

# K-12 Partnership Report

## Saving the Endangered Partnership Director

*Why partnership leaders face budget cuts just like everyone else – and what to do about it*

*Note: While this article is based on the results of a June 2011 survey of the partnership field, it is not the complete survey report. That report will be published as a standalone paper later this month.*

Over the past several years, I've seen time and again the kind of value that partnership leaders generate for the schools and districts they support in terms of funds, volunteer support, goods and services, goodwill, and much more. Given current budget conditions, you would think districts would be pouring resources into their partnership offices in order to maximize community support, but you'd be wrong: I've heard several reports of departments losing staff and funding, trying to do more with less just like everyone else.

The solution, it seemed, was obvious: go find out just what kind of value partnership offices are producing, and share that knowledge with policymakers and district leaders. The survey we conducted in June was designed to help us do exactly that. However, the survey responses told a different story than we had expected: rather than prove why partnerships are such a great investment, they helped us discover that there is a real gap between best practices and what's currently being done in districts. It's a gap that's limiting what partnership programs can achieve, and it's a gap that is limiting the support that district leaders can realistically give them.

If you want to preserve and grow your partnership office, this is a gap that must be closed; this article will highlight some opportunities to improve your program and allow you – and your district – to reap the benefits.

### About the Respondents

Respondents represented a good mix of districts, with a large and medium sized districts (correlating with urban and suburban markets) outnumbering small and/or

rural districts. This is to be expected: since it was a survey exclusively of district-level partnership directors, we knew responses would be weighted toward the larger districts that are more likely to employ them.

Specifically, of the 162 respondents who identified themselves as leading district-level partnership offices, we found 26.2% within districts of 1-20 schools, 38.8% in districts of 21-50 schools, and 35.0% in districts of 51 or more schools. Most were urban (44.4%) and suburban (40.0%), with only 15.6% in rural markets.

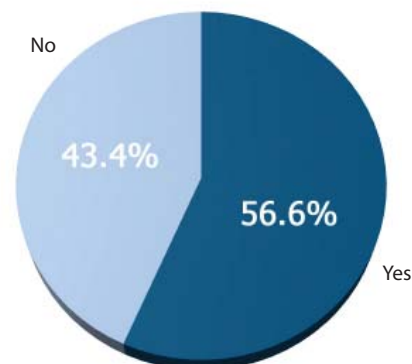
One of the great challenges appeared early, in that district-level partnership offices are lightly staffed: when asked how many full time equivalent (FTE) staff worked on partnerships for the districts, those in districts of 1-20 schools reported an average of 1.2 FTEs, those in districts of 21-50 schools had an average of 1.8 FTEs, and those in districts of 51 or more schools had an average of 2.2 FTEs. Clearly, this lack of manpower fuels all of the challenges outlined here.

### Challenge #1: Building Infrastructure

Strong partnership build relationships with other departments and with influential individuals in order to extend their reach and their impact. This can happen by creating an advisory board of community leaders who can help guide department efforts and solicit new partners;

### Presence of an Advisory Board

*Survey item: Does your district-level partnership program include a board or advisory council?*



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it can also happen by working with other departments or community groups who share your mission.

According to this year's survey, partnership leaders have done a better job on coalition-building in some areas than in others. The good news is that most are connected in some way with an education foundation: In fact, 70.3% said that their district has a district-level education foundation, while just 15.8% said that their district had no education foundation at any level. A small group - 3.8% - indicated that their district had school-level foundations only, while 10.1% noted that they had both district and school-level foundations.

Surprisingly, only a little more than half (56.6%) report having a board or an advisory council. Given the low investment and high yield of putting such an institution in place, it would be wise to pursue it if you don't already have one.

Also of concern was the lack of relationships with the district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) office. For those not familiar with CTE, this function is one of the most active when it comes to building community partnerships; not only do they have numerous strong ties with area businesses, but they also tend to have relationships with postsecondary institutions, business coalitions (chambers and workforce boards), and others. Despite this, partnership offices are not particularly close to their CTE counterparts: Only 26.9% are closely linked in, with 4.5% of partnership directors stating that they operate from within the CTE department, and another 22.4% saying that they have a very close relationship, which includes coordinating efforts. Among the remaining 70.1% of respondents, 40.4% say that they have a "somewhat" close relationship, and are aware of one another's efforts, while an additional 32.7% say that they are not particularly close, and that their efforts are largely separate.

