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AUTHOR	Loeb, Hilary
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the work of the Education Trust and other teams of researchers and school leaders. If focuses on one symposium on and five research studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. The six studies provided information about best practices in school leadership, organization, and instruction. Building on scholarship from the Effective Schools Movement, the studies supported the notion that schools can be accountable for student achievement. The studies all addressed school arrangements in terms of time and human resources and, to a more limited degree, the role of finance in school performance. This paper presents the attributes of high-performing, high-poverty schools with a specific focus on how schools allocated money, time, and human resources. To this end, it summarizes the methodology and questions presented in the six studies. It then discusses the factors that researchers attributed to the schools. It concludes with the author's preliminary position on this line of inquiry and emerging questions about resource allocation in high-performing, high-poverty schools. (Contains 14 references.) (Author/WFA)

Running Head: HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

Resource Allocation in Six Discussions of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

Hilary Loeb

University of Washington

Abstract

Six studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools provide valuable information about best practices in school leadership, organization and instruction. Building on scholarship from the effective schools movement, they support the notion that schools can be accountable for student achievement. These studies all address school arrangements such as the allocation of time and human resources. To a more limited degree, they explore the role of finance in school performance.

This paper will present the attributes of high-performing, high-poverty schools with a specific focus on how schools allocate money, time and human resources. To this end, it will first summarize the methodology and questions presented in five research studies and one symposium. It will then discuss the factors that authors attribute to the schools. It concludes with my preliminary position on this line of inquiry and emerging questions about resource allocation in high-performing, high-poverty schools.

Resource Allocation in Six Discussions of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

The body of literature on high-performing, high poverty schools is relatively recent. While the first studies using these terms were conducted in the late 1990s, the research agenda is related to Edmonds' 1979 study that focused on the attributes of effective schools serving high proportions of low-income children. Levine and Lezotte (2001) synthesize his and other studies by such scholars as Brookover (1985), Chirspeels (1992), and Lezotte (1982, 1993). They demonstrated that these schools shared such factors as strong administrative leadership, high expectations, an orderly school atmosphere, a collective faculty dedication to improve student performance, an instructional emphasis on basic skills and frequently monitored student progress. Both Bell (2001) and The Education Trust (2001) note Edmonds' legacy:

> How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far (Edmonds, 1979, cited in Bell, p. 8).

Many of Edmonds' elements are present in comparative studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools. While some authors express an interest in the ways these cases could inform training and leadership, others focus on the legacy of the reauthorization of Title I, the Improving America's Schools Act. Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000) explain that this law encouraged states to raise academic standards, develop new assessments, and build schools' capacity to implement these reforms. The Act also sought to ensure accountability for these

changes in schools. To this end, schools were encouraged to extend instructional time in reading and mathematics (Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al., 1999). The authors continue that research has demonstrated that the mastery of these skills supports subsequent learning in other subjects. An earlier noteworthy event was the approval of the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the Act in 1988, providing schools with at least 75% of students at or below the poverty level the opportunity to use Title I funds throughout a building (Wong, 1999).

Wong states that there have been two positive trends associated with federal policy. School-wide programs are now promoted in high-poverty schools. There is also a current effort to have all Title I schools meet national standards in subject areas. He explains:

> . . .disadvantaged children would be better served if they were taught the core academic curriculum in regular classrooms, placed in heterogeneous groups, and asked to live up to higher academic expectations. In sum, federal policy can be redesigned to move away from the 'compliance mentality' and become a supportive partner in making a difference in classroom learning (p. 41)

In 2000, 23 states were mandating changes in chronically low-performing schools (Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al., 2000). Upon implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, all states receiving federal funding will have policies in place that compel school reform efforts (Overview of No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Despite increased federal and state accountability efforts, interdistrict inequities in per pupil funding continue to exist in all but seven states.[1] An Education Trust (2001) report indicates inequities between the highest- and lowest- poverty school districts in these states that range from $32 to $2,794. In New York, this latter gap would translate into over $1.1 million at a 400-student elementary school.

[1] The report did not include Hawaii as the state has only one school district.

It is not a surprise that leading a high-performing, high-poverty school continues to be an exemplary accomplishment. The Education Trust released the first research about the numbers of identified schools in the United States in December 2001. The report, "Dispelling the Myth Revisited" claims there are 3,592, 2,305 and 1,320 high performing schools that serve high-poverty, high-minority and high-poverty-and-minority populations of students respectively. These schools currently educate approximately 2.07 million children. Tom Loveless of the Brookings Institution states there are approximately 15 million low-income students who do not attend high-performing schools (Matthews, 2001).

