

# POLICY NOTES

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## Addressing Achievement Gaps

### After the Bell Rings: Learning Outside of the Classroom and Its Relationship to Student Academic Achievement

Education reform began with the schools, as advocates pushed for rigorous academic standards, enriched curricula and accurate tests. Improve the schools, reformers thought, and the achievement gaps separating low-income minority students from their more affluent White peers would vanish. But more than two decades later, those gaps remain, and to some reformers,



Photo by C. Fournier/ SUNY Rockland CC

Edmund Gordon

one reason is clear: the schools, where children spend only a fraction of each day, can't do it alone.

“Schools are essential, but we’ve got to do something about the rest of the lives of children,” psychologist and education researcher **Edmund**

**W. Gordon** told an audience of 200 assembled for ETS’s recent achievement gaps symposium on

out-of-school learning. “Since learners spend so much of their time outside of the institution that we call school, we’ve got to give a lot more attention to manipulating and exploiting the educative functions of living itself.”

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**“Schools are essential, but we’ve got to do something about the rest of the lives of children.” — Edmund Gordon**

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For the past three years, Gordon and a group of colleagues convened by ETS and Columbia University’s Teachers College, and sponsored by the College Board®, have met to discuss the nature and impact of children’s out-of-school learning experiences. The work of the National Study Group on Supplementary Education,

## THIS ISSUE

### After the Bell Rings: Learning Outside of the Classroom and its Relationship to Student Academic Achievement

Each day, children spend more hours outside of school than in it. Yet education reformers have principally targeted the classroom, paying relatively little attention to what goes on during out-of-school hours. Now, however, reformers are beginning to realize that closing the stubborn achievement gaps separating low-income minority students from their more affluent White peers requires new attention to the many varieties of out-of-school learning — tutoring, summer school, even educational television. Efforts to expand and coordinate such supplementary education programs face many of the same obstacles that bedevil classroom reforms: budgets are tight, alignment with other educational efforts is imperfect, and proving that new initiatives increase achievement can be problematic. Still, with a new presidential administration apparently committed to rethinking education policy, it may be an auspicious moment for carrying education reform beyond the classroom.

The promise of supplementary education was the focus of “After the Bell Rings: Learning Outside of the Classroom and Its Relationship

*(continued on page 11)*

whose policy statement is forthcoming, informed ETS's conference "After the Bell Rings: Learning Outside of the Classroom and Its Relationship to Student Academic Achievement," held October 5–6 at the Fairmont Hotel in Washington, D.C. The conference, whose roster of two dozen speakers included researchers, advocates and educational administrators, was the 12th in ETS's six-year series of "Addressing Achievement Gaps" symposia. The conference was co-sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and co-conveners included A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education; the After-School Corporation; the Institute for Educational Leadership and its Coalition for Community Schools; the National Council of La Raza; and the National Urban League.

Out-of-school learning has always played an important role in children's lives, conference speakers agreed — although they jostled gently, with each other and with audience members, over whether such education is best identified as "supplementary," "supplemental," "complementary" or "comprehensive." Whatever the label, and however long-standing the issues, increased attention to achievement gaps has turned a brighter spotlight on the way students spend their non-school hours: a University of Pittsburgh study concluded that 57 percent of achievement stems from non-school factors, said conference speaker **Pascal D. (Pat) Forgione Jr.**, Executive Director of ETS's Center on K–12 Assessment and Performance Management.

The policy implications of such findings are manifold, conference speakers said. Once we acknowledge the impact of non-school influences on student achievement, some speakers argued, we must demand broadened access to such social supports as child care and health insurance — what Gordon called "a stabilization of the floor under existence."

