



Rossier Researchers Examine Federally-Mandated SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB), schools that have not made adequate yearly progress are required to offer parents of children in low-income families the opportunity to receive extra academic assistance, or supplemental educational services (SES). CEG researcher **Dr. Patricia Burch**, Associate Professor of Education at Rossier, is Co-Investigator for a project to improve student learning and achievement by identifying successful approaches in the organization and management of SES programs within school districts and the delivery of SES programs by approved SES providers. With funding from a \$3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences, Burch and her research team aim to address the following major questions about the implementation and efficacy of SES:

1. How can school districts maximize participation in SES by those students who are eligible and most likely to benefit?
2. What factors influence parent and student choices in selecting (and staying with) SES providers?
3. What are the key characteristics of different program models of SES tutoring, as enacted by providers and as regulated by districts and

states, and how do they influence SES net program impacts?

4. What is the net impact of SES on student achievement?
5. What are the policy levers and program administration variables that state and local educational agencies can use to increase SES program effectiveness?

Currently, Burch has been gathering qualitative and quantitative data on 20 SES vendors in five urban school districts with varying student demographics in Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Chicago, Austin, and Dallas. Preliminary findings are available on the project website and will be presented at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association and the American Sociological Association and at a March 2011 meeting organized by the Center for American Progress and the American Enterprise Institute and aimed at informing reauthorization of NCLB.

In an effort to support public access of data and cross-district exchange of information, the team launched a website with working papers, publications, information on the study design, staffing and activities, and contact information for the study, available at www.usc.edu/cegov/. ■

[FROM THE DEAN]

This issue of *Rossier Reach* examines the critical issues of K-12 governance, management, alternative reform models, and measures of success. The research work of our esteemed faculty members in this field covers not only the subject of charter schools, a major topic in the national education dialogue, but also the economics, organization theory, politics and policies that are driving America's decisions on K-12 schools and education reform.

The work of our Center on Educational Governance, like all six of USC Rossier's nationally recognized Research Centers, is practitioner-driven and focused on real-world applications for successful outcomes.

I hope that you will contact me, or any of our Research faculty, if you have questions about our work.

Karen Symms Gallagher, Ph.D.
*Emery Stoops and
Joyce King Stoops Dean*

[RESEARCH INNOVATION]

K-12 schools

PAVING THE WAY FOR 'SUPERMAN'



THE RECENT DOCUMENTARY, *WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN,"* chronicled the challenges K-12 students and their families face when seeking a quality education in America. Like many of those featured in the film, families across the U.S. have turned to charter and other alternative schools in the attempt to gain the high-caliber education for their children that their local traditional public schools cannot seem to provide. By most measures, the American education system is failing far too many students.

At USC Rossier School of Education, researchers are at the forefront, studying the issues that impact K-12 education in public, private, charter and other alternative schools. How schools are governed, funded, managed and organized to succeed (or fail) are the issues that can critically affect the future of our children.

White House initiatives such as Race to the Top have forced schools to make flexible governance structures a priority. Funding has become attached to offering alternatives, experimentation, and broader portfolios for school management. Those receiving funds must demonstrate innovation, bold approaches to reinventing low-performing schools and their teacher evaluation systems, and adoption of the department's reform goals. Those goals include: embracing common academic standards, improving teacher quality, and creating more comprehensive educational data systems.

In this issue of *Rossier Reach*, we highlight forward-looking research in the areas of charter school innovation, evaluation, and collaboration; education reform in the Los Angeles Unified School District; and the real impact of supplemental educational services on student learning and achievement.

These exemplify the many projects in which USC Rossier research faculty are engaged. Rossier's work leads the field of education policy reform in ways that can truly transform our K-12 schools and the children they serve. ■



Office of the Dean : USC Rossier School of Education

3470 Trousdale Parkway | Waite Phillips Hall, Room 1100 | Los Angeles, California 90089 | 213.740.8994 | <http://rossier.usc.edu/>

Center on Educational Governance | 213.740.0697 | www.usc.edu/cegov/

Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice | 213.740.7401 | www.usc.edu/programs/cepp/

Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis | 213.740.7218 | <http://cheqa.usc.edu/>

