

## **Moving beyond the Dichotomy: Meeting the Needs of Urban Students through Contextually-Relevant Education Practices**

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The term “privatization of education” generally refers to the increasing influence of education management organizations (EMOs) on schooling through the commercialization of public education. More specifically, privatization may manifest as: (a) corporate funding through vending machine proceeds, (b) strategic philanthropic donations, (c) corporate sponsored incentive programs, and (d) private corporations taking on the direct responsibility of managing schools and educating youth (Molnar, 2003). The literature on privatization in sectors other than education is rather extensive. However, the privatization literature in education is less well developed and has focused its emphasis primarily on dichotomized comparisons between privately managed schools versus traditional public schools (GAO,

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2002). Although helpful in conceptualizing the broader educational policy issues, these dichotomized comparisons fail to consider the role of context or explore the practice through a developmental lens. Moreover, comparative analysis seeks only to make a case either for privatized or public education. This either/or dichotomy denies the historical role of business in all facets of education including teacher education. Also, it minimizes the unique attributes and needs of the communities and students for whom education (public or private) was intended to serve.

Further, often overlooked in discussions of privatization of education are explicit discussions of the educational needs of minority urban communities. This is ironic as the education of youth who reside in urban minority communities is at the heart of the public/ private education debate. For example, charter schools have emerged as the most common form of educational privatization. Often marketed as an alternative to failing urban public schools, charter schools have emerged primarily as a minority phenomenon. Nationally, estimates of minority charter school enrollment ranges from 50 to 63% of the total charter school enrollment (Gajendragadkar, 2005). Another study found that charter schools enrolled “11% fewer White students, 7% more African American students, and 3% more Hispanic students” (Bulkley & Fisler, 2002). Further, some researchers have pointed out that the clustering of minorities in charter schools serves to further isolate an already socially, economically, racially isolated population. According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2003, p.25), “seventy percent of Black charter school students, over 100,000, are in 90-100% minority charter schools.”

Stated differently, much of the privatization debate is about the education of economically disadvantaged minority students. Historically, teachers, researchers, and policy makers have tended to ignore developmental processes in interaction with minimally supportive contextual conditions and to view these populations from deficit driven perspectives (Lipman, 1998). As recently reviewed and critiqued, publish reports suggests that much of the research on which policy is based and implemented as practice lacks perspectives that consider the unique situations and normative processes of youth of color in unacknowledged contexts of continuing 21st century racial bias (e.g., see Spencer 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Spencer, Harpalani, Cassidy, Jacobs, Donde, Goss, et al, 2006)

The goal of this article is to move beyond the more traditional question, “Does business have a role in public education?” A historical overview of education suggests that the involvement of the private sector is not a new phenomenon and is not likely to end in the near future (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Further, according to Pedro Noguera, privatization in education is an idea as old as the nation itself—the use of public funds to purchase education from private providers was presented by Adam Smith in his 1776 publication *Wealth of the Nation* (Noguera, 1989).

In this article, we argue that a much more fruitful line of inquiry is to examine how the characteristics of public education and privately managed education

meet (or not) the unique needs of a highly vulnerable group—urban youth. We begin by providing a brief overview of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Considering the impact of NCLB is critical, as it has facilitated the growth of EMOs by introducing the notion of school choice in response to poor school test performance. Secondly, we discuss how privatization has been implemented and evaluated in Philadelphia under a diverse provider model. Next, we make a theoretically grounded case for reframing public and private education to focus more centrally on the affective development of teacher and students. With a parallel conceptual rationale, we conclude by making theoretically grounded recommendations for teacher preparation.

### **The No Child Left Behind Act**

In 2001, the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965 was implemented. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 redefined the government's role in the educational system. It is guided by four basic principles: (1) stronger accountability for results, (2) increased flexibility and local control, (3) expanded options for parents, and (4) emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven effective.

For students and parents, NCLB offers the promise of a high quality education by requiring all teachers to be highly qualified and students to meet state identified standards. The “all” is particularly promising for minority and special needs populations as they are often underserved and overlooked by public schools. Testing and data play a central role in determining whether students have reached proscribed grade level benchmarks. Yearly, students and schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward state identified standards. The use of standardized tests provides feedback (data) to public education stakeholders as to how well schools, districts, and states are educating youth individually and by subgroup. As the rationale goes, these data allow parents to become informed consumers of education and “choose” schools whose students test well or receive free tutoring while remaining in current school.

Proponents of privatization argue that new and unique management models for schools will mean that more students and families will have better options in determining where they attend school. In addition, many people believe that for-profit schools are an effective way not only to provide a variety of learning opportunities but also to improve the quality of public schools by providing competition (Friedman, 1995). And, in this time of accountability with goals aligned with NCLB, the potential to increase student achievement in struggling schools by choosing private entities suggests an attractive strategy (Ganson & Morehouse, 2002). Unfortunately, as Ganson and Morehouse (2002) point out, studies have not found significant differences between students in schools run by private companies as opposed to students in public schools. In fact, consciously determined or not,

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data are not collected in a fashion that would allow for substantive analysis between these two types of schools.

