



Innovations in Education

**An Interview with Dr. G. Reid Lyon
by Nancy Salvato**

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Update & Clarification: SBRR Criteria & Reading First

In an interview with Nancy Salvato in which we discussed literacy and the Reading First program I mistakenly indicated that the US Department of Education changed the SBRR criteria for Reading First funding from the more specific criteria that we initially submitted for inclusion in the legislation. I apologize for the confusion. As I was not involved in the negotiation process, I should have checked with congressional staffers who were intimately involved in the negotiating phases. I made an assumption that the Education Department was involved in the process, and I was incorrect. In point of fact, the Education Department accepted the language passed in the legislation.

In drafting the initial language for congressional review, Robert W. Sweet Jr. and I recommended that federal funding should be contingent on program-specific evidence of effectiveness derived from studies employing appropriate research designs and methods. This criterion was revised through congressional member and staff review and the negotiation process, which resulted in the less-specific language in the current law. In the revised language, funding was contingent upon programs demonstrating that their content and instructional formats were based on SBRR rather than program-specific effectiveness. The language was revised prior to enactment of the legislation and governed the implementation of the law.

As an aside, I believe this lack of specificity has had unintended consequences. For example, some vendors of reading programs simply changed the language in their promotional materials to embody the critical elements of scientifically based reading research without providing a comprehensive program whereby instruction was provided directly and systematically. It is also the case that substantial lobbying of congressional members and staff by publishers and vendors of reading programs occurred. Thus, in implementing Reading First, a major responsibility of, and challenge to, the Reading First staff was to determine whether a program's claims made against even the weaker criteria were accurate. In some cases, they were not.

In hindsight, one can only speculate what would have occurred if the original, program-specific effectiveness criterion had been accepted. To be sure, there were few reading programs that would have met the criteria. On the other hand, we predicted that by setting the higher standard, vendors would have a clear effectiveness goal to achieve in order to be competitive. One could also predict that the publishing industry and the reading community writ large would resist the need to test programs for effectiveness and identify the conditions under which effectiveness was achieved (implementation factors, learning characteristics, and teacher characteristics, for example).

In summary, the Education Department was not involved in developing the Reading First language relevant to research and funding criteria.

Dr. G.Reid Lyon

Shifting the Focus to Effective Instruction

Dr. G. Reid Lyon received his Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico with a dual concentration in psychology and special education. He served as a faculty member of Northwestern University and the University of Vermont. He has practical experience as a learning disabilities teacher, third grade classroom teacher, and school psychologist for 12 years in the public schools.

Perhaps Reid Lyon is best known for his role as a research psychologist and an advisor to President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush on child development and education research and policies. He was one of the architects of Reading First – a Federal legislative initiative to improve reading in grades K through 3. He recently resigned his position as the Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch within the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institute of Health to take a position with Best Associates as a senior vice president for research and evaluation.

In his new position, Dr. Lyon will help develop innovative approaches for the American College of Education, a national teacher's college that will train teachers and administrators to use the most current scientifically-based educational methodologies. Courses began this fall.

He is also helping to develop Whitney International University, part of GlobalEd's mission to create high-quality institutions in key regions of the world and making private postsecondary education more available to all qualified students. Curriculum will focus on relevant professional, technical, and practical training and education that prepares students to successfully enter the workforce.

Response to Instruction discrepancy shows that the student does not learn even when provided with quality instruction that produces learning and achievement in the majority of students. This is important because the definition and identification of LD (learning disabilities) are now linked explicitly to instruction rather than lengthy, expensive, and frequently invalid diagnostic assessments.

Q. Should we eliminate “ability achievement discrepancy” and implement Response to Instruction (RTI) to identify those who are demonstrating learning difficulties for more specialized instruction?

A. Aptitude achievement discrepancy is, to be blunt, an invalid marker for learning disabilities. The discrepancy model is based on the clinical observation that learning disabilities (LD) are characterized by a mosaic of strengths in many areas with specific deficits in one or more academic skills such as reading, math, writing and/or language. In a practical sense, LD is characterized by “unexpected underachievement”, where despite average to above average intelligence the student struggles academically. For years, the IQ-achievement discrepancy was thought to be a way to quantify this gap between learning “potential” and achievement. Unfortunately, IQ tests do not reliably predict strengths or weakness in specific reading, math, or writing skills - thus, it is not a strong measure of “potential”.