Center for Urban Education | 213.740.5202 | <http://cue.usc.edu/>

Center for Cognitive Technology | 310.379.0844 | www.cogtech.usc.edu/

Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation | 213.821.3147 | www.usc.edu/dept/education/core/



LEADING

IN CHARTER SCHOOL RESEARCH

THE CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE (CEG) under the leadership of **Dr. Priscilla Wohlstetter**, took on the issue of charter schools nearly two decades ago when the first charter school law was passed in Minnesota in 1991. There are now 40 states and the District of Columbia that permit charters and close to 5000 schools enroll more than 1.6 million students. Charter schools are autonomous schools of choice that give the school community the freedom to hire staff, make school budgeting decisions, and design the education program. The theory of action suggests that when school communities are given more autonomy, they will try new ways of doing things to improve student achievement.

CEG's work in the area of charter schools is a string of firsts – the first entry in the *World Book Encyclopedia* on charter schools; the first published research article on charters which distilled lessons from Britain's experience with charter-like schools for U.S. charter schools. CEG was a partner in creating the National Center on Charter School Finance and Governance, which offers strategy briefs for state policymakers, profiles of promising practices, and guidebooks on emerging charter issues like family engagement, public-private partnerships, and charter management organizations. CEG also developed the first accountability tool for evaluating California charter school performance statewide – Charter School Indicators-USC (CSI-USC). Now CEG is leading the first comprehensive, systematic review of research on charter schools, as part of a 5-year national evaluation, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. CEG's assistant director, **Dr. Joanna Smith**, leads the effort.

Charter School Indicators-USC, now in its sixth year, rates charter schools in California on 12 indicators of performance. The *Wall Street Journal* recognized the uniqueness of CSI-USC's performance indicators, noting that it was the first of its kind to feature measures of financial health, in addition to academic measures. CSI-USC also rates schools on academic productivity – for the amount of money spent per child, what is the school's output in terms of student achievement. The data for CSI is downloaded from California's state data system, and individual charter schools are rated from 1 to 10 on each performance indicator. With the release of the CSI-USC 2010, CEG added an online, searchable database

that invites users to compare a single school's performance over time and to benchmark the performance of groups of schools of interest. CEG researcher **Dr. Guilbert Hentschke** is the CSI-USC innovator. CEG's indicator work is now serving as a model for the development of a national charter school data warehouse, funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Reformers envisioned that charter schools would serve as "idea labs" for public schooling – places where new ideas could be developed, incubated and scaled-up if they worked. There's a gap, however, between idea creators and potential users – diffusing innovation and scaling-up successful models of schooling hasn't occurred much.

To help address the gap, CEG, in collaboration with the charter community, has held competitions to identify promising practices in school governance, finance and curriculum and instruction. The award winners are profiled in an on-line compendium of promising practices. The compendium is designed around school problems that affect the quality of schooling and ultimately student achievement. The profiles are intended to get users to think out-of-the-box and what their appetite to try something new. A contact person at the school site and relevant resources are also provided in the profile so that users can follow-up easily with creators of the practice.

Charter schools, themselves, have also been concerned about replicating innovation and with help from the philanthropic community, a new phenomenon has emerged, charter management organizations (CMOs) – networks of schools that share the same education program. CEG's research, the first national study of CMOs, examined the process of scaling-up.

CEG is about to embark on a new study comparing CMOs to traditional school districts. Are CMOs bureaucracies like school districts, or do they represent a different form of organization? Early evidence suggests many CMOs are highly successful in educating the students they serve – largely urban, poor, ethnic minorities. CEG's study asks questions that compare the structures and processes of the two systems.

The pioneering work of CEG continues to lead the field in the study of governance, management and performance of charter schools. ■

Hybrid High School to **Provide Alternative** for High-Needs Students

USC HYBRID HIGH SCHOOL MOVED ANOTHER STEP CLOSER

to realization in December 2010 with the announcement that it had received a starter grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the first Gates Foundation grant awarded to Rossier.

USC Hybrid High will be a year-round school, open seven days a week and ten hours a day, allowing students the ability to create flexible and personalized schedules. Its aim is to provide an alternative to traditional urban high schools for high-needs students who are most likely to drop

out of school.