Critics of NCLB have argued that NCLB has limited curricular creativity and meaningful learning in the classroom by pressuring teachers and administrators to teach “toward the test.” Advocates of NCLB have suggested that the test results provide invaluable information for teachers about how each child is performing and that these data will help teachers meet the needs of each student. The goal was to increase school success and address failures. However, average scores for 17 year olds have not improved since the 1970s and over the past two decades taxpayers have spent 125 billion dollars on elementary and secondary education while at the same time a trend of low performance persists (Phillips, 2000). Teachers report that they feel a tremendous amount of pressure in testing students and that the time it takes to test adversely affects student learning and causes anxiety (Donegan & Trepanier-Street, 1998). Many teachers believe that an overemphasis on testing may lead to some wonderful content-based lessons that have little attention paid to whether or not the students have understood the material. Unfortunately, the content driven accountability standards leave little room for teachers to cultivate interpersonal skills that may actually help students learn.

Regardless of whether one is a critic or advocate of NCLB, one fact remains: NCLB impacts both teacher training as well professional teaching practices. Stated differently, NCLB serves as a context for teaching and learning as it has reframed the national educational agenda to focus primarily on standards and the corresponding test to determine if the standards have actually been met. On the one hand, this shift in focus is necessary to ensure that indeed—no child is left behind, however it is not sufficient. Clearly, unpacking of the myriad self-context interactions and attendant inference making processes both of students and teachers is necessary for adequately understanding the character of support actually needed for improving and sustaining improvements in achievement outcomes. The exclusive focus on the cognitive dimension of the student development is myopic. This exclusion suggests that the affective developmental dimension has little to no role in the transmission and mastery of curricula.

On the contrary, we argue that affect is inherently linked to cognitive processes, which considered collectively plays a major role in teaching and learning. Research indicates that affect or emotional intelligence (EI) is associated with a number of key educational issues that are directly related to academic achievement (e.g., bullying, discipline problems, and poor teacher-student interactions). Emotional intelligence is broadly defined as understanding how to discern and convey the feelings of oneself and others in socially acceptable fashions (Goleman, 1995). According to Herrod and Scheer (2005, p. 503) EI is the “combination of factors that allow a person to feel, be motivated, regulate mood, control impulse, persist in frustration, and thereby succeed in day-to day living.”

## **Framing the Issues**

### ***Privatizing Our Schools***

This article considers the privatization movement using Philadelphia as a case study. Philadelphia was chosen as an exemplar for a few reasons. First, as the ninth largest school district in the United States serving more than 200,000 students, Philadelphia exemplifies many of the problems shared by large urban districts. Of the 200,000 students, approximately 12% have individualized education plans (IEPs) and 70.3% are considered low income, the latter figure is more than double the statewide figure of 30.8% (NCES, 2001). In addition, Pennsylvanians have a long tradition of opting out of public schools (private education). For example, Hess (1999) reports that while the national mean for students attending private schools hovers around 10%, 32% of Philadelphia school children attend private schools.

In Philadelphia alone, there are approximately 91 charter schools, which is about half of all the charter schools in the entire state. Lastly, due to the district's usage of a diverse provider model to meet the mandates of a state takeover, Philadelphia represents a unique laboratory to compare a variety of educational models. The diverse providers model includes non-profits (Universal Companies and Foundations, Inc.), for-profits (Edison Inc, Victory Schools, and Chancellor Beacon), and higher education institutions (Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania) to manage 46 of the city's 264 public schools, thus, making it a unique case study. Further, a for profit company, Community Education Partners (CEP), has been contracted to educate youth with behavioral challenges who are not served by traditional neighborhood schools. Regarding Philadelphia's diverse provider model, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, stated, "This school district has embarked on one of the most aggressive implementations of NCLB . . . You have blurred the line between public and private . . . Everyone in the nation should take note of these partnerships" (cited in Christman, Gold, Herold, 2006, p. 14).

### ***Privatization Delivery Models***

Three main companies are leading the management of schools: Edison, Mosaica, and Chancellor Beacon. This section briefly describes characteristics of their models in terms of curriculum emphasis and other factors. In addition, we discuss how these models have been integrated into the Philadelphia Public School system. Edison, which may be the most well known name in the privatization movement, emphasizes basic skills. Edison schools are particularly interested in supporting reading skills and believe that these skills must be mastered as the basis for all future learning. While their program is clearly laid out, it allows for fine-tuning and customization by schools that contract with them. In addition, Edison includes subjects such as art and world languages as "enrichment areas." In order to support their belief in basic skill development, Edison supports the use of repetition

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and drill with direct instruction. They also use instructional methods such as the Chicago Math and Success for All reading programs.