Is an IQ score a good predictor of academic ability? Not really. It isn't that strong.

To gain a better understanding of the validity and the utility of IQ scores and their relationship to academic achievement, we began to ask several questions over the past decade:

1. Is an IQ score a good predictor of academic ability? Not really. It isn't that strong. It has a general predictive capability but it's not that powerful in telling us how kids will do in learning to read, write and calculate. This is particularly the case in reading, where most kids have difficulty at the decoding level which IQ doesn't predict well at all.

2. A second question we asked was whether kids with and without IQ-achievement discrepancies respond differently to remediation efforts? No. Our studies have shown little difference in response to treatment. Thus, the predictive ability of the IQ measure in terms of “potential” to learn is not well supported – again, at least in terms of specific reading and basic math skills.

3. Is there a neurological/physiological difference between discrepant and non discrepant kids? No. For example, kids with IQ-achievement discrepancies do not show us a different neurophysiologic signature than kids without a discrepancy between their IQ scores and their scores on achievement measures.

The use of an IQ-achievement discrepancy criterion for the identification of students with LD actually institutes a “wait to fail” model.

Very importantly, it is also important to understand that the use of an IQ-achievement discrepancy criterion for the identification of students with LD actually institutes a “wait to fail” model. That is, the discrepancy will not occur until the kids have already failed to perform well on achievement tests. Given the fact that waiting to intervene limits a student’s response to instruction, it is critical to identify students at risk for failure as early as possible and implement instructional programs that can PREVENT learning failure.

Response to instruction (RTI) is a much better indicator of severe LD.

Given that IQ-achievement discrepancies are not predictive of response to instruction or differential neurophysiology, and given that the use of discrepancy constitutes a “wait to fail” model, there is little reason to use discrepancy as a diagnostic marker for LD.

An IQ measure can provide some rich clinical information with respect to general verbal and non-verbal skills which certainly are important for learning and instruction, but the information is not specific enough for the identification of an LD. It can be used along with other information such as a student’s response to well designed instruction.

Response to instruction (RTI) is a much better indicator of severe LD. Moreover, using RTI as one factor in the identification of students as LD shifts the focus from eligibility to concerns about providing effective instruction.

If students with LD are provided instruction that has been found to be effective for most students through well designed studies, then we can infer that the student has unexpected difficulty learning. Thus, rather than requiring an IQ-achievement discrepancy, an RTI discrepancy shows that the student does not learn even when provided with quality instruction that produces learning and achievement in the majority of students. This is important because the definition and identification of LD are now linked explicitly to instruction rather than lengthy, expensive, and frequently invalid diagnostic assessments.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA: We don’t have enough data for RTI outside of reading, although studies are in progress. States and local districts can use a variety of means to assess students for the presence of LD, but they are not required to employ an IQ discrepancy.

RTI should be a critical & main part of what they do. They shouldn’t use IQ to identify students but the flexibility to use it is there. As I mentioned earlier, IQ measures can provide a good deal of valuable clinical information that can help teachers and parents understand some general learning characteristics, but IQ is weak when applied for identification purposes.

Unfortunately, many districts don't have capability yet to do early screening, find kids at risk, place them in effective instruction and measure if they're responding or not.

Unfortunately, many districts don't have capability yet to do early screening, find kids at risk, place them in effective instruction and measure if they're responding or not. There is a capacity issue. When these factors are in place RTI is a much better indicator of LD.

It should be said that no matter how good the science, translating scientific evidence into practice is quite difficult because the system typically resists anything new. And to be sure, guiding instruction on the basis of evidence of what works is a very new concept in education. When we designed the Reading First initiative we knew that implementing effective evidence-based programs would be very difficult to accomplish if funds were not tied to the selection and implementation of effective programs and approaches. Education is beginning to change now, although very slowly, we now have science driving policy and educational practice, which carries money with it.

Effective Reading Programs Share Common Characteristics

I have never nor will I endorse a program

Q. By now we're familiar with the questions that you've answered regarding how kids learn to read, why some don't, how this can be prevented, and how best to remediate those who weren't reached early enough. What particular instructional programs do you endorse in order for teachers to implement what you've learned through your research?

