



Perspectives

Newsletter of the Pennsylvania School Study Council

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Spring 2009

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Inside this issue:

Executive Director's Perspective 2

PSSC Research Grant Award Winners 4

Reflections from Australia 6

Bill Boyd Mentorship Award

Last year the Education Policy Studies Student Association (EPSSA) created the Bill Boyd Mentorship Award in order to recognize the outstanding mentorship of the Education Policy Studies faculty members.

In the inaugural year of the award, EPSSA hosted a ceremony to honor Dr. Boyd as a dedicated scholar and teacher who treated his students as equals and generously shared his time and knowledge.

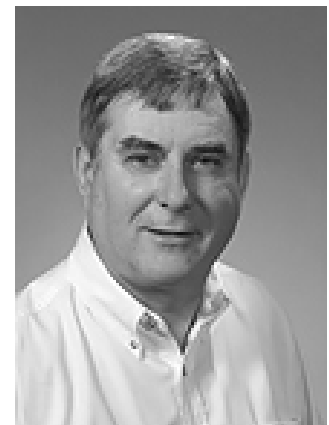
Each year EPSSA would like to continue honoring Dr. Boyd by recognizing a faculty member from any Education Policy Studies program who demonstrates the same generosity and kindness as Dr. Boyd.

This year nominations

were accepted during the month of March. At the end of the nomination period, the faculty members who were nominated by students were entered into a voting poll.

Graduate students in Educational Leadership, Educational Theory and Policy Studies, and Higher Education had the opportunity to vote for the faculty member that they felt demonstrated the qualities that Dr. Boyd possessed.

Voting for the Bill Boyd Mentorship Award took place the 3rd week in March through an anonymous online voting poll. The faculty member who received the most number of votes will be awarded the Bill Boyd Mentorship Award.



This year, EPSSA will present Dr. Paul Begley with the Bill Boyd Mentorship Award. Dr. Begley is currently a professor of Educational Leadership in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Penn State.

In April, EPSSA will hold a ceremony to recognize Dr. Begley and his achievement as an outstanding mentor for graduate students in the program.

Executive Director's Perspective

Gaining a More Global Perspective

When PSSC Executive Director, Paul Begley, proposed a school study trip to Australia, it sounded like a great excuse to visit a country I had always dreamed of visiting. While I understood that we would visit schools while touring the country, I had no idea what an incredibly valuable professional experience the trip would be.

We all talk about the world becoming more globalized, and we have some vague idea of how

this will impact the future of today's children in terms of job opportunities. However, few of us really know what this means, or what globalization actually does, or will, look like. And, even fewer of us take advantage of the opportunities that exist to get out there and see what the world has to offer. In doing so, we realize not only the differences that exist, but the many similarities as well.

The PSSC school study trip to Australia brought five of us to the country down under. Joining Paul Begley and I on the trip



Jillian Reese, Associate Director of the PSSC.

were Dr. Bill Bush, Superintendent of Elk Lake School District, Dr. Nancy Tuana, Executive Director of the Rock Ethics Institute, and Marilyn Begley, Managing Editor of the American Journal of Education. The five of us journeyed from State College, PA to Sydney, New South Wales; Brisbane, Queensland; and Cairns, Queensland, where we explored much more than just the schools and universities. We learned about the culture, climate, wildlife, and the relationship that exists between this continent and ours.

From the schools in Manly Beach, just a ferry ride from Sydney, to those closer to the Great Barrier Reef in Cairns, we found many similarities to our North American schools. We discovered as much diversity in the school leaders and students as one would expect to find in schools from New York City and State College, PA. Some

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Executive Director Perspective (Con't)

leaders were extraordinarily committed to the students and it showed in the confidence and poise of the youngsters. Others were struggling with the many demands of the job and trying their best just to keep things running. In general, the Australian schools were focused on many of the same issues as those in North America, including standardized testing, accountability, reduced funding, changing demographics, and technology.

Still, we found elements of many Australian schools that contrasted from ours. To begin with, almost all students in Australia wear school uniforms. Hats and backpacks are often-times also part of the uniform, and in schools with stricter codes shoes are included. Thanks to a much milder climate, the schools are generally more open, with cafeterias and gymnasiums being concrete slabs totally exposed to the outdoors. Snakes and frogs in the common areas are, therefore, to be expected. Middle schools

do not exist in Australia, with primary schools going from Prep (Kindergarten) to 7th or 8th grade, and secondary schools continuing on through the 12th grade. And, school leaders are not certified for such positions but rather trained and promoted from within the school system. These differences caused our group to reflect on our own system of education and analyze the strengths and weaknesses.