The Mosaica model seems to have a bit less flexibility than the Edison model in that they prescribe a “morning program” that must include reading and math and an “afternoon program” which includes Mosaica’s own curriculum called Paragon. While the morning program allows for some customization by local schools, the afternoon program does not. Paragon offers a multidisciplinary learning approach with particular attention to student learning styles. This program emphasizes the humanities and the use of projects in the classroom. Another unique quality of Mosaica’s model is that community involvement through networking with local community resources is encouraged. Community involvement attempts to link a community’s organizations with schools in order to share and provide resources.

The last model, Chancellor Beacon, offers the most willingness to customize educational programs to meet the needs and preferences of local schools. They do not lay out specific programs to be held in the morning or afternoon, but rather work collaboratively with the local schools to design a program that will be effective. On the other hand, the Chancellor Beacon curriculum does include a Core Knowledge component. This component includes an expectation that students master specific content in language arts, history, geography, math, morality, and community volunteerism. A unique characteristic of this model is that they specifically mention the provision of operational support as a way to encourage schools to focus more fully on academics.

Although omitted from many of Philadelphia’s EMO evaluations, Community Education Partners (CEP) manages four alternative schools for behaviorally challenged youth. Most recently, the Tennessee-based company received 28.1 million dollars to educate between two to three thousand students. The CEP approach is to improve the learning gains of traditional public schools by removing students who pose safety or behavioral challenges. CEP students receive a self-paced curriculum in a small learning community. The school’s motto is: “Be Here. Behave. Be Learning.”

### **Testing Outcomes**

While all three of these models described appear to offer elements of sound curricular design, it is difficult to determine sources of significant differences from traditional public school models. And, as Richards, Shore, and Sawicky (1996) report, the approaches offered by educational contractors have not been shown to be more effective than methods already being utilized in public schools. In fact, there is very little rigorous research on the effectiveness of the three educational management companies outlined above. Due to this lack of research, it is difficult to draw conclusions about whether in fact, programming efforts specifically support student achievement or improve school climate. While there are some studies that suggest

that the privately managed schools have demonstrated academic progress, more research is needed to determine if there is a qualitative and significant difference in achievement outcomes between privately managed schools versus the outcomes experienced by their counterparts in public schools (Ganson & Morehouse, 2002).

Given the focus of NCLB on standardized testing, the evaluation of public schools in general and Philadelphia schools particularly has focused exclusively on test performance. Overall, it is clear that students are performing better on standardized test now than two years ago. However, even these gains are no call for celebration. Since the state take-over of the Philadelphia School District, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores have increased. According to a report from Research for Action, “[f]rom 2002 to 2005, the percentages of students scoring in the proficient and advanced categories increased by 14-15 percentage points for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders” (2006, p. 14). With regard to math, fifth and eighth graders improved by 27 and 21 percentage points, respectively. Although these gains are impressive, the overall test scores remain low and the achievement gap with surrounding suburbs persists. For example, across the three grades tested (5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>), the maximum percentage of students scoring proficient to advance in reading was 39. In math, 45 percent of the fifth graders attained only 23 percent of 11<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or better.

In a recent report entitled “Privatization Philly Style,” a comparison between test performances of various education models demonstrates mixed results (See Table 1.) All education providers have shown increases in percent proficient in PSSA Math and Reading scores (5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) from 2002 to 2005. However, it is interesting to note that schools managed by the district and restructured schools (public schools following a intervention plan created by the district as an attempt to preempt a state takeover) demonstrated the greatest gains in proficiency and ranked first and third in percent proficient in Reading. In math, district managed schools and restructured schools yielded the highest percent proficiency (2005) at 49.7% and 36.0% respectively.

The authors of the report note the growing difficulty in evaluating the efficacy of for profit education provider. Due to the use of political connections rather than outcome data and the potential for large profits, the qualities that make Philadelphia an ideal quasi-experimental study of privatization have been compromised. For example, the for-profit providers have begun to collaborate sharing and exchanging best practices and lessons learned. Although arguably beneficial to current students, collaboration among competitors diminishes the ability to determine what “brand” of education is effective and contradicts NCLB’s assumptions regarding market competition. Further, the history of privatization in Philadelphia has produced a unique opportunity to compare district, for profit, and non-profit led school based academic interventions. Most unfortunately, the district has chosen to no longer fund its own intervention—a natural control group—that was outperforming the EMOs.

