

Journal of Transformative Leadership & Policy Studies

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JTLPS

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California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, California

**Editor
Porfirio Loeza, Ph.D.**

Professor • Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, California



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Address all correspondence to:

Journal of Transformative Leadership and Policy Studies
Doctorate Program in Educational Leadership
College of Education, Sacramento State
6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819-6079

Email: jtlps@csus.edu

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Letter from the Editors

The *Journal of Transformative Leadership and Policy Studies (JTLPS)* is a system-wide, open access, and online journal with a print edition representing the California State University System. The journal's focus on supporting and disseminating applied research pre-kindergarten through higher education uniquely positions the journal among the varied body of educational journals. Realizing the complexities that underscore educational organizations, the journal aims to inform practice via the development of wide-ranging types of academic genres, including, but not limited to, exploring issues of equity and achievement, STEM in education, and exemplifying how leadership and policy influence educational change.

This volume includes two reflective essays that speak to transformative leadership and the policies needed for transformative change to occur in both public schools and community colleges. Francisco Rodriguez, the newly appointed Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District, met with members of the editorial team for an intimate and transparent question and answer session on transformational leadership. He provides a critical perspective on the leadership policies he will consider to mediate change for the nine-campus district. According to Rodriguez, to promote institutional change you need the "Three C's"—Courage, Conviction and *Coraje* (valor and boldness). This refers to having the courage to facilitate conversations about social justice aimed at redressing educational disparities. Ramona Bishop, Superintendent of the Vallejo City Unified School District, provides a leadership perspective on the need for transformational leaders in inner-city schools. Her testimonies allude to her own leadership skills and approach to transformational leadership. She speaks to her role as being a fastidious facilitator, unselfish community-builder, an approachable intellect, and most importantly, a compassionate listener. Bishop's use of quotes, particularly from Horace Mann, the first Secretary of Education, vividly brings alive practices that underscore school transformation.

The Viki Montera article provides insights to issues of assessment, curriculum and pedagogy reform for a more equitable and accountable educational system. The au-

thor illustrates one school's effort to expand assessment and accountability activities through the use of assessment research literature and dialogue throughout the school community. In turn, Rose Borunda and Crystal Martinez-Alire point to pedagogical practices that embrace Native American cultural values. Five developmental theorists cited in this concept paper speak to pedagogical practices shown to be in alignment with American Indian cultural orientations and advance educational success.

Three book reviews are included in this issue. Bryan Rogers reviews *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement*. An overview of the possible arguments both for and against the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are discussed. The prose of the introduction and discussion is lighthearted and persuasive towards viewing the CCSS as a golden opportunity to rebuild and retool education modes and assessment means. Lisa Romero reviews *Public Policy and Higher Education: Reframing Strategies for Preparation, Access, and Success (Core Concepts in Higher Education)*. Romero applauds the authors for their efforts to develop a resource for higher education aimed at explaining the relationship between political ideology, policy decisions, and outcomes affecting college opportunity, access and success. Sarah Graham and Brandon Jougatos review *Understanding Community Colleges*. Their analysis provides a comprehensive analysis from a critical and theoretical perspective of scholarly research on how to improve access to students. The authors recognize that in order to influence the diverse populations they serve, instructors must be aware of how to teach the skills needed in a way that meet the needs of diverse learners.

This volume includes a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) report based on a California State University (CSU) doctoral fellowship. The authors, Randy Kilmartin and Katrina Pimentel, provide insight into practices that influence underrepresented minority high school students' participation in STEM. The report is underscored by practical recommendations that may assist policymakers, industry leaders and educators in advocating for equity and inclusion in STEM education. The Editorial Board of *JTLPS* would like to thank the authors, the

Chancellor's Office of the California State University, and the College of Education at California State University, Sacramento for their support of this journal and the field of education. The editorial team especially would like to recognize the journal's editor, Porfirio Loeza, for his own transformational leadership in guiding the production of this volume. *JTLPS* invites scholars and practitioners to submit papers on a range of topics pertinent to leadership and policy studies in education and STEM education.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlos Nevarez'.

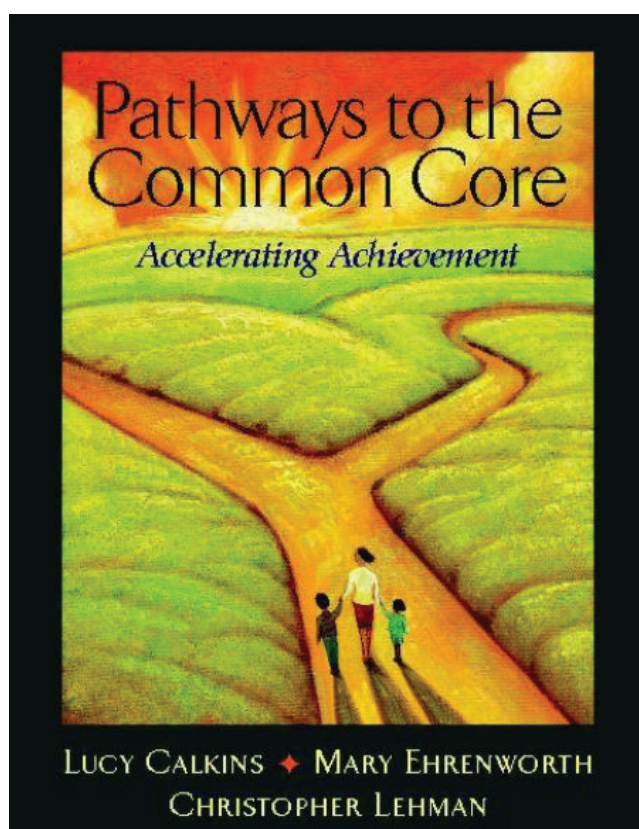
Carlos Nevarez, PhD
Executive Editor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Porfirio Loeza'.