This paper will discuss the work of the Education Trust and other teams of researchers and school leaders. Studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools provide valuable information about best practices in school leadership, organization and instruction. They support the notion that schools can be accountable for student achievement. While a common characteristic of these discussions is that they present a limited analysis of the role of school finance in school performance, all address school arrangements in terms of time and human resources.

This paper will present the attributes of high-performing, high-poverty schools with a specific focus on how schools allocate money, time and human resources. To this end, it will first summarize the methodology and questions presented in five research studies and one symposium about high-performing, high-poverty schools. It will then present the factors that authors attribute to the schools. It concludes with my preliminary position on this line of inquiry and emerging questions about resource allocation in high-performing, high-poverty schools.

Research Questions and Inquiry Strategies

These reports utilized a range of criteria to identify schools. They sought to answer diverse questions. While they commonly used demographic information about proportions of

students qualifying for free and reduced lunch to select schools for participation, the minimum for such populations ranged from 50% to 74% in these studies. Bell (2001) provides a useful definition:

> HP2 schools appear to routinely provide for low-income and other historically marginalized groups of students the same opportunities to acquire intellectually challenging subject content that are taken for granted in more affluent communities. They are more likely to embrace, and even surpass, requirements of the state's accountability system. They tend to engage in school practices that reflect a culture of success and excellence. And they respect the primacy of adults supporting one another, as well as children, toward a common vision of success in school and life (p. 8).

The questions and research methods of the studies and the symposium follow in chronological order.[2] Figure 1 on the following page provides a brief summary of this information at the conclusion of this section.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) investigate how teaching resources are organized at five schools that support high levels of student learning in "Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons from High-Performing Schools." The authors provide evidence of each school's "strong or improving student achievement" (p. 12) that include such criteria as the rate of improvement of student performance, low drop-out rates, and high levels of graduation and college admissions. They discuss the presence of six principles of resource reallocation: reduction of specialized programs (such as Title I and special education), increased flexibility of student grouping, structures that create more personalized environments, longer and

[2] I opted not to include *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* by Carter (2000) for two reasons. The report claims, "The findings here are not he product of formal scientific research" (p. 115). *No Excuses* also possesses the tone of an advocacy piece in numerous places, highlighting that common attributes of these schools would justify choice measures. One example of this is: "Charter schools in many states are not required to hire people who pass through schools of education or who are state certified. In this environment, well-educated adults can enter into teaching without first dawdling in expensive programs unrelated to their daily assignments as teachers" (p. 19).

varied blocks of instructional time, more common planning time for staff, and creative definitions of staff roles and work schedules. The authors qualify, "The sample is too small and the schools too unique to claim a causal connection between the organizational designs and their students' successes" (p. 10). They add that some large-scale quantitative studies suggest that achievement is correlated with school designs that enable teachers to both spend more time over extended periods with small groups of students and to make instructional decisions in teams.

Figure 1: Summary of Studies of High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

Study and Year	Location of Schools	Number of Participating Schools	Income and Performance Measurements Used to Identify Schools	Methodology and Focus of Study or Symposium
"Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons from High-Performing Schools" (1998)	MA, NY, OH, TN	5	Lowest measurement of poverty was 60% free and reduced lunch (FRL). Criteria for schools included student performance, high graduation/college admissions, etc.	Case study of five high-performing (HP) schools that have organized professional resources in innovative ways
"Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools" (1999)	GA, IL, MA, MD, MI, WI	9	Over half of students met low-income criteria. Schools reported higher than average achievement in math and reading.	Case study focusing on context of reform efforts of high-poverty, high performing (HPP) schools
"Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations" (1999)	21 States	366	Over half of students at schools live below the poverty rate. Schools were top scoring or most improved in respective states.	Survey to present attributes of high-poverty, high performing schools
"Four Models of School Improvement: Successes and Challenges in Reforming Low-Performing, High-Poverty Title I Schools" (1999)	Schools identified by region (e.g. Midwestern, Southern, etc.)	9	Schools served minimum of 74% HP students. Sites represented "leading examples" (p. 2) of four models of reform.	Mixed-method study, comparative evaluation of four reform strategies
"Dispelling the Myth Revisited: High-Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations" (2001)	All states and Washington, DC, except IA, ND, NM	3,592 HPP, 2,305 HP, 1,320 HPMP high-minority (HM)	Over 50% met poverty criteria or member of minority group. Scores were in top 33% in respective states.	Survey and phone interviews to present attributes of high-poverty, high performing schools
"High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools" (2001)	CA	12	FRL was at least 60% for elementary and 50% for high schools. State API ranking was 7 for at least two years.	Article about HPP Symposium discussing common features of CA schools

"Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations," (1999) a report of the Education Trust, presents analyses of survey data on 366 elementary and high schools with attention to common attributes of high-performing, high poverty schools. In this study, Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al. (1999) surveyed 1,200 schools that were the top-performing or most improved with poverty levels of over 50%.