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Table I

Percentage Scoring Advanced or Proficient by 2005 EMO Classification, Grades 5 & 8 combined

*—School District of Philadelphia*

Reading	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change 04-05	Change 02-05
District Managed	27.0%	33.5%	43.2%	43.9%	0.7%	16.9%
Edison	10.5%	10.1%	20.7%	21.7%	1.0%	11.2%
Foundations	13.5%	17.5%	19.4%	22.5%	3.1%	9.0%
Penn	13.1%	15.6%	22.3%	27.2%	4.9%	14.1%
Restructured	11.9%	20.0%	28.0%	29.3%	1.3%	17.4%
Temple	9.8%	10.0%	15.7%	16.0%	0.3%	6.2%
Universal	8.6%	7.7%	25.0%	19.2%	-5.8%	10.6%
Victory	10.8%	14.6%	24.0%	23.9%	-0.1%	13.1%
Charter	24.8%	32.6%	35.4%	36.6%	1.2%	11.8%

Math	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change 04-05	Change 02-05
District Managed	23.2%	28.1%	38.2%	49.7%	11.5%	26.5%
Edison	6.3%	6.9%	16.6%	27.4%	10.8%	21.1%
Foundations	8.7%	13.4%	15.1%	27.8%	12.7%	19.1%
Penn	9.5%	15.4%	13.2%	30.6%	17.4%	21.1%
Restructured	6.7%	15.1%	19.2%	36.0%	16.8%	29.3%
Temple	5.1%	6.1%	9.8%	17.2%	7.4%	12.1%
Universal	9.2%	5.5%	15.3%	19.4%	4.1%	10.2%
Victory	5.5%	7.1%	16.7%	21.3%	4.6%	15.8%
Charter	17.0%	21.4%	26.0%	33.8%	7.8%	16.8%

(cited in Christman, Gold & Herold, 2006, p.22)

### **TNT: Teaching and Testing**

NCLB and the potential for big profits in educating urban students have converged to reconfigure challenges and opportunities for teacher education. Standardized test are the primary source of feedback regarding teacher and student efficacy. When used appropriately standardized tests can provide invaluable feedback. Nonetheless, the uninformed use of test and “teaching to the test” strategies fail to maximize the role of emotions in teaching and learning. This section explores the role of affect in teaching.

Teachers have a long history of seeking feedback for their performance in an effort to improve and serve students more effectively. In 1983, the White Paper on

Teaching Quality formally advocated for assessment of teachers. And, just two years later, a paper produced by the government regarding quality in schools focused attention on the need for teachers to be clear about the expectations placed upon them in the classroom (Humphreys, 1992). However, it was not until a study in 1988 that the subject of exactly what methods of teacher evaluation were most effective was undertaken (Cameron, 1988). Cameron's study found that teachers' self-assessments had high value in informing the teaching process. On the other hand, while performance analysis gave some good information to administrators, it gave no value to a teachers' own view as a learner. The study concluded that teaching quality was most favorably affected by supporting teacher motivation by contributing to the quality of teacher learning and attention to teachers' own perceived needs.

Still, the focus of teacher education is on market demand. The results are teacher education programs that are cheaper and more straightforward to conduct, but ignore the core aspect of the people who they serve (e.g., pre-service teachers, students and parents). This core aspect is a sense of self-respect and motivation tied to truly wanting to help students learn and not just bolster test scores. Elkind argues that adults often fail to recognize, acknowledge and respond to children's feelings and that failure may adversely affect student learning (Schuster, 2000). Relying on the same logic, we must be sure to recognize, acknowledge and respond to teachers' feelings in order to support good practice, which will undoubtedly support student learning as well.

Emphasis on student test scores may undermine work satisfaction, high quality performance, and internal motivation in teachers. Noddings (1996) argues that while attention to emotion has the potential to enhance a passion for teaching, relieve the sense of isolation and improve classroom performance, the struggle to have the profession of teaching viewed with more respect has resulted in apprehension when considering emotion. Research has determined that teachers derived more motivation from the intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards of their job (Herzberg, 1964). The intrinsic rewards include self-respect, sense of accomplishment, and personal growth. Teachers generally measure factors such as sense of accomplishment and personal growth by seeing the progress of their students. However, teachers in struggling schools may see very little of this progress if they are focusing solely on student test scores. Moreover, it could be argued that the emphasis on standardized test scores reflects a masculine cultural value highlighting competition, which competes with and devalues reciprocity and care in schools (Seligson & MacPhee, 2001).

Advocates of high stakes testing believe that the information provided to teachers about student achievement should be sufficient to help teachers improve classroom practices and student achievement. In this belief is packaged the idea that a well-designed evaluation system accommodates children of varying needs. However, teachers feel a great deal of dissonance with this system of evaluation and assessment because many teachers still contend that these measures discrimi-

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nate against the most vulnerable students. Using evaluation of students to help teachers may indeed be useful if those evaluations are well designed. However, a poorly designed evaluation may cause anxiety and mistrust between teachers and administrators leading to a school climate that is not conducive to learning and exacerbating obstacles at all levels. On the other hand, attention to fostering healthy relationships in schools, as a core organizing principal, would add personal and communal advantages that would buffer the stress associated with the emphasis on achievement.

Noddings (2005) calls for an “ethic of care” in school settings. Giving caring relationships a place of importance in schools requires teachers to be attentive and listen to students needs. Further, the expectation is that teachers would respond in a way that will support the caring relationship. This type of relationship is one in which needs are heard and respected. While teachers may have a strong desire to establish and maintain caring relationships, obstacles may get in the way of that desire. These obstacles may include pressure to bolster test results, or personal limitations that impede one’s ability to act in a caring way toward others. A frequently unacknowledged and complex obstacle may be the history of unjust and uncaring schooling experiences had by urban and poor youth, which result in challenging student coping styles.