As we toured from school to school, city to city, we observed many factors other than those related to the schools, but just as important to our understanding of the relationship between this continent and ours. We discovered that Australians are also concerned with the environment and climate change, but they deal with things slightly differently. They regularly suggest limiting showers, require room keys in hotels to activate the lights and air, and are addressing issues related to "sustainability" on many levels. We also observed

the huge influence of the American culture on Australian television, movies, and magazines. More than one student referred to their interest in *The Simpsons*. We discovered that Australians are incredibly friendly people, always going out of their way to help. And, we experienced the natural beauty of the country from the kangaroos and koalas to the rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef.

For me, the school study trip to Australia was much more than a long vacation. It was truly an experience to remember that will contribute to my understandings of the world and our relationships within it. It is our responsibility as educators to encourage students to develop similar understandings so they will be prepared to meet the demands of a global world. I encourage everyone to take advantage of opportunities like this one in the future.

Jillian Reese
Associate Director



2008/2009 PSSC Research Grant Award Winners

During the Spring Semester of 2008, the PSSC surveyed member organizations on their information needs and research priorities. The research priorities that had been identified were promoted among the students and faculty of the College of Education.

Five research award grants were awarded during the Spring 2009 semester to graduate students in the Educational Leadership Department at Penn State. The winners and their research studies are highlighted below.

Leadership in Green Schools: School Principals as Agents of Social Responsibility

Carly R. Ackley

Description of Study:

The purpose of my study was to examine the leadership practices of school principals who are promoting a social responsibility agenda; specifically through their work in a "green school." A green school, as it is defined by the American Association of School Administrators (2008) is a "facility that creates a healthy learning environment for children and educators while reducing environmental impacts and lowering operating costs, thereby saving schools energy, resources and money.

A green school observes green building and maintenance practices by using green chemicals or other alternatives to toxic chemicals; seeks to be energy efficient and mindful of resource consumption; serves nutritious food; and teaches students the importance of school, community and the earth's environment and resources." With this definition in mind, I investigated how social responsibility agendas like green schools are promoted and advanced on a daily

basis by school based advocates in administrative roles. To conduct such an inquiry, I compared the practices and intentional actions of a sample of school leaders working in green schools to the documented practices from the literature on leaders of more standard public schools. This comparison highlighted the differences and similarities of practice between the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the leadership duties of a green school versus that of a standard public school. With this information insights from the study have been revealed and provide a look at the nature of leadership in this specific socially responsible arena.

Assessing the Impact of Legal Issues on Private Boarding Schools

Angela Duncan

Description of Study:

My research centered on identifying the legal issues which trouble boarding school administrators. This research was designed to point out which legal issues cause the greatest degree of organizational discomfort for administrators of these organizations.

The research was carried out for three major reasons: to help schools write better handbooks, enrollment agreements, and faculty contracts; to help schools to prepare for/ avoid (to the best of their abilities) potentially problematic litigation; and to identify avenues for and topics for professional development of staff and administration in handling litigious situations.

While this study was boarding school specific, the findings were universally applicable and implemented a survey

instrument which can be used to assess the impact of many different school-related issues in any type of school.

Leadership Perspectives on the Creation and Maintenance of Positive School Culture

Dan Schochor

Description of Study:

This study focused on the creation of positive school culture at the independent school level. The central questions guiding this research were: (1) What comprises school culture in independent schools? (2) How do stakeholders at The Polk School define school culture? (3) According to the stakeholders at The Polk School, who has the most influence over the school culture? (4) How do stakeholders in one independent school perceive school culture in their school as opposed to public schools? Is it the same? Is it different? If so, how? (5) What impact, if any, does school culture have on academic performance (as perceived by independent school stakeholders)? (6) Do the leaders in one independent school see themselves as influencing school culture? Do the other stakeholders in this school see the leaders as influencing school culture? If so, what specific actions can school leaders take to influence school culture positively? In order to address these questions a single-site case study was conducted at an independent school, The Polk School, located in the Middle Atlantic States.

This case study used a multitude of in-depth interviews as a means of data collection. Nine school community members holding different positions within the school community were interviewed, twice each. A review of the literature was conducted

2008/2009 PSSC Research Grant Award Winners (Con't)

that focused on a variety of scholars. Some of the literature focusing on the connection between school culture and academic achievement, leadership theory, and leadership and its direct effect on school culture was also included.