Other speakers advocated lengthening the school day and year, to more closely match the time that most developed nations devote to education. And still other speakers stressed the importance of turning out-of-school hours into educationally productive time, especially for low-income children. Years ago, Gordon recalled, parents in Harlem told him they had done their part once they had gotten their children to school; meanwhile, parents in the affluent suburb where Gordon was raising his own family were filling their children's days with tutoring and library visits. "The rest of our lives constitute important sources of education, and we've got to exploit them, improve them, utilize them, as much as we do schools themselves," Gordon said. "And nobody needs to hear that message more than some of our economically disadvantaged, socially marginalized families." Since low-income children often attend less effective schools, pointed out conference speaker **Heather Weiss**, Director of the Harvard Family Research Project, when they miss out on supplementary learning opportunities as well, "the debt compounds."

In a draft executive summary of its policy statement, circulated at the conference, Gordon's National Study Group on Supplementary Education calls for coordinated government and private-sector efforts to integrate in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities for all children. "Because of moral and legal imperatives, and in order to secure our economic future, it is now time to update and upgrade the ways that we prepare our children for life in the 21st century," the draft says. "In the hours that young people spend outside schools, we need to do better."

The draft lays out an ambitious agenda, calling for a reduction in school funding disparities among states; the development of comprehensive

out-of-school programs and curricula; an accountability system that broadens the definition of student achievement to include not only reading and math, but also such qualities as critical thinking and creativity; the funding and dissemination of research on effective out-of-school programs; and intensive efforts to increase parental and community involvement in children's development. As a first step, the draft proposes the creation of government-funded community resource centers that would help families and communities support child development and would identify and publicize local resources for supplementary education. "Just as health does not begin and end in hospitals, education does not begin and end in schools," the draft says. "The nation must begin seeing public education as we see public health, as a comprehensive approach to social well-being."

## Beyond One Size Fits All

Across the country, conference speakers said, educators and advocates have developed a wide range of out-of-school programs, some as venerable as the 1960s War on Poverty, some as newfangled as the most up-to-date website. These programs vary along many dimensions. They take place after school, in the summer, or whenever a child turns on a television or a computer. They are run by schools, in community centers or through universities. They serve different age groups, for different lengths of time. They incorporate academic preparation, college access, civic engagement, even just plain fun. Just as engineers build redundancy into mechanical systems — ensuring that, if one component fails, others will provide backup — so, too, supplementary programs that pick up where schools leave off can create a beneficial redundancy, offering many ways for children

to acquire the skills, habits and knowledge they need for success, conference speakers said. "The array of educational opportunities, of development opportunities, is what's important," said **Hal Smith**, the National Urban League's Vice President for education. "There probably is not one model that is going to work across the age span, or even within a certain age band, to serve all of what young people need."

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Some supplementary education programs take direct aim at test scores, speakers noted. Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, schools that fail to meet achievement targets must offer their students tutoring, often supplied by commercial vendors under contract to school districts. Traditionally, summer school performed a similar catch-up function for struggling, often reluctant students. But now, inspired by data showing that all students — and especially low-income students — lose skills and knowledge over the summer, school districts and nonprofit organizations from Boston to Wyoming are striving to move beyond that "remedial, sort of punitive model," said conference speaker **Jeffrey Smink**, Vice President of policy for the National Summer Learning Association. The most successful summer programs mix academic enrichment, field trips, mentoring and community engagement, he said, to produce something that looks and feels different from school. With a Baltimore study attributing two-thirds of the ninth-grade test-score gap in reading to summertime effects, "summer represents an untapped resource for closing the achievement gap," Smink said.

## Why Summer Learning?

- **Summer Slide**

- 39 empirical studies find evidence of summer learning loss
- Most students lose two months of math skills
- Low-income students lose two months in reading achievement while middle-class peers make gains

- **Achievement Gap**

- Two-thirds of the ninth-grade reading achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities
- Summer learning loss has negative impact on high school graduation and college attendance rates

Source: National Summer Learning Association

Supplementary education programs also seek to keep low-income and minority students on track to high school graduation and beyond, speakers said. The National Urban League’s Project Ready, run at 16 affiliates around the country, stresses college preparation and access, Smith said. The federally funded TRIO programs, including 1960s-vintage Upward Bound and Talent Search, offer a mix of summertime, weekend and after-school services — including tutoring, counseling and mentoring — to disadvantaged students, especially those whose parents did not attend college. Studies of some TRIO programs have shown that participating students are more likely to continue their education after high school, said conference speaker **Ngondi A. Kamatuka**, the Director of educational opportunity programs at the University of Kansas.