Although there is a growing body of literature examining how support for EI in children has a positive impact on learning, not much attention is paid to adult needs in this regard. When a teacher possesses emotional and interpersonal intelligence, they are more able to notice individual needs of their students, be flexible in creating a positive learning environment and demonstrate creativity in structuring lessons. These interpersonal skills support self-discipline, self-understanding and self-esteem (Richardson, 1997). While some may argue that emotional skills cannot be taught, Goleman (1995) contends that with appropriate training and support, anyone can learn skills to improve EI. Still, they have not become a core part of teacher training in either the public or private sector.

The inattention to EI with respect to teachers may be driven by an assumption that those who do not possess these skills generally do not pursue teaching as a career. Or perhaps, there is a hope that these individuals would “select out” of a teacher education program because their inability to relate with a high level of empathy and social skill will cause them to vet themselves out of such programs. However, the focus on test scores and achievement standards does not end at K-12 schools. College students who are able to score high on tests and maintain high grade point averages will likely graduate and take teaching jobs regardless of their interpersonal skills. So, the charge of teacher education might be to help bridge the achievement gap by supporting teachers’ emotional and social competence along with core content knowledge in addition to traditional academic ability. Teacher behavior needs to be caring and committed to supporting and modeling caring and moral behavior. With this in mind, teacher education should make variables

associated with EI a priority and not continue the standard strategy, which is often to minimize its importance when compared to other competing demands.

In part, training prospective teachers is a process of training people who will eventually work as part of a team. When team members work together effectively, productivity rises and the workplace climate is positively enhanced. However, research about how to build these effective teams has been oversimplified by suggesting that desired qualities such as the ability to cooperate, collaborate and stay committed to goals do not have to be directly supported. Rather, a few key leaders who demonstrate these qualities can be identified and others are expected to imitate these qualities and achieve similar results (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). However, research indicates that trust, group identity, and self-efficacy are essential to the success of teams in business (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). We believe that these same ingredients are essential in schools as well and that teachers who are supported in these areas will express a more positive attitude toward tasks associated with student success.

Inclusion of a component supporting EI in teacher education programs would be relatively easy to implement. Teacher candidates would need to be engaged in a process of self-reflection in order to identify their emotions and manage them in multiple contexts. Many teacher education programs already embrace the idea of reflection as a way to improve lesson planning and implementation. In order to achieve a candidate's ability to recognize their own emotions, their reflections would include a component asking them to consider how they felt throughout the lesson, what emotions were triggered during class and how they coped with those emotions. Requiring teacher candidates to engage with and process their stress tolerance and coping styles will likely lead to improved relationships with both students and colleagues. And, engaging in high quality interpersonal relationships will contribute to meeting their students' social and emotional needs as well (Seligson & MacPhee, 2001).

### **What Educators Need to Know**

In this section, we move beyond the "what" or making an "outcome argument" as an enhanced approach to teaching and learning. Instead, we present a particular theoretical approach, Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (Spencer, 2006), as a model for understanding and conceptualizing how teachers and students dynamically serve as each other's contexts for development. That is, we propose moving from a narrow "what or outcome focus" to understanding the "how" of this process as a mechanism for enhancing the teach-student dynamic.

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes that represent unavoidable interactions between individuals and contexts. They are undergirded by perceptual processes, which are largely determined by cognition determined human inference making (i.e., perception). Accordingly, how one perceives and reciprocally projects

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emotion in multiply layered contexts contributes to the context and the extent to which it facilitates or inhibits the purpose of the school context: Teaching, learning and the facilitation of more general human development and each stage's specific developmental tasks (see Havighurst, 1953).

The processes are largely influenced by how well one perceives and projects emotion in context. The following section provides an overview of Spencer's Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) and discusses how social emotional learning (SEL) may be used to enable teachers and students to adaptively cope in context. The emphasis on interaction and emotions is particularly salient because no matter the model of schooling (public or private) or curriculum used, teaching and learning is fundamentally about relationships and the management of emotions that serve as contexts for those relationships. This process-oriented point that aids an explication of the frequently stressful dynamic is often lost in discussions of NCLB and education privatization.

The emphasis on interaction and emotions is particularly salient because no matter the model of schooling (public or private) or curriculum considered, teaching and learning is fundamentally a cognitive *and* affective process taking place in culturally defined social contexts. The resulting academic system is about relationships and the management of emotions that result from those relationships. The outcome afforded is a psychologically and physically safe setting, which is of foundational importance for the high risk-taking activity of learning. That is, students can be made to feel secure in letting down defenses for engaging in the process of acknowledging what is known, and feeling open to the cognitive and emotional dissonance and challenges associated with obtaining information representing what needs to be known and learned for a particular grade. This cannot happen if the bi-directional processes described are ignored since the cognitive demands of learning achievement relevant information for standards determining benchmark (e.g., math and reading scores), in fact, mirror those inescapably undergirding the processing of schools' and classrooms' social emotional climate.