Johnson and Asera's (1999) study, "Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High Performing, High-Poverty Schools," identify use of Title I funds as a common factor in reform efforts. These authors were particularly interested in the schools' transformation processes. They chose schools that lacked selective admissions criteria in which at least 50% of the students met low-income definitions. The researchers reviewed school documents and utilized two-day site visits, interviews, and focus groups with administrators, teachers, and parents.

Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000) compare four processes for reforming nine low-performing schools in "Four Models of School Improvement: Successes and Challenges in Reforming Low-Performing High Poverty Title I Schools." The authors present qualitative case studies of implementation of instructional change and quantitative data about outcomes in student achievement, instructional choices and school climate. School buildings in this study served a minimum of 74% high-poverty students. While not all of the schools in "Four Models" would be considered high-performing, the authors presented common factors of those with the greatest gains in academic achievement.

Bell (2001) provides a brief report on the HP2 Symposium in California. The Symposium identified twelve schools that fulfilled the criteria of having more than 50% and 60% of students at the high school and elementary levels, respectively, that qualify for free or reduced lunch. Bell, who once coordinated California's Statewide System of school support, discusses the common attributes of these schools that have all received a statewide Academic Performance

Index (API) ranking of over seven for a minimum of two years. The API ranking measures how a school performed compared to all schools statewide on a scale of one to 10.

"Dispelling the Myth Revisited" (2001) evaluated over one million school-level test scores in 47 states and the District of Columbia and provides this information on a Web-based database (see www.edtrust.org). It identifies three categories of high-performing, high poverty schools: those that are in these states' top third for proportions of high-poverty, high-minority (i.e., African-American or Chicano-Latino), and those included in both categories. Identified schools were all in the top third for reading and/or math achievement levels. The authors utilized an undisclosed number of principal interviews to revisit the common factors identified in the 1999 survey. They emphasize that interstate comparisons are not appropriate as states identify diverse standards of student achievement and use varying methods to assess student progress.

Resource Allocations at High-Performing, High Poverty-Schools

Given that most of these studies are comparative, the majority of the discussions of high-performing, high-poverty schools focus on shared characteristics. Some also examine the variability among schools. While few explicitly devote analyses to the influences that different factors may have had on one another, there are moments in which this discussion of combined effects is embedded in the presentation of the reform process or conclusions about the outcomes of schools' efforts.

This section presents authors' claims about resource allocation in high-performing, high-poverty schools. First, the role of financial resources will be discussed. The second part will review authors' claims about the resource of time. The final part addresses arrangements of human resources. It is noteworthy that these categories are devices to consider the use of resources in high-performing, high-poverty schools. Certain determinants of success that appear in the studies could be discussed in multiple sections of this paper. For example, strong

leadership could be conceptualized in terms of all of the types of resources. Specifically, one could discuss a principal's efforts in fund development in the financial resources section. A school leader's decisions about the organization of a day could be presented in the time section. The philosophical stance of a leader could be explored in the presentation of human resources.

Financial Resources

Financial resources are used to hire staff, purchase materials, and provide training. In most of the studies, district, state and federal resources were utilized to implement building reforms. This section provides information about the ways high performing, high poverty schools' use of Title I and district support, their access to types of school funds, and the ways these schools spend money.

The vast majority of schools in these studies receive Title I funding. In "Dispelling the Myth" (1999), 79% of the surveyed schools utilized these funds. Johnson and Asera (2001) describe the role of Title I in the changes they observed in the schools they studied:

> These schools are a powerful affirmation of the power of Title I to support comprehensive school improvement efforts. In these schools, many important change efforts were enhanced through the use of federal education resources. On the other hand, although Title I supported the change efforts, Title I was not the catalyst of the change effort. The true catalyst was the strong desire of educators to ensure the academic success of the children they served (p. vii).