Porfirio Loeza, PhD
Editor

BOOK REVIEW

Review by Bryan Rogers, James C. Enochs High School, Modesto, California



*Pathways to the Common Core:
Accelerating Achievement*

by Lucy Calkins, Marh Ehrenworth and
Christopher Lehman

Routledge, 224 pp.

ISBN 13: 978-0325043555

\$33.13

In her book, *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement*, (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012) Lucy Calkins presents an overview of the possible arguments both for and against the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The prose of the introduction and discussion is lighthearted and persuasive towards viewing the CCSS as a golden opportunity, encouraging the reader to view them as a chance to rebuild and retool education modes and assessment means. The author is clear in her acknowledgement that while we may see the great opportunity of the CCSS; how it will be implemented is still an unwritten chapter in the book of modern education reform.

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 45 states across the nation, including the District of Columbia and four American territories, represents a large scale change in curriculum and assessment goals aimed at better preparing America's K-12 students for success in college and careers (National Governors Association, 2012). The new mandates require an increase in literacy skills for all students K-12 in every academic discipline. The guidelines of the Common Core State Standards indicate students will be assessed using adaptive testing on an open-ended response style of questioning that measures literacy mastery and the ability to explain the "correctness" of their responses on multiple topics. Students who have previously been trained and assessed on their ability to look for the best-fit answer and make educated choices will soon face a testing environment that does not match the way they have been taught or assessed previously.

This translates into a requirement for the students to adapt to new modes of content delivery, assessment, and

very likely, a completely different learning experience in a fully implemented CCSS classroom. Similarly, it is a clear change in the working environment and charges teachers to produce deeper lessons for students, with higher expectations of performance specifically connected to literacy mastery. According to Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012), "...the Common Core marks a return to the kind of reading that was promoted in the thirties and forties through New Criticism. New Criticism put text at the center and equated reading with close analysis of the text" (p. 26).

The main focus of the book is on the theory and implications of three parts of the CCSS: reading standards, writing standards, and speaking and listening standards. In each of the sections the authors break down the standards and painstakingly illuminate the connections within and between the standards, as well as how each standard stacks upon the previous school years in a threaded fashion. The text in each of these sections is descriptive and at times repetitive with commentary regarding resources that can be obtained from the authors' company. In a few areas, the author seemed to be more interested in describing the difficulty only to follow up with their company's answer for how to approach the challenges of implementation.

The book is strong on explaining the relationships and rationales of each of the three standard areas discussed. The structure of each of these areas is well defined for interrelation and theory. The goal of reading for meaning and how to blend that concept into writing for meaning are developed in each section and at times the connections are very clear. They cite the research on "close reading" as a means to help students engage in the lessons for intrinsic reasons, which is common in current CCSS training sessions. The examples in the reading sections using the book *Charlotte's Web* are very good but limited to certain grade levels.

The narrative mentions a limited number of possible methods to actually apply the standards to a classroom setting and the examples that are presented are from the elementary school level. There were very few discussion pieces that give mention to high school level implementation suggestions. The implementations suggested also come from a perspective that the educator reading the book is most certainly working with a group of other teachers in collaboration. The assumption of a profession-

al learning group or team working on implementation using the book as a guide comes across as a hidden message that the task is too big for one teacher with one group of students. It would be wonderful if teamwork and consistent collaboration was the norm at every school site, but I would argue the authors' perspective on this is not a universal truth.

The authors make multiple references to purchasing new books and materials for students to read but this seems in opposition to the reality of current school budgets and the very real concern of the costs of implementing the standards and assessment pieces that they briefly cover in the introduction. In addition, the depth of study required for implementing text, reading, and speaking analysis as they suggest would be problematic with the current hours of school required for attendance, which is a largely unaddressed concern in their narrative.

The primary weakness in the book is the lack of connection between the literacy strand and all of the academic disciplines. Reading, writing, and speaking, while very important skills, are not the only academic topics covered in school and by leaving out the other disciplines in this book the authors may have missed a key area of practical need for educators.

The book concludes with a very useful and thorough discussion of the two consortia that are developing Common Core assessments, the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The explanations of philosophy and the different style of assessment to be offered by each of these groups is well written and are quite valuable resources to address concerns about the new assessment model.

In summary, *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* provides a solid discussion of the theory behind the Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening standards. The narrative is incomplete, as it does not connect to literacy standards across all disciplines, such as mathematics, science, and social science. Educators in the elementary and 7-12 English Language Arts will find the detailed theoretical breakdowns of the standards useful in understanding the purposes, but will still be left with the question of how to implement the standards fully. The case for collaboration to address this change is assumed, but nevertheless represents what may be the only possible way for full implementation to work. Although this

book would be a good source for starting the conversation about implementation and how to adapt to CCSS instruction, it represents only one part of the story to be told in this new era of education reform.

Further Reading

Calkins, L., Ehrenworth, M., & Lehman, C. (2012). *Pathways to the common core: Accelerating achievement* (1st ed.). Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heineman.

National Governors Association (2012). *Common core state standards initiative: Preparing America's students for college and career*. Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

About the Reviewer

BRYAN ROGERS is a veteran educator and currently teaches Algebra and U.S. History in Modesto, CA. He is a doctoral student in Educational leadership at CSU Stanislaus.

Email: brogers1@csustan.edu