### **Affect Matters**

In a time where NCLB has shifted the focus of education primarily to standards, discussions regarding the emotional context of student teacher interactions ironically seem out of place. However, a number of scholars have demonstrated that emotional well-being has profound implications on the focus of NCLB—educational gains. Early on, Piaget in *Affect in Learning* noted that emotional state has direct implications on cognition, memory, and learning. Sylwester (1994), citing the role of peptide molecules (e.g., increased productions of cortisol and opiate endorphins), validates Piaget's perspectives. In aroused emotional states, elevated levels of peptides molecules serve to impede the function the higher order brain center (cortex) and facilitates the temporary dominance of the more fight or flight

oriented limbic system. However, one need not engage the brain based learning literature to recognize the role of emotion or the expression of emotions to note that individual and collective emotions serve as the context for teaching and learning. Emotional expression (or the lack thereof) has been implicated in learning outcomes through classroom management, problem behavior, school violence, and poor instruction (See Garbarino, 1999; Ferguson, 2001; Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Norris, 2003).

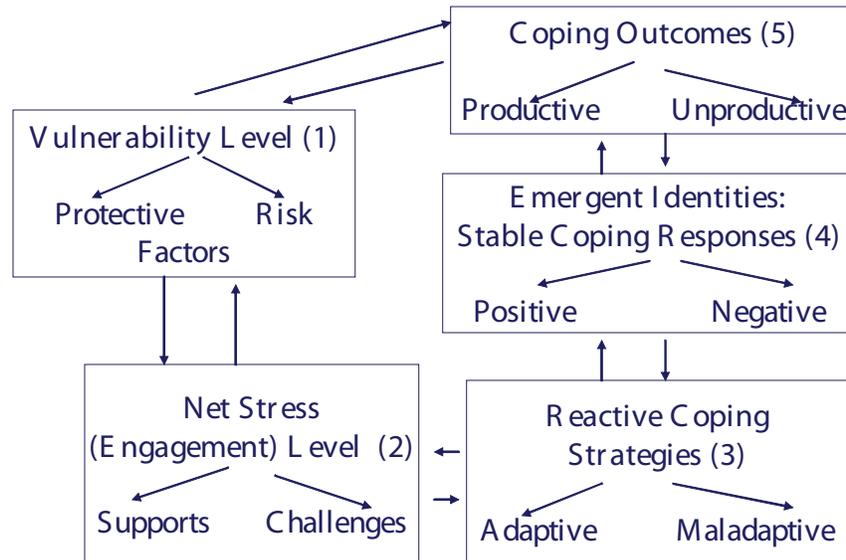
Too infrequently discussed in education are the simultaneous competing and complimentary ego needs of teachers (typically middle class white and female) and their minority students. Both parties (i.e., students and teachers) are discussed as solely racial or cultural beings that are reading from opposing cultural scripts (Erickson 1993; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1993; Sleeter, 2001). Although useful, perspectives such as these fail to highlight the need of teachers, particularly novice teachers, to feel some degree of efficacy as each fully assumes the professional identity as educator. Similarly, such perspectives fail to highlight the role of identity exploration in students as they attempt to define themselves and reach developmental milestones. PVEST's particular emphasis of identity—coping—and context throughout the life span allows it to be applied simultaneously to both teacher and student. When viewed from this perspective, schooling is much more than teachers, students, and corresponding test scores. PVEST places relationships (interconnectivity) at the center of educational analysis and subsequent intervention. These relationships are not limited to student teacher interactions but also the physical, structural, and developmental issues that serve as contexts for student teacher interaction.

The first of the five-component system PVEST framework emphasizes net vulnerability. For the purpose of this paper, we apply a PVEST lens to both students and teachers (See Figure 1). Net Vulnerability refers to the overall balance between risks and protective factor presence. These attributes factor widely into the unavoidable and cognition-based appraisals of self and others. For the teacher, these factors may include: race, gender, years in field, age, school or home neighborhood etc. In very real and tangible ways, these attributes are used to evaluate worth and promise for students and teachers like. The second component is Net Stress Engagement. This component highlights the balance between challenges confronted as one moves across time and place juxtaposed against the availability of supports. Stated differently, depending on the available level of support (internal or external), challenges that emanate from transformed risks confronted in context may predispose one to experience a particular level of stress. Take a twenty something newly minted teacher. It is here that individual differences in the nature of the prior years becomes manifest.