Data also testify to the effectiveness of the community school model of supplementary education, under which the school becomes a center for academic, health and social services, said conference speaker **Martin J. Blank**, President of the Institute for Educational Leadership and director of its Coalition for Community Schools. A community school builds partnerships with other organizations, and it stays open past the final bell of the school day, hosting after-school programs, internships and neighborhood gatherings. Community schools build on the insight that low-income students often lack social capital, the network of relationships that support learning, Blank said. “What community schools do is recreate those connections,” he said, “because they have universities and community-based organizations and hospitals and families all working together.”

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**“Summer represents an untapped resource for closing the achievement gap.”** — *Jeffrey Smink*

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Such broadened forms of community cooperation are integral to the educational efforts of the National Council of La Raza, which has organized 85 of its local affiliates into an expanded learning network, said conference speaker **Delia Pompa**, La Raza’s Vice President for education. At Alta Vista High School in Kansas City, Missouri, a La Raza after-school and summertime enrichment program exposes students to college and career choices, arranges internships, and offers courses on such “soft” job skills as showing up on time. The high school has a Hispanic graduation rate three times the national average, Pompa said. Other La Raza affiliates take different approaches to integrating in-school and out-of-school learning, she said: a Chicago community center keeps a parent liaison on the staff of its after-school program to help guide immigrant families

through their contacts with school officials; and a Houston charter school shares a building with a community center, where students can take photography classes and join the champion drum line.

What Happens in a Community School?	
After-school enrichment and extended learning	Early child development
Family support	Family and community engagement
Adult education and workforce classes	Community-based learning
Health, mental health and prevention services	Violence prevention

Source: Coalition for Community Schools

Not all supplementary education comes in institutionalized packages, pointed out conference speaker **Susan Zelman**, Senior Vice President of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB): public television is an important source of supplementary education, especially for low-income children, who watch more TV than do their middle-class peers. For 14 years, federal Ready to Learn grants have funded CPB efforts to improve the reading skills of young children in high-poverty broadcast markets, Zelman said. The initiative includes online courses for parents and caregivers, kid-friendly websites featuring educational games and activities, a curriculum based on the popular shows “Sesame Street” and “Between the Lions,” and outreach efforts to day care centers and after-school programs. Parents can even sign up to receive cell-phone messages in which cuddly Elmo from “Sesame Street” encourages adults to help children turn everyday objects into props in an alphabet game.

Over the past four years, research into the effectiveness of the Ready to Learn efforts has shown that several public television programs help improve young children’s vocabulary, letter recognition and enthusiasm for reading, said conference speaker **Barbara E. Lovitts**, CPB’s Director of research and evaluation. And research into the literacy initiative’s “social marketing” components — efforts to involve parents and caregivers in their children’s out-of-school learning — has found that some approaches work better than others. “Messages such as ‘Read to your child for 15 minutes a day’ and ‘Help prepare your child for school’ are not messages that resonate with low-income parents,” Lovitts said. “Low-income parents do not see themselves as their children’s first teachers.” The new, improved messages, she said, stress that parents can help children learn around the clock (“Any time is learning time”) and that such help is critical for a future beyond school (“Preparing your child for success in life”).

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But as educators and advocates try to squeeze education into every moment of the day, they must not lose sight of what may be squeezed out, warns the Michigan public television documentary “Where Do the Children Play?”, an excerpt from which was shown at the conference. Children once spent hours in unstructured play, often outdoors, building imaginary worlds, discovering nature and learning how to negotiate, compromise and follow rules. But especially in the affluent suburbs, children now spend most of their out-of-school time tethered to electronic media or

participating in extracurricular activities planned and organized by adults. These changes have undermined children's health and impoverished their emotional lives, said conference speaker **Gil Leaf**, whose wife, University of Michigan lecturer and author Elizabeth Goodenough, wrote the book on which the Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary is based. "Imagination and creativity is going to be the competitive edge for America," Leaf said, "and what we're doing instead is regimenting kids."