Given the small staff size of most partnership offices, it would make tremendous sense to begin developing relationships with others who share your goals as a means of quickly and significantly increasing your reach and impact.

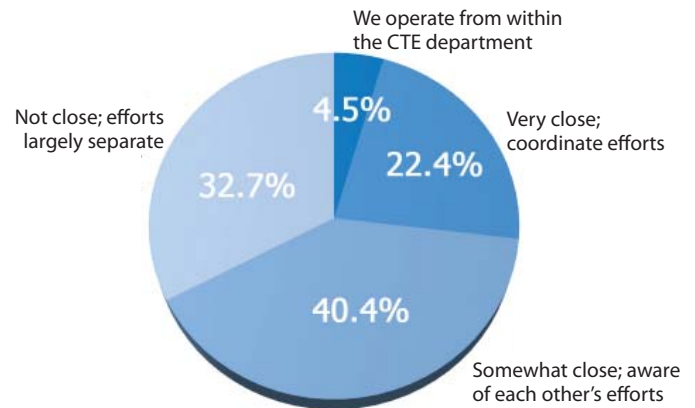
## Challenge #2: Professional Development

As you might expect, partnership offices that are understaffed cannot singlehandedly build all of a district's partnerships. In fact, when we asked about recruiting partners, we heard the following:

- 22.3%—The district is responsible for most partner recruiting
- 61.5%—The district recruits major, district-wide partners, while schools are responsible for recruiting smaller local partners

## Relationship with CTE

Survey item: *How closely are partnerships and Career and Technical Education (CTE) aligned?*



- 2.3%—The district does no recruiting, but offers training and guidelines to guide schools in their recruiting
- 13.8%—Schools are entirely responsible for recruiting their own partners

Given the fact that 77.7% of respondents indicate that school representatives are doing some or all of their own partnership development, the question naturally turns to support. How are district partnership offices preparing schools to recruit and retain partners? What kind of support are they offering on building and assessing high-quality partnerships?

Unfortunately, support for those school-based partnership leaders (which, according to 58.5% of respondents, are most often principals) is limited at best. Survey respondents were asked first about what kinds of support materials on partnerships they make available to their schools. The only category in which more than half even offer materials is on the subject

## School-Level Support

Survey item: *Does your district offer support materials on partnerships to your schools? (check all that apply)*



of recruiting partners (55.6%). In other areas, less than half offer materials on managing partnerships and on sustaining partnerships (45.5% in each case), and fewer still offer resources on designing partnerships (38.0%). Furthermore, just over a quarter of respondents offer information on measurement and assessment of programs (26.9%), a number which relates to the challenge which follows.

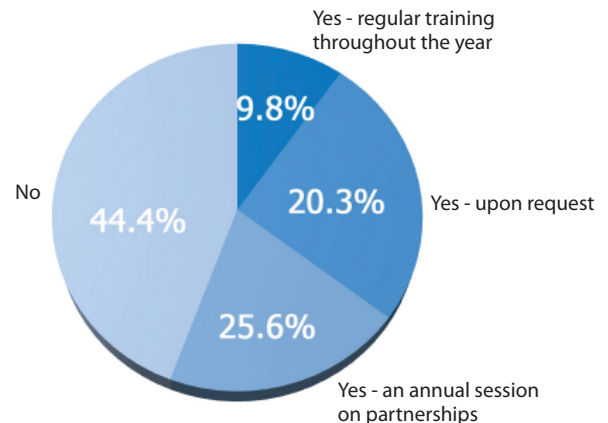
There was also limited activity on training for school-level partnership leaders, with almost half of all survey respondents (44.4%) indicating that they offer no training at all for those in the field. Of the rest, just 9.8% have a formal training program set up, offering training throughout the year; 20.3% offer training upon request; and 25.6% offer an annual session on partnerships for school staff.

These numbers are not surprising: in addition to the constraints of small staff sizes, partnership leaders have anecdotally noted the difficulty in drawing participation from school leaders in partnership training. Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by this newsletter with Nina Randall (reported in August 2010; v2n7), in 58% of districts, partnerships are not included in principals' evaluations, making this subject less of a priority for them.