We argue that the context of schools (public and private) can be altered to provide an education that addresses the cognitive and affective domains of youth. More specifically schools can function better if both teachers and students become

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Figure 1. Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST).



more aware of their respective coping processes. According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (i.e., PVEST model), Life Stage Outcomes are the result of mediating components three and four, respectively: Reactive Coping Strategies (i.e., the net balance between maladaptive vs. adaptive strategies for dealing with net stress experienced “in the moment”) and Stable Emergent Identities (i.e., the net balance between negative identifications and positive identifications) internalized and stabilized as a consequence of redundant reactive coping strategy use. Specifically, reactive coping responses become automatic and redundant over time, which result in emergent and stabilized identities. As suggested, the patterned and internalized responses to redundant reactive coping behaviors become stabilized as an emergent identity; the process explains the stability and long-term character of an evolved identity formation product linked to the school context. The latter is important and explains why a teacher can feel inadequate and incompetent while at school; however, arriving home, the appropriate skill sets are successfully afforded his or her own children. In fact, the latter may be a major contributor to the teacher’s sense of professional efficacy.

The situation serves to reinforce the teacher’s suppositions about her school (and students) through the reinforcement of stereotypes, which function as risk factors for her students... and the cycle continues. That is, the perceived risk inferred by teachers is converted to problematic teacher behaviors (e.g., lack of caring, emotional and professional teacher investment, and student valuing), and may contribute to teacher

maladaptive reactive coping behaviors given inferred assumptions about students and the need to protect one's professional sense of an efficacious self. In turn, students then infer the stigmatized beliefs symbolically communicated by teachers as requiring reactive i.e., "in the moment" coping responses (i.e., maladaptive coping acts often intended by youth as "face saving" behavior) in response to perceived sources of stress (i.e., from "challenges" inferred by under-valuing behavior by teachers). The youth-perceived challenges from teachers and learning environments generate youths' cognition-based problematic and ultimately (re: school engagement), maladaptive, coping responses; as suggested by PVEST, students' behavioral responses become ritualized as a school identity...and the troubling achievement and social (coping) outcomes are "a given"—and the cycle continues.

As we consider schools and schooling, the settings represent dynamic interactions for behavioral coping. Using the schools as the focus both teachers and students enter schools with particular reactive coping histories (i.e., traits and attributes). It is the character of these attributes (i.e., maladaptive or adaptive) that facilitates or undermines a "best fit" between self and the requirements of the context. The issue of fit determines whether the accrued attributes function as assets or liabilities (see Cunningham, Swanson, & Spencer, 2003; Spencer, 2001; Youngblood & Spencer, 2002). Take for example a thirteen-year-old Black boy who is 5'10" and 175 pounds. Considered in isolation these characteristics are merely measurements of an adolescent's height and weight. In the context of the classroom, being an early maturing Black male may be associated with some degree of risk as these attributes are associated with stigma based fear and levels of stress. Early maturing boys (particularly Black boys) may be perceived as threats and disruptive even if there is evidence to the contrary. Ferguson (2001) describes how teachers adultify and characterize Black boys (early and non-early matures) as threats early in their schooling careers. According to Ferguson, this process often takes the form of double standards of academic expectations and behavior for Black and White males.

Teachers place low academic expectations and high behavioral expectations on Black males whereas; the converse is true for White male students. Black boys are reprimanded more often and given harsher consequences for committing the same behavioral offenses as White male students. This double standard often leads to maladaptive reactive coping by Black boys, and the system's adverse reactive coping response by placing them into special education where, more often than not, youth respond with early school leaving (see Dupree, Spencer & Bell, 1997; Spencer 1999, 2001; Youngblood & Spencer, 2002). Offsetting the patterns described is possible. We propose that bias and reactive coping can be dramatically decreased, by making the coping in context an explicit component of the self-appraisal process of teacher and students. This can be done by promoting EI.

### ***Policy Implications***

This section introduces a number of practical points that serve to make teach-

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ing and learning a process that involves the whole (i.e., cognitive and affective) individual (teacher and student). Thus, the goal of this section is not only to address standardized testing but also to acknowledge that “cognition alone is not enough for success in the classroom, or even, even more importantly in life” (Norris, 2003, p. 314). To be successful, one must not only understand the complexities of their own emotions, but be able to appropriately read and respond to the emotions of others as well. Being able to understand the relationship between stress and coping is essential to optimizing the multiple contexts for teaching and learning. Still, emphasis on this area of teacher training and development is severely lacking in the current system.

As noted previously, we argue that for education (public or private) to be effective, it requires a comprehensive focus on the affective. That is, attention to the affective development of teachers and students must be paid across the multiple layers of context that shape educational practice (e.g., policy, teacher preparation, classroom).

#### **Policy**

Our primary point is that NCLB has both created conditions for EMOs to broaden their market share in public education while simultaneously reinforcing ineffective non affective teaching and learning through a myopic focus on testing. Rather than an extreme approach of doing away with potentially useful measures of teaching and learning, we suggest an integration of SEL and state standards (which are already aligned with NCLB standards). On the surface such an integration may seem contradictory. However, as addressed in the previous sections, a “both and” perspective rather than an “either or” perspective acknowledges the role of development in the every day lives of teachers and students. Kress, Norris, Schoeholz, Elias, and Seigle (2004) write:

meeting state curriculum standards does not have to compete with helping children develop the skills they need to grow up with sound character. Rather, addressing the social and emotional developmental needs of children not only fosters the skills needed for life-long success but also helps children become better learners. (p.70)

Attention to integrating developmental needs with academic demands is not unprecedented. In fact, the Illinois State Board of Education has integrated Social Emotional Learning into its more traditional standards (i.e., English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development and Fitness, Fine Arts, and Foreign Language). These standards are operationalized as three goals: (1) Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success; (2) Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and (3) Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. For each goal there are corresponding developmentally appropriate learning standards by grade level that each student must meet (See <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/Default.htm>).