Deploying supplementary education to close achievement gaps could potentially reduce the time available for unstructured play even further, noted conference speaker **Ronald Ferguson**, a Harvard researcher. But psychologist Gordon insisted that this need not be so. "In the fullest conception of what education ought to be about, it would include children's play," Gordon said. "I see us including what is already there, but trying to focus it more effectively on the academic and the personal development of kids."

## Better Than Leftovers

Although supplementary education programs take different forms, similar policy implications emerge across the spectrum, speakers said: successful programs develop in response to local needs, rely on strong community partnerships, and insist on high quality. "The further away that the intervention is initiated, the less likely that it will be well implemented," argued Harvard researcher Weiss. And spending more time on education without improving the quality of instruction will not yield learning dividends, conference speakers warned. "If all we do with that time is reproduce what we do not do very well now, then all we're going to get is more of the same," said **Carlos Rodriguez**, Principal Research Scientist at the American Institutes for Research.

Public television's high production values show what supplementary education can be at its best, said conference speaker **Dennie Wolf**, of consultants Wolf Brown. Zelman set the conference audience's feet tapping when she screened an excerpt from "The Electric Company," a hip-hop-inflected salute to "silent E," featuring a multiracial cast of young people dancing through the halls of an inner-city school. "What goes on in after-school or supplementary education doesn't need to be composed of the leftover graham crackers from earlier in the school day," Wolf said. "It needs to be as exciting as multimedia." Indeed, some traditional schools could take pointers from supplementary education programs, speakers said. For the Baltimore students who learn math through a community gardening project that culminates in a farmers' market sale, "the fun is more obvious," said **Ann E. Chafin**, Maryland's Assistant State Superintendent of education. "I just wish it could be more obvious during the regular school day."

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— *Dennie Wolf*

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But the imperative to produce high quality can sometimes conflict with the imperative to act locally, conference speakers acknowledged. In theory, programs developed in response to local needs are more likely to be effective; in practice, however, local programs are often poorly implemented. Urban districts seldom understand how to set up sophisticated mechanisms for keeping program implementation on track and correcting problems early, said ETS's Forgione, a former urban superintendent. "Just because you're doing a program doesn't mean that you're making a difference," warned keynote

speaker **Angela Glover Blackwell**, the CEO of consulting firm PolicyLink. “Just because you care doesn’t mean that you solved the problem.” The solution to the conundrum, Blackwell said, is to build local capacity: the people to invest in, she said, are those “who, if they could produce the high quality, would have the most impact, because they’re closest to the problem, because they’re trusted in the neighborhoods, because these are their children.”

## Budget Blues

Supplementary education initiatives face many of the same challenges that bedevil other education reforms, conference speakers said. Money problems top the list: although supplementary education programs, including summer school, were among the permitted uses for the billions allocated under the federal stimulus package, the national recession has battered budgets everywhere. And while supplementary programs vary widely in cost, the most intensive do not come cheap: the pre-college Upward Bound program costs more than \$4,000 per student per year, said Kansas university official Kamatuka, compared with only \$400 per student for the far more limited Talent Search program. NCLB-required tutoring for students in struggling Milwaukee schools costs up to \$2,000 per child, said conference speaker **Robert H. Meyer**, a research professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has evaluated Milwaukee’s tutoring initiative. And four studies conducted over the past year found that supplementary programs for elementary- or middle-school students cost an average of \$2,600 per child during the school year and \$1,000 per child during the summer, for an average hourly cost of \$7 per student, said conference speaker **Sharon Deich**, Vice President of the education policy consulting firm Cross and Joftus. High

school programs were more expensive — \$10 per student per hour, she said.