A. I have never nor will I endorse a program. What I do know is:

1. No one program is equally beneficial for all kids.
2. Combinations of programs work frequently work better than one program alone.
3. The value of any program is data driven and based on its impact on kids.
4. The teacher is one of the most critical factors in how well kids learn. For example, if a teacher implements a good strong program but finds that some kids do not respond, then that teacher must assess why the poor response, and how instruction can be bolstered to ensure that the youngster understands the concepts.

Characteristics of good programs

My research and others found that there are particular characteristics of good programs. They're comprehensive and based upon substantial converging evidence that learning to read, for example, is complex and requires the learning and integration of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies.

Effective programs nurture the kinds of instructional interactions that develop these skills with professional development provided to teachers so they can monitor response to instruction, modify instruction if needed, and implement the programs with fidelity.

What we originally wanted in Reading First was that if you want to buy a program with federal money, it should have gone through clinical trials to be sure it is effective. But there weren't enough programs that went through that level of rigor; so many programs would be screened out and only a limited number of programs would be available. The Department of Education made the decision to make the criteria more general. Programs had to be comprehensive and the instructional interactions must be based upon principles supported by converging scientific evidence. It is important to note that we designed Reading First so that it would also stimulate publishers and program developers to develop and test programs scientifically to ensure their effectiveness. This is a very slow culture change, but there is some indication that the major publishers are beginning to move in this direction.

If kids do not learn in measurable ways, then the program needs to be replaced or modified

Q. What is your opinion of Reading Recovery? Guided Reading? Do these instructional methods adequately cover phonics? Is there a place for direct instruction in addressing literacy in the school system?

A. Everything I do comes from my scientific training. Any program that is comprehensive that results in increased student achievement should be implemented. The key points are Comprehensive and Effective. Problems stem from the implementation of many programs. A

comprehensive program includes phonemic awareness; phonics; fluency; background knowledge; and comprehension, and is based on scientific principals. So the question we need to ask is what level of professional development is needed to implement a program with fidelity? Can the district provide that? Can we cover the expense of the program? Is it cost effective?

With Reading Recovery, as with any reading program, one would want to make sure that the evidence for its effectiveness is obtained through independent sources and contains information about kids who benefited from the program as well as those that did not benefit. Everything should be based on whether there is value-added in terms of student achievement. If kids do not learn in measurable ways, then the program needs to be replaced or modified.

We know that the content of a program is only as good as how instruction is provided. We have found time and again that the students with the most significant reading problems require instruction that is direct, systematic, focused, and based upon the most current scientific evidence available

The most effective form of instruction must be clear, systematic and explicit

What do we know about kids who are struggling? What is the most effective form of instruction? Again, it must be clear, systematic and explicit. Kids shouldn't be guessing from pictures or from context. The program should be well scaffolded with new information being linked explicitly with concepts already learned. If kids are asked to guess words they don't pronounce well...by looking at a picture or reading around the word using context, those aren't strong strategies at all. Good readers don't use surrounding context, they use decoding skills to figure out words. Context is used to confirm if it makes sense. We are "here", but I also can" hear". Many programs continue to use guessing or "cueing" strategies as the primary tactic to decode unknown words. Unfortunately the converging evidence indicates that this is an inefficient and counter productive instructional element.

Every teacher of reading should know all the principles were talking about

Every teacher of reading should know all the principles were talking about. The more difficulty a kid has, the more explicit instruction needs to be. I can't say it enough. Whether you are teaching phonemic awareness or comprehension strategies, instruction needs to be direct, systematic and comprehensive. Direct instruction is absolutely critical. But it is critical to keep in mind that students must learn ALL reading skills to be able to understand what they read – the goal of reading instruction. To be sure, learning and applying phonics skills absolutely necessary - non negotiable - but it is not sufficient. You can have the best phonics skills in the world, but if you can't apply the skills quickly and accurately – that is fluently – you will get bored and will not be able to remember what you just read. Many kids can read words quickly and accurately but lack the vocabulary to understand the content. You get the picture – learning to read is very complex and requires comprehensive programs and teachers who know why the programs must be comprehensive.

The Federal Role in Education

Q. What role should the federal government play in education -in addition to conducting tax funded educational research on “best practice” since in order for our republic to function properly there must be a well educated citizenry?

A. The federal role is absolutely necessary. They have the nation’s welfare in mind and the organizational capability to base informed policy and practice on the back of the best evidence available. We do it with the FDA, we can do it with education.

