichotomies" (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001, p. 151). He advocated for pedagogical methods of inquiry and experiential learning that valued the application of knowledge—not just its acquisition—because the development of the individual was inseparable from the development of society, and vice versa (Rorty, 1998). His espousing of democratic learning was central to his belief that education should serve to better society as "the means by which citizens became informed, communicated interests, created public opinion, and made decisions" (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 81).

Service-learning offers students opportunities to engage with classmates of different backgrounds, to develop relationships with community members, and to find commonalities amidst diversity. Educators should understand the delicate issues of power and privilege inherent in such initiatives that delineate the providers and the recipients (Borrero, 2012; Butin, 2003). Service-learning that stops short without critical reflection and social action has the potential to have reverse consequences, reinforcing stereotypes and creating more social divisions than intended. Critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2007; Rice & Pollack, 2000) ensures that an equality of voice, reciprocal learning, perspective sharing, and analytical dialogue are included in pedagogical practices so learning can truly be considered transformative.

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Laura Handler

Book Review

Lisa Patel's *Youth Held at the Border*

By Alicia Reid, Alonda Clayborn,
Dymilah Hewitt, and Shanitria Cuthbertson



Alicia Reid



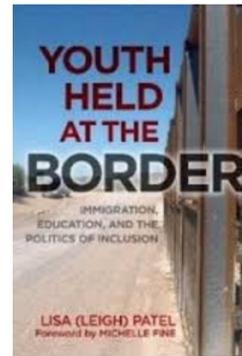
Alonda Clayborn



Dymilah Hewitt



Shanitria Cuthbertson



Youth Held at the Border provides valuable information about a continuously growing population in the form of critical ethnography. It documents the experiences of immigrant youth and their sociopolitical struggle for inclusion in America. The author, Lisa Patel extensively draws upon her personal experiences and the experiences of immigrant students to construct a counter narrative that confronts the myth of meritocracy. The compelling stories of these students and the immigration policies that impact them are analyzed to provide a strong case for the inclusion of marginalized immigrant populations. Ultimately, Patel adds to the discourse on the over politicization of immigration by tackling issues that oppress immigrants—particularly young people.

Patel focuses the lens of immigration on the psychosocial, economic, and educational challenges faced by undocumented immigrant students. She exposes readers to the real issues of immigration by detailing the lived experiences of young people. By taking this approach, Patel's activist tone causes her to reach a broader audience and thereby makes a universal call to address the complex issue of immigration that goes beyond the superficial. Her self-awareness and deep investment in the issues that young immigrants face, fuel her unwavering fight against injustice. An effective strategy Patel used was the inclusion of her personal critiques of the current and previous president. She argues that Bush's No Child Left Behind policy failed to help many of these young immigrants realize their promise and potential. She also notes that deportations have soared under the Obama administration.

The longitudinal nature of the study is also a strength because it gives the author the opportunity to provide detailed information about the educational outcomes of the students. Patel's critiques of the practitioners who work with the immigrant youth in the text can be used to help educators more effectively serve this population. Her portraits of their teaching and leadership methods provide excellent case studies which can be used to demonstrate best practices to emulate. Patel strategically steps outside of disciplinary boundaries of research by including the voices of family members and engaging in discourse about the students' experiences at home. This book strongly expands the literature in the area of immigrant youth by collecting data on cultural and racial borders, low-income status and borders in schooling. Patel explicitly exposes ways that society uses the law to limit immigrant students' access to opportunities. Her strong argument for educators to understand the background of their immigrant students is a definite call for action. Patel did a good job of weaving broad, new existing politics, socioeconomics, and history with the personal stories collected from these students.

While Patel beautifully articulates the voices of the immigrant students in her research, she did not select a wide enough range of immigrant students. The limitation of the geographic location, school district, and local socio political context fails to provide the reader with an alternative view of the immigrant student experience in context.

The major holes and gaps in the work stem from a lack of relevant background information. It would have proven helpful if Patel had included more relevant details about the countries of origin of each student and the various economic, social, and political reasons why he or she chose to migrate to the United States. Patel's arguments would have been even more persuasive if she explained how the United States government may have exacerbated these issues. The work would have benefited from additional information regarding the Boston Public School System. Even though she provides details about the city of Boston, she does not fully describe the school system. This description could have provided a more thorough context for this particular school—and more specifically the students and staff.

Patel's work provides insight into the experience of the "other minority" often represented in the urban education student populous. Larger numbers of immigrant students are finding their way into the classrooms of urban schools across America. Patel's counter narrative stands to increase urban educator awareness of this student population.

Are Year-Round Schools an Underrated Option?

By Katie Brown

Schools across the country are considering alternative school calendars in an effort to boost student achievement. Some states have added instructional days, while others have added hours to the school day. The current traditional school calendar dates back to the 1800s and was designed to accommodate the agricultural calendar (Dixon, 2011; Lynch, 2014). The year-round calendar has been a popular alternative to the traditional school calendar. An estimated two million students in 3,000 schools across 46 states currently attend school on some form of a year-round calendar (Lynch, 2014). Year-round education has had a presence in North Carolina since Wake County started the first year-round program over 25 years ago; the model has more recently been adopted by Project L.I.F.T. schools in Charlotte (Helms, 2012). Michigan is the latest state to jump on the year-round bandwagon; a bill to allow year-round schedules, including a \$2 million allocation for grants for low-performing districts to implement the programs, recently passed both the Michigan state House and Senate and is currently awaiting the governor's signature (Tarsitano, 2014).

Year-round calendars vary in configuration, but most avoid the long summer break by distributing school days more evenly throughout the year. Some year-round schedules go above and beyond state-mandated minimums to include more instructional days than traditional schools. Proponents of the year-round calendar argue that this schedule reduces the learning loss that typically takes place over the long summer break and provides more frequent opportunities for remediation and enrichment. Opponents counter that the year-round schedule disrupts family vacations and takes away valuable time for play and socialization (Dixon, 2011; Lynch, 2014).

While it has been established that poor students are more likely to suffer from summer learning loss (Allington et al., 2010; Blazer, 2011; Donohue & Miller, 2008; Lynch, 2014), and that exposure to academic content during the summer helps to reduce this effect (Allington et al., 2010; Blazer, 2011), many education scholars have stopped short of endorsing the year-round calendar, claiming that the research on year-round schools is inconclusive (Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, & Melson, 2003; Desoff, 2011). As Lynch (2014) points out, "at-risk students do fare better without a long summer break, and other students are not harmed by the year-round schedule" (para. 8). If this is the case, then educators have nothing to lose by trying year-round schooling, and the neediest students have much to gain.

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