**Teacher Training**

It should come as no surprise that teachers are fundamentals to the teaching learning process. As such, considerable attention should be given to (a) providing teachers multiple opportunities for content mastery, (b) making teachers aware of their own emotional intelligence (EI), and (c) training teachers on how to align EI and curricular standards. Teacher development is of serious concern particularly for privatized schools, as they tend to employ teachers with less education and experience. Teacher preparation and continued education is a critical aspect to the improved performance of urban districts.

We suggest that explicit attention to be given to SEL in teacher education (pre-service and in-service). Self-reflection is a highly valued characteristic of teaching (e.g., reflective practitioner). It enables one to critically monitor and assess one's effectiveness across a wide variety of domains. It is our belief that the PVEST model can serve as a useful training device to facilitate guided critical self-reflection. That is, by identifying and understanding the interconnectivity of one's own risks, supports, and coping strategies teachers are better able to meet the emotional and cognitive needs of their students. Additionally, the PVEST model can be used to better understand student outcomes. In this capacity, the PVEST model will aide teachers in identifying student's strengths, challenges, and missing sources of supports. Orienting teachers to understand their pupils as holistic (cognitive and affective) and evolving beings minimizes the likelihood for teachers to view youth from a deficit perspective. This is key as low academic expectations sabotage both affective (classroom behavior) and cognitive (academic performance) outcomes. To be sure, deficit perspectives of urban youth are all too pervasive throughout the multiple layers of the educational system.

In addition to using PVEST, teacher education programs should focus more explicitly on the integration of SEL as a classroom management strategy. Behavioral problems in the classroom are directly connected to emotion. The emotional skill of the teacher and students determines the quality of teaching and learning to take place. Whether it is providing a student with tools and license to let a teacher know that the current pedagogical approach is not working or providing students with the language and supports to work out differences among themselves emotional skill building is needed in the classroom. Elias and colleagues (1997) identified five key emotional domains that are key to effective classroom management: (1) self awareness, (2) self regulation, (3) self monitoring and performance, (4) empathy and perspective taking, and (5) social skills and handling relationships (See Figure 2). To develop some mastery of these skills, we suggest role-play and the development of curriculum to meet at least two skills under each of the above headings.

What makes our perspective unique is that it grounds the education of urban youth and teacher identity development in a normative developmental framework rather than test performance alone. We focus on how teachers and minority students

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Figure 2. Key Skills in Social and Emotional Learning (Elias et al., 1997).

Self-Awareness

- Recognizing and naming one's own emotion
- Understanding the reasons and circumstances for feeling as one does

Self Regulation

- Verbalizing and coping anxiety, anger, and depression
- Controlling impulses, aggression, and self destructive, antisocial behavior
- Recognizing strengths in an mobilizing positive feelings about self, school, family, and support networks

Self-Monitoring and Performance

- Focusing on tasks at hand
- Setting short and long term goals
- Modifying performance in light of feedback
- Mobilizing positive motivations
- Activating hope and optimism
- Working toward optimal performance

Empathy and Perspective Taking

- Learning how to increase and develop feedback
- Becoming a good listener
- Increasing empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings

Social Skills in Handling Relationships

- Managing emotions in relationships, harmonizing diverse feelings and viewpoints
- Expressing emotions effectively
- Exercising assertiveness, leadership, and persuasion
- Working as part of a team/cooperative learning group
- Showing sensitivity to social cues
- Exercising social decision-making and problem solving skills
- Responding constructively and in a problem solving manner to interpersonal ob-

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make sense out of context (past and present) to evaluate themselves as human beings. This perspective moves beyond debating whether or not education should be privatized. The reality is that privatization has been implemented as an option to reach the mandates of NCLB in Philadelphia and other urban districts throughout the country.

The diverse provider model experiment of Philadelphia suggests that public school districts can indeed improve public school performance as the district managed schools outperformed EMO schools. However, doing better is simply not good enough as proficiency rates are still unacceptably low in Philadelphia. Focusing teacher education and professional development on the affective dimension of learning is a promising way to address the inadequacy of district and EMOs. It is in the classroom where students learn the possibilities. It is in this same place that teachers circumscribe the limits of those possibilities. Both processes are mediated by the ability of all parties to interpret and express emotion. We contend that through informed focus on the affective dimensions of teaching and learning not

only will test performance improve, but the learning experience for teachers and students will be greatly enriched as well.

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