The emergent theory created in this study can be used as a tool for practitioners. The study was conducted in a manner that allowed for the detailed examination of a single school environment. Future studies can look to compare what was found at The Polk School with findings from schools across geographic regions, or comparing schools located in close proximity to one another. Research can also be conducted within a single school, focusing on individual stakeholder groups (students, faculty, and administration) and their views on positive school culture and their specific role in creating it.

The Formation and Development of Moral Literacy as a Component of Pre-service Teacher Identity Development Dipali Puri

Description of Study:

This research study focuses on the formation and development of moral literacy as a component of pre-service teacher identity. The purpose of this study is as a preliminary investigation to determine the contribution to, and impact of, formal teacher training education programs on the personal and professional development of pre-service teachers' moral literacy. This study will examine the development of pre-service teacher identity from the perspective of the candidates as a process of becoming. This study

will focus on the relationship between personal experiences and professional training as influences on the formation of pre-service teachers' moral literacy.

The following methods and research techniques will be employed to answer the research questions and study the professional socialization and moral literacy development among pre-service teachers. A literature review surrounding moral literacy and professional socialization will be conducted to provide a foundation for the study. Qualitative research methods, specifically interviews and document analysis, will be utilized in this study. Due to the nature of this study, purposeful sampling will be employed to recruit participants.

The Influence of School Discipline Policies on the Decision Making Process for Principals

Hollie Mackey

Description of Study:

School discipline is becoming increasingly restrictive and punitive in response to the levels of violence and type of infractions being witnessed in schools. Many schools have moved towards zero-tolerance and "three strikes and you're out" policies. Policies of this nature result in suspension, whether in school or out, and expulsion being used as a pro-active measure in maintaining safety in schools.

What proponents of these policies fail to recognize is the cost of exclusion to both the school and the greater community. This study is intended to assess the degree to which principals perceive their discretion in decision making is limited by the adoption of



zero tolerance policies within their school districts. Open-ended interviews will be conducted with 25 principals and assistant principals in PSSC member school districts to determine the effect of these policies and the ways in which school leaders retain the ability to use discretion while working within a set of discipline policies that have little gray area.

Emergent themes from the interviews will be used to design a survey that will measure school leaders' readiness and commitment to school discipline reform that is aligned with a social justice philosophy. The results of the survey and content of the interviews will provide valuable information that will assist in developing strategies for school climate improvement, integration of moral literacy and professional development for implementing social justice practices for school leaders.

All five of the PSSC research grant award winners are currently doctoral students at Penn State University.

Reflections on Australian Schools

Dr. William Bush

I recently had the chance of a lifetime to participate on an educational trip to Australia. We spent a total of 13 days visiting 10 different state schools and 2 universities in Sydney, Brisbane, and Cairns. The trip was organized by the Pennsylvania School Study Council. There were a total of 5 educators; four Penn State University professors and myself. I currently serve as the Superintendent of a small rural school district in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

There are notable differences as well as numerous similarities between our school systems and the Australian school system. One of the major differences is the funding and organization of the Australian schools. The funding for Australian schools comes from both state and federal revenues. Unlike American schools there is no "local effort" or property taxes that help fund schools.

In addition to funding formulas, the other major difference with our schools is how schools are organized. Australian schools are separated into private or "Catholic" and "state" schools. Aus-

tralian "state" schools are similar to our "public" schools. Both the "state" and "Catholic" schools are fully funded for the general population to attend. Parents may choose Catholic schools if they choose to have their child receive a faith based education.

We visited a number of "state" schools. They included Forest Lake State School, Forest Lake State Elementary, Harlan State, and Toogoolawah State High School and Edge Hill State school. We also visited a number of Catholic schools which included St. Kierans Catholic School, St. Mary's Catholic School, Manly Primary School, and Stella Maris College, and St. Andrews Catholic College (High School), and St. Andrews Catholic College Redlynch Valley, Trinity Anglican School.

Another noticeable difference of the Australian schools is the physical layout of the school campus. While the American schools are usually a solid mass or "block" structure, the Australian schools were made up of many interconnected buildings. The level of school determined which buildings were interconnected. For example if it were an elementary school the buildings were the different grades. At the high school level the buildings were the disciplines such as math, science, music, industrial arts,

Lunch time was another notable change from our schools. It was strange to see students go outside for lunch. They were free to sit and socialize while eating with anyone or anywhere near their classrooms they choose to. There are no lunch programs with prepared meals for students to purchase. Although many schools do have a "Canteen" available on campus to purchase drinks, ice cream or other snacks, students for the most part bring their lunch from home. After

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Manuscript Requirements:

Generally, manuscripts should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words in length. Prospective author(s) must include a statement which indicates they agree to the submission of the manuscript, and that the manuscript has not been published, and is not under consideration for publication, in part or in substance, elsewhere.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced and leave wide margins.

