

# Inside

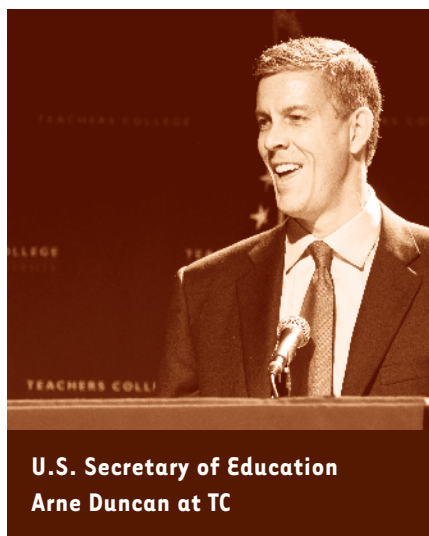
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*The source for news, events and people at Teachers College, Columbia University*

## The Secretary Calls for a Sea Change

*The nation's education chief addresses TC*

In a half-hour speech on October 22 that inaugurated TC's Phyllis L. Kossoff Lecture, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan praised Teachers College and many other education colleges that have provided high-quality preparation programs for many years. But in general, he said, teacher preparation programs need a major overhaul if they are to help close the achievement gap between minority and white students, improve graduation rates, and prepare more students for college and the workplace.



**U.S. Secretary of Education  
Arne Duncan at TC**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**New York's Education Commissioner and Regents  
Chancellor to speak at TC on November 30. See page 5.**

### Inside Inside

Assessing school readiness.....	10
Hechinger makes news.....	12
Voices of Mexican youth in NYC.....	14
Going Green.....	18
The Brantley Award winners.....	22

## A New Teacher Residency Program at TC

*A \$9.75 million boost for 21st century teacher prep*

Teachers College is creating a new teacher residency program in which students will work as apprentices with experienced teachers in high-need classrooms in New York City public schools for one year while earning master's degrees. The Teaching Residents at Teachers College program (TR@TC) will be funded by a \$9.75 million, five-

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9**

# Narrowing the Ach

*Can after-school programs help narrow the achievement gap? Professor Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and colleagues have found that they can—but not by much*

**C**an after-school programs narrow the achievement gap between minority and white students? To Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Child Development and Education at Teachers College, and colleagues Margo Gardner and Jodie Roth, researchers at TC's Center for Children and Families (NCCF), the answer is yes—but not by much.

Speaking at a forum of The Campaign for Educational Equity at TC on October 7, the three colleagues discussed a research report they authored that examines the impact of increasing rates of after-school participation to 100 percent among youth living far below the poverty level—a disproportionate number of whom are black and Hispanic. They found that even with full after-school participation among poor youths, the achievement gap between black and white students would decrease by only 2 to 4 percent in reading and 4 to 7 percent in math. In terms of the gap between Hispanics and whites, the gap would narrow 2 to 5 percent in reading and 5 and 12 percent in math.

The lesson, say the researchers: after-school programs aren't *the* answer but they're part of it.

"Instead of thinking 'Oh, my goodness, it's so small a difference it doesn't matter,' the fact is that almost all of our policy interventions are going to be reducing the equity gap maybe 10 percent," Brooks-Gunn told a standing-room-only crowd at Grace Dodge Hall. "A couple of things may do a better job, early childhood education does a better job. So don't be discouraged by the effect sizes. What we need is a multifaceted approach."



The presentation by Brooks-Gunn, Gardner and Roth was part of The Campaign's Equity in Education Forum series, which over the past few years has explored topics ranging from federal policy on bilingual education to funding of early childhood education. The forum in October, the first of the academic year, focused on after-school programs, which have begun to receive more attention as a way to enhance the academic

achievement of disadvantaged youths and as an element in the push for more comprehensive services that extend beyond the schoolhouse door.

The research report prepared by Gardner, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (who is also Co-director of NCCF), was commissioned by The Campaign. Also speaking at the forum

# Achievement Gap?

*Janne Brooks-Gunn and her colleagues at TC*

were Lucy Friedman, President of the New York City-based After School Corporation, and Robert Granger, President of the William T. Grant Foundation.

During her presentation, Roth pointed out that while the effects on academic achievement of after-school programs are small, they are on par with those for summer school and Title I initiatives, federally-funded programs targeted to high-poverty schools and districts.

Gardner, meanwhile, said that overall participation in after-school programs is low. For the purposes of their review, the researchers defined after-school programs as those that operate on a regular basis during non-school hours throughout the academic year, are supervised by adults, and offer more than one activity (homework help, recreation, arts, etc.) The data indicate, Gardner said, that rates of youth participation in such programs range from 10 to 20 percent.