Reading First demands that we examine our efforts and their impact on kids honestly

Q. Why do you suppose President Bush is so misunderstood with regard to his educational concerns? Why do you think people are so easily distracted by the accusation “unfunded mandate” that they can lose focus on the bigger picture -that there are significant groups of children whose learning needs are not being addressed by the educational process- wouldn’t you consider this to be the most important issue on which we should concentrate our energy?

A. It is surprising there is so much criticism. Reading First is certainly funded at historic levels. There is 1 billion a year provided in Reading First which is an increase over previous funding. It is tough to see this argument. What I think is operating when people malign Reading First for example, is the predictable pushback you will find when a change is asked for and when greater accountability is put in place. Reading First demands that we examine our efforts and their impact on kids honestly. No hiding the numbers – No excuses. Teachers’ decisions should be based on strong evidence- based knowledge, not beliefs, philosophies, untested assumptions, or anecdotes. Evidence is not the plural of anecdote. Pushback is cultural, historical and political. As a scientist, I want to see if we’re putting the right stuff in and are teachers benefiting kids. When teachers see how things work, they’ll trust it. This is a Republican administration with the boldest initiative in history that departs from status quo. Federal money can’ be used with that which does not work and must be used to help kids who are disenfranchised.

Competition

Q. NCLB was originally written to include private school choice. It was passed with this section of the law left out. What are your thoughts about having the money follow the child in education?

A. I’m for anything that increases competition.

Accountability

Q. How can you be sure that schools receiving federal money are implementing programs properly?

A. If you find a program isn’t doing well, that is to be expected if teachers aren’t implementing the program with fidelity. Likewise, you can have the most well prepared teacher, but if the program is ineffective, kids will not learn. One can also have a great teacher and a great program but if the building level leadership is poor and the teachers are not provided enough time to teach and to collaborate with one another, then kids will not learn. It is complex, but so is life. The point is when all elements are in place, students learn – even those from the direst circumstances.

Reading First has also instituted accountability into the educational culture. Schools are now monitored to determine if the programs they purchased with federal funds are effective in improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps between subgroups of students. If schools do not produce learning gains among students, then students will have the right to transfer to a school where their needs can be met. Again, common sense.

Education has always been a local issue

Q. You'd think an audit would be welcomed.

A. This is such a sea change; education has always been a local issue and people felt they were doing extremely well without the feds help. A blue ribbon school could come in at 80th % proficiency in reading but if you disaggregated scores by student subgroup – for example, looked specifically at how kids from different SES levels, race and ethnicity were doing, you would typically see very few kids from disadvantage learning to read at all – but, their difficulties were not noticed because all of the scores were lumped together. Disaggregating the data forces an answer to the question, why are you leaving kids behind? For example, there were and still are in some schools very low expectations that kids from disadvantaged environments could actually learn as well as their more affluent classmates. Now, we know they can if the right programs are in place, if the teachers are well prepared, and if the schools are led by effective principals. But until we asked the question about how ALL of your students are doing, many youngsters were left behind. The law is based upon getting those kids the very strong help they need.

Implementing ineffective programs constitute malpractice

Q. I recently heard a speaker who disappointed me by suggesting that we want to go back to this golden age of education that never existed and expressed his belief that he thought educators were doing pretty well. I wanted to say, well some people are... but what about those sub groups who aren't.

A. We line up in the middle when compared against other countries. Where are our disadvantaged kids? When we maintain status quo we don't truly look to see who is being hurt. Now we're being honest about who is not doing well and if we provide the right stuff, will they do better? Absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that implementing ineffective programs constitute malpractice.

Typical media outlets foster debate and controversy rather than dig for the objective facts

Q. What role has the media played in helping us understand critical educational issues and needs?

A. What has always disappointed me is that your typical media outlets foster debate and controversy rather than dig for the objective facts. Reporters will frequently tell me that you can use research to support anything you want. Bull hockey. Good research is good research and good research is defined by using the right methods and designs to answer specific questions. If you could make research support anything you want, why have we given up the practice of using leeches to treatment particular maladies? Surely, some may say they have "research" that continues to support that. The media gets lazy – they tend to base their stories on "appeals to Authority" rather than the objective scientific evidence. Figuring out what works with students is not about a particular individual or personality – it is only about what the evidence proves