Supplementary education programs draw on a range of public funding sources, Deich said, including education and social service budgets at the federal, state and local levels, many of which have been hit hard by the national recession. The pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act may offer the possibility of new funding for supplementary programs, she said; less certain is the impact of the \$4.35 billion in federal “Race to the Top” grants, available to states. But private money — whether from foundations or from businesses, which spent \$136.6 million on local after-school programs in 2005 — has been “the driver of innovation around out-of-school-time programming,” Deich said.

Challenge — Making Expanded Learning a Regular Part of Education Reforms
School and city budgets are under siege
Need grassroots as well as grasstops support to expand and sustain this work
Need better research to show the value of expanded learning — that it is a cost-effective way to enhance education
Need support for partnerships — funding for intermediaries, and other infrastructure
Need a permanent home for expanded learning programs

Source: Sharon Deich

## Alignment Issues

However they are funded, supplementary education programs often face another problem: the lack of alignment with regular educational offerings, which can dilute the educational power of supplemental programs, speakers said. Sometimes, this lack of alignment is deliberate: the tutoring required under NCLB, often provided by vendors promoting a particular instructional approach, is intended to contrast with the regular instruction that has failed to raise student test scores, said Wisconsin researcher Meyer. The funding provided for alignment efforts is “zero,” Meyer said. “The program is conspicuously designed not to be aligned.” To some extent, such variability may be inevitable, said conference speaker **Steven M. Ross**, a senior research scientist at Johns Hopkins University, who has evaluated tutoring programs in 14 states: tutoring a struggling sixth grader may require teaching first-grade material, not the sixth-grade curriculum the student can’t yet master. But lack of alignment with the increasingly responsive classroom evaluation systems that some schools have instituted gives vendors no way of assessing their impact on the classroom, Meyer said. “If you cut off the vendor from that source of information, you’re making it a lot harder for them to respond and to know whether they’re succeeding,” he said. “It’s a lot to ask a vendor, to build a completely separate replication of that information system. It doesn’t seem like it’s too efficient.” But to the extent that alignment is possible and desirable, it must be pursued carefully, said Harvard researcher Weiss, to avoid turning supplementary programs into clones of their school-day counterparts. “It’s going to be critically important how we think about aligning them with schools, so we don’t lose what’s so important about out-of-school time now,” she said.

## Data and Common Sense

In the push to expand and coordinate supplementary learning opportunities, data showing which programs work will play a crucial role, conference speakers agreed. And across the country, despite the persistence of failure, some high-poverty schools are succeeding in educating low-income students, noted conference keynote speaker **Pedro Antonio Noguera**, a professor of education at New York University. “In public education, common sense is almost absent altogether,” Noguera said. “Why don’t we start by doing more of what works?”



Pedro Noguera

But for some supplementary programs, evidence of effectiveness is elusive or highly contested, conference speakers said. An independent evaluation of Upward Bound, which reported that the college-

readiness program had anemic effects, was mired in controversy from the start, said conference speaker **Margaret Cahalan** of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). In 2008, 16 years after the study began, Cahalan made public her doubts about technical aspects of its methodology, including the composition of the control group and the validity of the statistical weighting. In her re-analysis of the data, designed to eliminate what she saw as bias, Cahalan found that, eight years after high school, 21 percent of Upward Bound participants, but only 14 percent of the control group, had earned bachelor’s degrees; she



estimated that the government got back \$5 in higher tax payments for every \$1 spent on the program. The argument was more than a tedious bureaucratic struggle among number-crunchers, Cahalan said, because the original findings — that the program had some effect for at-risk students but little effect overall — were used to justify ultimately unsuccessful efforts to eliminate Upward Bound’s funding. “It’s one of the few evaluations that did not get put on the shelf but was actually used to influence ED policy,” Cahalan said.

Complications also plague evaluations of NCLB-required after-school tutoring, said Wisconsin researcher Meyer and Johns Hopkins researcher Ross. Although advocates hoped the program — formally known as Supplemental Educational Services, or SES — would yield big increases in test scores, Meyer said his evaluation of tutoring provided by commercial vendors in Milwaukee produced “the disappointing finding that we haven’t found gangbuster effects.” Ross’ evaluations of reading and math tutoring in 12 states also found that SES’s impact was “modest, at best”: while 53 percent of his analyses showed directionally positive effects, only 4.4 percent found statistically significant positive effects. Conversely, 47 percent of the evaluations showed directionally negative results, and 3.5 percent were negative to a statistically significant degree.