"This generous grant enables the project to begin an immediate search for a very gifted headmaster," said **Dr. David Dwyer**, Research Professor and Katzman-Ernst Chair in Educational Entrepreneurship, Technology, and Innovation at Rossier and project director. "The Gates Foundation grant will allow this leader to be involved in planning, selecting future staff, and engaging students, parents, and community organizations who share the vision." ■

CEG

EXAMINING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE INITIATIVE

WHAT TO DO WITH CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS? This question is being asked by educators, policymakers, researchers and parents across the country. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) decided to do something no other school district in the United States had done before – allow teams of educators to compete to turn around underperforming schools and operate newly built schools throughout the district. This initiative, entitled the Public School Choice Initiative (PSCI), is being watched by policymakers and educators across the nation.

To further the work of the PSCI, LAUSD joined with researchers from the USC Rossier School of Education, Unite-LA/Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, and several other partners to bid on a grant from the federal Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), part of the historic \$5 billion investment in school reform in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The proposal, entitled Los Angeles' Bold Competition: Turning Around and Operating Its Low-Performing Schools, was rewarded this summer with a highly competitive \$6-million, three-year i3 grant. Of the nearly 1,700 applicants for i3 grants, only 49 were awarded to organizations attempting innovative education reform.

The Public School Choice Initiative

will allow competition among teams of internal and external stakeholders, such as local educators, administrators, community members and organizations, charter school operators, non-profit organizations, and labor partners. Winning applicant teams for each site accept the opportunity to manage a designated "focus" school (the bottom one percent of low-performing LAUSD public schools) or newly established "relief" school (designated to ease overcrowding in schools

that have been operating on year-round calendars and have been identified by a bond initiative for new campuses). Over time, the PSCI expects to include up to 200 focus schools and 50 relief schools.

Applicant teams for the Initiative select from a variety of governance models, all of which are currently used in LAUSD schools. For example, a team may propose to operate a pilot school, charter school, extended site-based management model, or a traditional school. These models vary in the levels of autonomy the school will have from district and union policies, and in flexibility over resource use. Teams explain their proposed governance model and provide a detailed description of their proposed educational plan. All applications go through an extensive review process that includes a community advisory vote where the teams present plans to parents and citizens, review by expert panels and the superintendent, and a school board vote. The long-term goal of the Initiative is to create a rich portfolio of high-performing schools that are tailored to – and supported by – the local community.

The i3 research project funds will support LAUSD and its partners as they work to enhance LAUSD's Public School Choice Initiative, and will support the implementation of accountability and continuous improvement measures. The Rossier research team, led by Center on Educational Governance researchers **Drs. Dominic Brewer, Julie Marsh** and **Katharine Strunk**, is tasked with evaluating the effects of the Initiative on student and other important outcomes and with providing feedback to LAUSD and its partners to help them refine their processes.

The Rossier team will first examine implementation and intermediate outcomes. Researchers will seek to understand and

document: 1) the support provided to applicant teams for developing plans and to selected teams for implementing their educational programs; 2) the ways in which LAUSD holds schools accountable for achieving stated goals; and 3) the efforts to engage parents and community in the process. The team will also track the numbers and types of applicants, new policies developed to support the initiative, the quality of plans and the program implemented, and the quality of accountability and monitoring structures over time. Ultimately, the study will also examine the effects of the initiative on school personnel and student outcomes.

The overall evaluation will utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers will interview leaders in the Initiative; survey applicant teams and principals; observe public meetings; conduct case studies of select schools as they progress through all phases of the Initiative, from application to implementation; analyze proposal documents; analyze student outcome data; and compare PSCI schools to non-Initiative schools.

The research project is particularly significant because the PSCI model may provide important data to inform similar reforms across the country. With the Initiative, LAUSD joins a growing number of districts that are implementing Portfolio District Reform and school turnaround models. The LAUSD Initiative is innovative in its commitment to ensure that the newly implemented schools – whether focus or relief schools – meet the contextualized needs of their communities. The Initiative provides a distinct opportunity to study the portfolio-turnaround hybrid model of reform and obtain reliable outcomes estimates, made possible by LAUSD's commitment to transparency and the administration's desire to partner with the Rossier research team. ■