Parents frequently assume that the teachers and schools know best

Do we have to use scientific evidence in making instructional decisions? You bet. If your own child was sick and being seen by a physician would you not want to make sure that the treatment was

based on the best and most objective knowledge available. The FDA requires two clinical trials for treating particular illnesses. There needs to be this sort of rigor in the educational community. Parents frequently assume that the teachers and schools know best. If you survey parents and ask them if schools are doing a good job, they'll say no. But if you ask them if their school is doing a good job, they'll say yes. Teachers want to do a great job but teachers can't teach what they don't know. That gap in evidence based knowledge exists and we need to make people understand this without making people feel bad.

Getting Beyond Polarization of Bilingual Methods

There is an unfortunate either/or thinking process that pervades the field of education.

Q. What are your thoughts regarding Bilingual vs. ESL education? Is there an either/or between these methodologies?

A. There is an unfortunate either/or thinking process that pervades the field of education. We see this in arguments about reading instruction, about early childhood education, and about research methods. We certainly see it in discussions about second language learning. As you know, this is a very destructive way to discuss complex educational issues given their complexity.

It also says to teachers and administrators that they must make a choice between two extreme positions. The polarization and dichotomies that are in place in edu-speak continue because emotion, ideology, and philosophical ideas have informed your question, rather than objective evidence of what works and for whom.

Education proceeds forward on philosophy, untested belief systems, and appeals to authority but that isn't right. Evidence should underpin what education programs we should embrace. To not employ converging scientific evidence in the implementation of instruction constitutes malpractice in my mind.

Different Spanish speaking students, from different environments, with different exposure to English may respond equally well with English only programs.

Q. Does research reveals that one method of teaching is more likely to decrease the learning gap experienced by this EL subgroup -identified as being left behind- because of the NCLB law?

A. The NICD just finished their first 5 year trial of studying how different instructional approaches benefit students whose first language is Spanish. Some of the early data indicates that students learn more efficiently if they are initially taught Spanish with a transition to English once critical concepts have been learned but the data might not be strong enough to change people's minds. But keep in mind, even this conclusion is tempered by the fact that different Spanish speaking students, from different environments, with different exposure to English may respond equally well with English only programs. The best people to discuss this issue with are Peggy McCardle who has directed the NICHD Spanish to English Research Program and Tim Shanahan who chaired the National research Council Committee on second language learning.

Many studies are poorly done and research methods and designs aren't built properly for particular studies.

Q. Has this debate been addressed in the What Works Clearinghouse?

A. What Works is looking at specific programs and the studies they're based on. Many studies are poorly done and research methods and designs aren't built properly for particular studies. Education research is plagued by this problem. Educational researchers frequently are not well prepared to address complex educational problems and to be able to identify and utilize different research methods and designs to address specific questions. Again, we see a polarization among educational researchers with some advocating qualitative research approaches and other quantitative approaches. This is very dumb. Most studies will require both – but you can't use both if you only understand one.

Typically how to develop EL programs is a local issue.

Q. Is there money to teach Bilingual Programs adequately?

A. It is a capacity issue, just like Response To Instruction. RTI has a greater evidentiary base than the Bilingual issue. Yet even with strong science behind it capacity comes into play as well. The science is just now coalescing with English Learning. Policy won't be built on the science at this time. Capacity is built up over time by placing it into legislation, law and policy over time. Unless something is in policy, typically it is a local issue about how they want to develop their EL programs.

With Reading First there is local and state discretion but the program has to have certain components; phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, phonics, etc. Longitudinal studies have shown that poor academic achievement in school constitutes not only an educational problem but a public health problem as well. For example, if you can't read, how can you read a prescription, obtain meaningful employment, keep yourself healthy? Science must inform educational policy and practice.

Developing an American College of Education

Colleges of education are not accountable for what their graduates know

Q. You are quoted as saying, “You know, if there was any piece of legislation that I could pass, it would be to blow up colleges of education.” How will your college prepare teachers so that they can meet the individual needs of their students? How are concepts like “differentiation of instruction” and “multiple intelligences” misunderstood by the time they are implemented in the classroom because I think they’re like the junk science of education.