Manuscripts should not identify the author(s) of the work. A separate page should be included which provides the author(s)' details, including contact information (address and e-mail).

Send to Dipali Puri, editor at dxp175@psu.edu

Reflections on Australian Schools (Con't)

completing lunch students are able to engage in various activities of their choosing.

It also caught my attention that when students were outside they were required to wear a hat. When students are on campus there is a concerted effort to make sure all students have a hat of some type of head cover to shield them from the sun. There is an extremely high incidence of skin cancer in Australia, so school officials are enthusiastic to ensure all students are properly covered.

One of the most striking features that you don't see is the big "yellow school bus" that is a part of the Pennsylvania school districts. The bright yellow school buses that dot the American landscape are non-existent in Australia. Students at urban/suburban schools walk to school or have their parents drive them. Students in the rural areas that we visited rode to and from school via charter buses.

Also noteworthy is the structure of leadership training. It is vastly different than ours here in Pennsylvania. In Australia teachers apply for an administrative position when it becomes available. Once they are selected for the position they begin their administrative courses. In Pennsylvania we take our administrative course requirements first and then get appointed to administrative positions. Since I was very impressed with the Australian Principals both systems seem to fit the needs of the educational system.

principals that were assigned to the schools we visited. They have more administrators per student ratio than we do. The Principal oversees the building operations. They are assisted by Deputy Principals and if the number of students are warranted Assistant Principals and Curriculum Directors are added to the staff.

The similarities of the two systems are many. Safety is a major concern. Due to the fact school campuses are so open school officials are concerned for the safety and welfare of their students. School Lock Down drills are a part of school policy. This concern is genuine even though there has not been a history of school violence directed towards students to date.

Australian schools make a concerted effort to keep class size as low as possible. Most of the classes in the elementary level we observed had 15 – 20 students.

At the high school level most of the classes averaged around 20 students. These class sizes were consistent with the concern that more and more students were coming to school lacking some of the essential skills to be successful in school. Obviously the smaller class sizes enabled teachers to work with students.

Australian schools face the same challenges as American schools in regards to high stakes testing.

Australia has recently adopted a

national assessment for students to take each year. The results are published and each school is now being rated as to "how good" they are. The Principals are scrambling to evaluate the data and determine the best way to impact instruction and increase student instruction. Every administrator I spoke to feels the added pressure of the national test results. In addition to the nationalized test school officials feel certain a national curriculum will be added. The high stakes testing phenomenon we have experienced in Pennsylvania is alive and well in Australia.

Of all the similarities and differences of the two systems I observed and discussed with our Australian counterparts my strongest and lasting impression is the one of professionalism and commitment to students exhibited by the Australian Principals and educators. They truly care about students and make it the focal point of their profession.

In conclusion, what a golden opportunity to visit another country to see it's culture and it's schools. It is comforting to know that the struggles we face each day in educating students is the same half way around the world. Don't feel despair or give up hope. The students you are impacting today are the students that will remember you and pass on the gifts you have given them to the next generation.

Dr. Bush is a Superintendent and Vice President of PSSC



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Serving Pennsylvania Educators since 1947

The Pennsylvania School Study Council

Founded in 1947, the Pennsylvania School Study Council (PSSC) is a partnership between Penn State University and member school districts, intermediate units, and area vocational-technical schools. PSSC is dedicated to improving public education in Pennsylvania by providing up-to-date research information, professional development activities and technical assistance that will enable its members to provide top quality educational services to students.

Mission:

We believe that....

- PSSC's primary function is to provide services in response to identified member needs.
- PSSC services should be unique and have a competitive advantage.
- PSSC services should be easily attainable, timely, effective and helpful.
- PSSC must respond to changing circumstances with creativity and innovation.
- PSSC must use an entrepreneurial approach to providing services to its constituency.
- Professional integrity and responsible management of resources is essential.
- Personal contact is an important component of services offered and delivered.
- Integrity and collegiality must characterize relationships between PSSC, member LEA's and the University.

Perspectives
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