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— *Steven M. Ross*

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In part, Meyer and Ross said, such uneven results may reflect problems not with the tutoring programs but with the evaluations themselves, which may be able to control only imperfectly for variations in the abilities and motivation of enrolled students. But mixed

results also may reflect the nature of the tutoring program, Meyer and Ross said. Students signing up for tutoring are already struggling, and they may not be eager to take on more schoolwork; perhaps as a result, attendance is spotty. In theory, market forces should ensure that only successful tutoring providers stay in business, but parents often lack good information about which vendors are effective, and even the same vendor may vary in effectiveness, depending on how well individual tutors teach and how rigorously they follow the vendor’s published curriculum. More fundamentally, in the NCLB era, effectiveness has been defined narrowly, as a statistically significant increase in standardized test scores; federal rules dictate that a provider who fails for two years in a row to raise scores must be dropped from the SES program. But, Ross asked, is it reasonable to expect 20 to 40 hours of tutoring over the course of a year to have such a noticeable impact? “We’re so impatient in looking at program effects,” Ross said. “We want achievement effects now, but is that how it really happens with these at-risk kids?” Demanding results too quickly may mean giving up on providers who, given time, could have been effective, he said. In school reform, agreed Chafin, the Maryland education official, “we know lots of ways to do it right. The problem is we keep stopping and starting and stopping and starting, over and over and over.”

## Noncognitive Factors

SES’s true impact might become clearer if researchers looked for evidence of the less tangible changes — in motivation, behavior, study skills — that are likely to precede test-score increases, Ross said. Traditional tests do not measure such noncognitive skills, and NCLB, with its emphasis on reading and math scores, has encouraged schools to narrow even

the band of cognitive skills on which they focus. But several conference speakers echoed Ross in calling for a new effort to assess noncognitive skills, a category that includes such qualities as perseverance, leadership, teamwork and enthusiasm. Although observers may differ about which noncognitive skills schools are failing to teach, everyone agrees that something is being left out, said conference speaker **Elena Silva**, Senior Policy Analyst at the think tank Education Sector. That omission matters because measures of noncognitive skills are sometimes better predictors of success, in both school and career, than traditional cognitive measures, said **Richard D. Roberts**, a principal research scientist at ETS. And research indicates that noncognitive skills may be easier to modify than cognitive ones, he said. “There’s more to academic — and, more importantly, job — success than is currently represented by the cognitive test scores that we get,” Roberts said.

Furthermore, research has shown that noncognitive skills can be assessed accurately, Roberts said. ETS has begun developing such assessments — for example, situational judgment tests, which ask test-takers to decide, say, how best to organize a study group composed of members with conflicting schedules. Students applying to graduate school now can ask their professors or advisors to complete the ETS® Personal Potential Index (ETS® PPI), which rates applicants on a range of personal qualities, Roberts said. And an ETS noncognitive assessment designed for younger students generates feedback that can help parents and teachers find effective ways to help — suggesting, for example, that they avoid early-morning discussions of important issues with students whom the assessment classifies as night people.

Such work proves that noncognitive skills, far from being too fuzzy to assess, “are actually quite measurable,” Silva said. And while middle-class students acquire these skills outside of school, low-income students often do not, she said, putting them even further behind once they move on to college or career. With the growing recognition that noncognitive skills play a role in determining children’s futures, “there’s an urgency behind this now that didn’t exist before,” Silva said.

## A Moment to Seize

After decades spent focusing on schools, the time may be ripe for broadening the education reform agenda to encompass out-of-school learning in all its forms, conference speakers said. The new presidential administration appears committed to rethinking education policy, and it is backing up its priorities with significant investments, from stimulus money to Race to the Top grants. “If we can’t do something about educational change now, I’m not sure we ever will be able to,” ETS President and CEO **Kurt M. Landgraf** told the conference audience. “We have the first real opportunity to change the system, because we have the motivator, which is financial support.”