A. Correct. My comment was born out of frustration given the level of evidence we have about what works and how kids learn and the distance between that knowledge and what our teachers are provided in their teacher education programs. You only have to look at the billions of dollars that states and districts are spending on professional development for teachers already teaching to understand the gravity of this situation. Why in the world would schools have to re-teach concepts to teachers that they should already know? And it is the case that higher education, and teacher education has a very hard time changing no matter what the circumstances. There are many reasons for this, but a critical one is that colleges of education are not accountable for what their graduates know and how that knowledge affects students in their graduate’s classrooms. Colleges of education are process driven, not outcome driven – the faculty – rather than student achievement reinforce the teaching and the scholarship within the college. Teachers can matriculate knowing absolutely nothing about evidence-based approaches, why evidence is critical in selecting and implementing instruction and only implement instruction on the basis of philosophies and beliefs. However, when many of their students fail to learn to read, they and their schools are blamed. The institutions that provided them with the faulty information are not held accountable.

When we provide teachers and administrators with the most current and accurate information, they will know how to determine whether concepts such as multiple intelligences and differentiated instruction are valid. They will know how to ask, “What evidence of effectiveness do these approaches have, and have they been found to work with students similar to those in my classroom?” This is the level of training that is critical. Teachers and administrators must have the means to make accurate decisions about kid’s lives. Many prepared in our existing colleges of education are not at that level.

Parents must hold us accountable

Q. How critical Are Parent’s and Parent education in their Child’s education?

A. Parent education is critical and it has never been mobilized the way it needs to be. We scientists haven’t done a good job of presenting information in a compelling user friendly way. There’s not a lot of useful information being provided to parents currently and we have to remember that many our most disadvantaged parents cannot read. We must be able to provide the most useful information in a way that makes sense and gives parents direction in how to improve the education for their children. We need to focus on numerous ways to communicate to all parents so they become genuine partners in the education process. Parents must hold us accountable for ensuring that their children receive the most effective and appropriate education. Information must be transmitted through churches, groups and organizations that they trust. As we are establishing the American College of Education, there is a lot of thinking going on about how do we provide information to all parents in a way that is meaningful? Parents want to help their kids succeed.

Which areas of education have a significant impact on all the learning activities?

Q. Why are you only offering Curriculum & Instruction or Administration, why not reading methods?

A. First, Developing an American College of Education is an enormous task. But you have to examine which areas of education have a significant impact on all the learning activities that take place in school. Teachers in a curriculum and instruction program frequently do teach reading at the elementary and secondary level. Many also become curriculum directors of reading and math programs. They must know about the best information possible because they will influence the culture of the school environment. As we have already discussed, you can have the best teachers and the best programs, but without strong building level leadership, students typically fail.

Ongoing progress monitoring is essential

In all of our programs that will be coming on line as we move forward, we are making sure that everything we teach and everything we do is based upon the most current and accurate information available. We are also making sure that everything that is taught to teachers can be immediately applied to ensure relevance and improve fidelity of implementation. All of us learn better and retain what we learn if we can use the information in our daily lives. Our students will be receiving information both from faculty and from on-line resources. A tremendous amount of current research indicates that this blended approach is highly effective. Why? Because concepts that are learned can be applied and implemented and practiced through immediate on-line interactions. Moreover, students can work together on-line to collaborate and solve problems directly relevant to their everyday classroom practices. In using on-line platforms as well as faculty involvement, we can check to see if our students are understanding the concepts they are learning and can then provide additional immediate instruction if they do not understand. This ongoing progress monitoring is essential. Very importantly, we are developing assessment systems that allow us to track our students into the classrooms they teach in and determine if what we taught them actually benefits the students they teach. This is a very effective way to determine how well we are doing where it counts – student achievement.

About the Author

Nancy Salvato is the Senior Editor and Associate Editor for Education for The New Media Journal. She serves as the Director of Education and Constitutional Studies for the Basics Project, a non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)(3) socio-political education initiative whose mission is to re-introduce the American public to the basic elements of our constitutional heritage while providing non-partisan, fact-based information on relevant socio-political issues important to our country. She serves as the Vice President for Operations and Administration for the American College of Education. She is an experienced educator and has served as Educational Liaison for several Illinois State Senators. She works nationally and locally furthering the cause of Education Reform. Her writing is widely published on the internet and occasionally in print venues such as the Washington Times. Her opinions have been heard on select radio programs across the nation. Additionally, her writing has been recognized by the US Secretary of Education.