Gardner also noted that low-income youth face some barriers to participating in after-school programs that don't affect their more affluent counterparts, including an inability to afford fees, poor access to safe transportation and conflicting obligations, such having to take care of younger siblings.

Yet a few studies have shown, Roth said, that at-risk students who participate at high levels in after-school programs benefit academically, and those more so than their middle class peers. At the same time, it appears that academically at-risk youths require higher and more

## RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More Research on the Root Causes of Low Participation Rates among Disadvantaged Youth
2. More Research on Differences in Program Quality for More versus Less Advantaged Youth
3. More Experimental Research on the Academic Implications of “Evidence-Based” After-School Programs for Disadvantaged Youth
4. Research on Methods of Improving the Quality of After-School Programs that Serve Disadvantaged Youth
5. More Research on Differences in the Benefits of Participation across Socioeconomic Strata

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND POLICY RESEARCH

1. Align Funding Priorities with Measures that Will Truly Improve Access to Programs
2. Align Funding Priorities with Measures that Will Truly Improve Program Quality
3. Ensure that Public Funding Mechanisms Facilitate Program Sustainability

intense levels of participation to reap the benefits of after-school programs.

Given that, Gardner said that efforts to get disadvantaged youths to participate in after-school programs at higher rates is a good idea, but cautioned that such programs “are best viewed as part of a multifaceted approach to narrowing the achievement gap.”

**AFTER-SCHOOL CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

## AFTER-SCHOOL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Granger questioned the need for more programs to reach greater numbers of students. For him, the reality is that many programs already in place are, at best, mediocre—dull and uninspired.

“I’m not necessarily convinced that taking care of younger kids is a bad thing for the older kids,” Granger said. “Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn’t. Family chores and that sort of stuff sometimes help families function better. I am not so sure that the correct policy response is, ‘Let’s get those kids out of the house and into the center.’”

Instead, he argued that the focus should be on determining why some programs are effective and others are not. He called for a shift away from asking whether after-school programs make a difference in terms of academic achievement to probing the differences between programs that are highly effective and those that aren’t—and finding ways to help less successful programs become high-performing ones.

Friedman asked whether the focus should be limited to traditional academic outcomes such as test scores and grades when evaluating the effectiveness of after-school programs. School attendance rates, which were not considered in the research report, can be as robust an indicator—if not more so—of the success of an after-school program than test scores, she said.

“I think attendance in the school day really goes to, in many ways, what after-school programs seek to do, which is create tighter bonds with schools and make kids feel better when they are in school. I guess why I am so much in favor of looking at school-day attendance instead of test scores is because, one, it’s a lot cheaper to collect than other sets of data and, two, school day attendance is a strong marker of school attachment and graduation rates.”

Brooks-Gunn highlighted a series of policy and research recommendations, including reducing some of the barriers that disadvantaged students face by providing transportation to and from school and taking a more

“family approach” in which younger as well as older siblings can attend a program.

She also called for finding ways to provide after-school programs with funding that can be sustained for longer periods. Currently, the \$1 billion 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal program designed for after-school programs, limits grant funding to five years, she said.

“This is not exactly the way to get sustainable programs in the field,” she said. “We need examples of the kinds of things we need to do so that programs aren’t coming and going.” ❖

*The Equity in Education Forum Series at Teachers College seeks to promote education equity by highlighting important new research emerging from The Campaign for Educational Equity’s Research Initiative and by fostering dialogue on important equity issues affecting schools today. All forums are open to the TC and Columbia University community and to the general public.*

## Upcoming Equity in Education Forums

**November 11, 2009**

**3:30 – 5:00pm • 179 Grace Dodge Hall**

**Abbott v. Burke: Has the Landmark School Funding Case Improved Student Outcomes?**

David Sciarra, Executive Director, Education Law Center  
Gordon MacInnes, former assistant commissioner to the Abbott implementation

Clifford Janey, Superintendent of Newark Public Schools

**December 3, 2009**

**3:00 – 4:30pm • Milbank Chapel**

**Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity**

Heather Weiss, Director, Harvard Family Research Project

Richard Buery, Executive Director, Children’s Aid Society  
Larry Wood, NYC parent

**February 8-9, 2010**

**Fifth Annual Equity Symposium**

**Cowin Center**

**Stimulating Equity? The Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on Educational Opportunity**

Keynote: Russlyn Ali, Assistant Secretary for Education, U.S. Department of Education