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— Kurt M. Landgraf

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Along with the money, however, must go a new vision of what education is, conference speakers suggested — a vision that, in the Gordon study group’s terms, recognizes that education is no more confined to schools than health care is to hospitals. That analogy between education and

public health “moves us closer to the notion that education is tantamount to a civil right,” said conference speaker **Fayneese Miller**, Dean of the University of Vermont’s College of Education and Social Services — a view that “presupposes a collective, rather than individualistic, approach to education.”

Thus, changing the system means placing education reform in a larger context, said keynote speaker **Blackwell**, the PolicyLink CEO. By mid-century, a majority of American citizens will be people of color, she said, and the country will not thrive unless it erases race- and income-based disparities in employment, life expectancy and educational attainment. A unified approach to in-school and out-of-school learning is one piece of that larger puzzle, she said, and education advocates must connect with those working on other aspects of the problem, such as health care and economic development. “The nation has an interest in investing in people who are being left behind,” **Blackwell** said. “The nation doesn’t get to lead in the global economy, in the global context, unless all of the people who make up the nation can come along.”

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**“The nation has an interest in investing in people who are being left behind. The nation doesn’t get to lead in the global economy, in the global context, unless all of the people who make up the nation can come along.” — Angela Glover Blackwell**

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But turning that vision into on-the-ground educational reality — marshaling competing ideas about what works, sorting through the sometimes conflicting or imperfect data, helping communities establish effective programs — is a complex task, noted Harvard researcher **Ferguson**. “It may be that it’s fundamentally messy, unavoidably so, and that what we need is the public will to keep working it through,” he

## **THIS ISSUE** *(continued from page 1)*

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to Student Academic Achievement,” the 12th in ETS’s series of “Addressing Achievement Gaps” symposia, launched in 2003. The conference was co-sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and co-convened by A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education; the After-School Corporation; the Institute for Educational Leadership and its Coalition for Community Schools; the National Council of La Raza; and the National Urban League. Held October 5–6 in Washington, D.C., the conference featured two dozen researchers, advocates and educational administrators as presenters and discussants.

PolicyLink CEO **Angela Glover Blackwell** and New York University education professor **Pedro Antonio Noguera** gave keynote addresses. Remarks also were delivered by ETS Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer **Yvette Donado**; **Lenora M. Green**, Director of ETS’s Policy Evaluation and Research Center; ETS President and CEO **Kurt M. Landgraf**; ETS Senior Vice President **Michael T. Nettles**; and ETS Board of Trustees Chair **Piedad F. Robertson**.

Sessions were moderated by **Robertson** and by **Maitrayee Bhattacharyya**, Brown University’s Assistant Dean of diversity; **Betsy Brand**, Executive Director of the American Youth Policy Forum; **Robert Calfee**, education professor emeritus at the University of California, Riverside; Fordham University psychology professor **Howard Everson**; **Norris Haynes**, Chair of the Department of Counseling and School Psychology at Southern Connecticut State University; **Betina Jean-Louis**, Director of evaluation for the Harlem Children’s Zone; American Institutes of Research principal research scientist **Carlos Rodriguez**; and **Ernest Washington**, education professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. More information about the sessions, including presentations, can be found at [www.ets.org/achievementgap](http://www.ets.org/achievementgap).

said. Rather than do nothing while waiting for definitive research on what works, he said, “we should privilege common sense until we have firmer evidence.”

Indeed, the question of how best to orchestrate out-of-school learning opportunities for children does require a measure of wisdom, argued

psychologist Gordon, who, approaching the age of 90, can look back on a career that has outlived any number of educational fads. “Even if we researchers cannot find ways to measure the effect of humane and stimulating and supportive development of children,” Gordon said, “I would still be up here saying common sense says that we’ve got to do that.”

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