While Title I played a role in the vast majority of schools across the studies, district support was regarded as a factor in school success in some of the cases. Bell (2001) maintains that district support is especially critical but Johnson and Asera (2001) observes this in three of the nine schools in the University of Texas study. Bell states that districts in California have been especially helpful to high-performing, high-poverty schools in standards improvement, data

analysis, ongoing evaluation and professional development. Johnson and Asera comment the level of district involvement varied among high-performing, high-poverty schools in the study. They add that when the district role was substantial, the schools made the most rapid gains.

Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al. (1999) state that most high-performing, high-poverty schools used a larger proportion of funds to support increased professional development. These schools utilize state and district resources. 54%, 80%, and 94% used state standards to gauge teacher effectiveness, design curriculum and instruction, and to assess progress. 33% of schools used more than 10% of their Title I funds for professional development. In "Dispelling the Myth Revisited" (2001), preliminary interviews with principals find evidence of these strategies of resource allocation in successful schools with the noteworthy addition of utilizing assessments in helping schools guide instruction.

Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000) state that the most successful schools possessed adequate fiscal resources: They add that some engaged in grant seeking efforts and were successful in obtaining private foundation gifts. The authors also analyzed the impact of school improvement models. In the cases in which schools utilized nationally proven models, there was growth in measures of student academic achievement and the school professional climates only when teacher buy-in was present. They explain:

> When there was shared vision among the staff, and the teachers were active participants in deciding on the reform, the reform model was implemented successfully and improvements were made. When the reform was imposed upon the school by the district or by the principal, improvements were not as readily seen (p. 62).

The nine schools in Johnson and Asera (1999) varied in size and student mobility rates. The authors attribute both the flexibility the school had in regards to using financial resources and teachers' access to requisite materials and training to the schools' success.

The Resource of Time

Most of the case studies explored the ways in which time was a precious resource for school communities. The authors discussed time in terms of the duration of school change processes, the choices that school leaders made regarding use of time, and the arrangement of teachers' time in these school reform efforts.

Johnson and Asera (1999) state that school improvement efforts took between three and five years. The schools devoted increased time to instructional leadership, with principals spending more time in classrooms. They and Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al. (1999) document extended instructional time. Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al. state that 80% of the surveyed schools reported increased instructional time in reading and math. The authors also explain that 81% of the schools made time to analyze student data on a regular basis.

Johnson and Asera (1999) and Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) discuss the ways successful schools use blocks of time for student learning and teacher collaboration. Johnson and Asera state that schools extended instructional time during and beyond the school day. They also document that all nine schools in the study created opportunities for instructional personnel to work, plan and learn together. "Reduction of specialized programs to provide more individual time in all heterogeneous groups;" "Longer and varied blocks of instructional time;" and "More common planning time for staff," (p. 12) three of Miles and Darling-Hammond's six principles of resource reallocation, were present in the five schools the authors studied. The authors argue that high schools generally have more flexibility to rethink these arrangements than elementary schools. Weekly common planning time at the two case-study high schools ranged from 350-450 minutes with the longest period ranging from 120-140 minutes. In the study elementary schools, weekly planning time varied between 135 and 405 minutes with the longest period ranging from 45-105 minutes.

A number of high-performing, high-poverty schools use staff time productively. While Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000) do not conceive of teacher support as an issue associated with time, the authors attribute successful implementation to a shared vision among staff and teachers' opportunities to make decisions about reform efforts. They add that schools utilized different buy-in strategies. Bell (2001) maintains that another common factor of the high-performing, high-poverty schools in California was the safe and orderly environments for learning that the principals had succeeded in creating. Here, time that would have been spent on student discipline issues could now be devoted to instruction. Johnson and Asera (1999) note that schools were able to achieve this by cultivating students' sense of responsibility for their behavior.

Human Resources

The studies highlight recurring practices in the allocation of human resources in high-performing, high-poverty schools. This discussion focuses on three dimensions of the ways in which schools organized staff work and parent outreach. The studies document the role of instructional arrangements and parent involvement efforts. They also present the ethos of reform efforts. The authors provide tangible data and discuss the philosophical issues associated with schools' choices in these areas.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) present a detailed discussion of the contribution of instructional arrangements in the five schools in their study. The authors examine the presence of flexible student grouping. In two of the three elementary cases, they identify reading groups that were a third of the size of those in a traditional elementary classroom. While they did not observe significant differences in student loads between the cases and traditional elementary classes, the teaching loads were between 25% and 50% smaller in the study high schools. In

addition, the larger high school advisory groups in the high performance settings are slightly more than one half the average size of traditional secondary homerooms.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) maintain, "Greater flexibility in staffing arrangements appears to be a critical ingredient for successful school design" (p. 26). They state that the five schools in the study opposed policies, rules, and collective-bargaining agreements to make these and other changes. They elaborate that, in certain cases, staffing formulas, program administration rules, and teacher licensing categories were sometimes inappropriate. For example, many of the schools reconceived teaching and non-teaching positions to create jobs that did not neatly match contractually defined categories.

Every author, with the exception of Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998), notes that changes in parent/school relationships were central to school success. In Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000), successful schools are places that provide parent education and support. The schools in the Johnson and Asera (1999) study earned the confidence of families by improving student achievement. To this end, they cited numerous strategies that schools employed to build partnerships with families. Barth, Haycock, Jackson, et al. (1999) note that high-performing schools are focusing this work on activities to build parent involvement in areas that directly affect student achievement. Twenty-five percent of the schools in the study report that a majority of parents were involved in school programs designed to help them understand the quality of student work.

As to ethos, Johnson and Asera (1999) claim that successful schools persisted through difficulties. The authors explain that teachers who did not agree with the reform efforts often departed from schools. Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, et al. (2000) explain that a common factor of the successful schools in their study was that teachers' beliefs before and during implementation

in the reform process promoted their willingness to make sacrifices. Bell writes that the schools in the California study possessed staff that displayed "moral leadership" (p. 10). She elaborates:

> This ethical approach to schooling was often modeled and shared by principals, district leaders and faculty. Respect, high expectations, support, hard work and empowerment were key words that applied to both faculty and students.
>
> 'Moral leadership' also meant that staff and students visualized themselves as part of the system as a whole. They understood that schooling was more than preparation for academic attainment. Education laid the foundation for success in life (p. 10).

She adds that high staff motivation and strong site leadership were found at the high-performing, high-poverty schools. This recalls Johnson and Asera's conclusion: "School leaders created a collective sense of responsibility for school improvement. The shared sense of responsibility was nurtured by joint planning processes and reinforced by efforts to involve everyone in key components of the school's work" (p. ix).

Conclusions and Emerging Questions about Resource Allocation

The studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools do not offer in depth insights about school finance. However, they suggest a number of themes about resource allocation. Title I support played a role in the vast majority of schools. Authors of the studies present the various ways the involvement of school districts supported change efforts. In many cases, schools provided meaningful professional development and adequate materials. Principals sometimes became instructional leaders or invested in staff support in this area. Classroom and staff time seemed to be organized with a great deal of thought. As schools utilized these new models, they required greater flexibility in staffing.

Most authors presented cases of strong principal leadership. Leaders reconceived parental roles, with a focus on preparing parents to be partners in their children's academic

achievement. Some authors discussed the ways principals led school communities through difficult transformation processes. Most were able to gain the support of their staffs. High expectations of all members of school communities were essential in these efforts.

Thorough examination of school finance in high-performing, high-poverty schools would be an important element of the next wave of this inquiry. Numerous questions emerge when reading this work. What are the budgeting processes in these schools? What financial resources do they utilize? What are the relationships between practices in school finance and the high expectations that characterize the ethos of these schools? Answers might reveal promising strategies for state and federal partnerships. Conversely, they may provide cases of school entrepreneurship.

These studies also raise queries about time and human resources. Not enough attention has been paid to the ways high-performing, high-poverty schools conduct professional development. Who makes decisions about training? How much does it cost? Given that the body of research on professional development has emerging evidence of best practices, it would be worthwhile to see if these programs are common in high-performing, high-poverty schools. It may be equally important to understand how these schools negotiate with districts and unions in order to maintain alternative arrangements. It would be interesting to learn about the ways financial resources may have been a factor in these partnerships.

The Education Trust (1999, 2001) reports provide an invaluable national picture of high-performing, high-poverty schools. Because the authors caution against interstate comparisons, it would fruitful for a next wave of research to investigate and analyze efforts within states. In addition, there has not been enough time for this work to be longitudinal. It would be important to learn about the factors that enable these schools to sustain their outstanding programs.

Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) cogently argue that instructional vision and resource reallocation are intertwined. They explain that principles of resource allocation could help construct tools for schools and districts to understand their improvement. Changes in state and district policies might help limit the obstacles to alternative forms of organization. It follows that our knowledge of the ways in which high-performing, high-poverty schools use resources potentially helps us support schools in the emerging high-stakes accountability context.

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Printed Name: Hilary Loeb Organization: University of Washington

Address: College of Education
Educational Leadership
And Policy Studies
203D Miller Hall
Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195-3600

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http://ericae.net