However, if much of the partnership work taking place in a district is occurring at the school level, district-level partnership leaders need to make support a real priority. Having school-level staff effectively trained in this area is a true multiplier effect: every increase in the effectiveness of field staff is multiplied across all of your sites, reaping dramatic improvements in the rate and quality of your partnerships.

## Professional Development

Survey item: Do you provide training to school-level partnership leaders?



## Challenge #3: Gathering and Using Data

The greatest challenge in partnership work has always centered around measurement and evaluation, and this survey confirmed that sentiment. In terms of tracking activity and outcomes, only half of respondents actually lead the process, with 28.2% indicating that they handle tracking themselves, and another 21.4% stating that schools report to them through their own tracking system. In 15.3% of the remaining cases, partnership leaders note that schools decide what to track and gather

## K-12 Partnership Report

Brett Pawlowski  
Editor and Publisher

The *K-12 Partnership Report* is the newsletter of record for anyone involved in connecting schools and their communities, including K-12 partnership practitioners, school foundation directors, and the business and community leaders who work to improve students' lives and help to prepare them for the college and career opportunities that lie ahead. It is published 10 times per year (monthly except June and December) by DeHavilland Associates, 10101 Lampkin Way, Charlotte NC 28269. Phone 704.717.2864; email [brett@DeHavillandAssociates.com](mailto:brett@DeHavillandAssociates.com).

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Web: [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com)

data themselves, sending their reports to the district office; 12.2% note that schools handle this function themselves and that partnership officials do not request or receive it; and in nearly a quarter of all districts (22.9%), no one is tracking this data.

In cases where data is being tracked, its use is limited. The following uses were noted:

- 76.1%—Share with superintendent and school board
- 63.7%—Share with partners
- 59.3%—Share with schools
- 55.8%—Use it in presentations with future partners
- 54.9%—Make it publicly available (through the district website, published reports, etc.)
- 45.1%—Use it to “benchmark” and improve their work in the future

Respondents were also asked to specify how much their district and schools have received from partners within the past year; categories including the amount of funds donated, the number of volunteer hours, and the approximate value of goods and services. The majority of survey respondents did not complete this section, and of those who did, fully half indicated that they did not have access to this kind of data, making it impossible to report on the real value that partnership leaders are bringing to their district and schools.

### Leveraging Best Practices to Grow Your Program

It is tremendously hard to grow a partnership network, prepare dozens (or even hundreds) of school leaders to build strong and sustainable partnerships, and find ways of tracking activity and outcomes among all of these sites. It is harder still when such scant resources are available in terms of staff and funding.

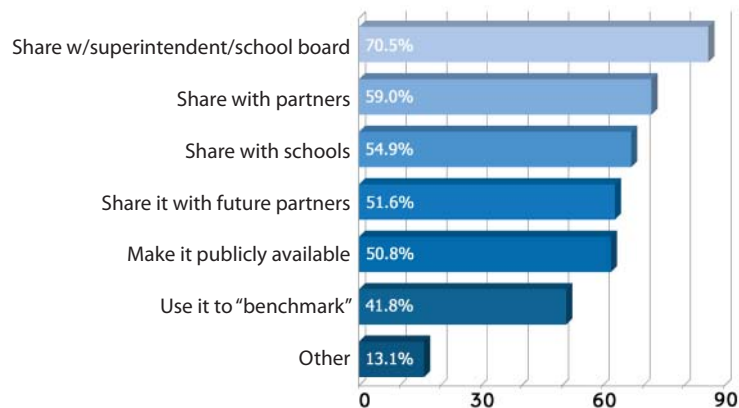
But the reality is that this must become a priority within the partnership field.

**Growing a partnership network** allows you to leverage high-profile community leaders, gaining their insight and access to their contact base. They can help you operate more effectively, set the right goals, open doors you could never open otherwise, and advocate for you with other community leaders (including top district officials) in ways you could never do for yourself.

**Preparing school-level partnership leaders** is a true multiplier effect: Just think of the difference between having 50 schools with no training or interest in building partnerships, as compared to 50 schools with leaders who have the resources, training, and support network to build strong partnerships. There is no way you could make up the difference singlehandedly; but by making school support a priority, you can have an outsized impact.

### Use of Data

Survey item: *How do you use data on partnership activity and outcomes? (check all that apply)*



In this age of accountability, **tracking activity and outcomes** may be the single most important task you can do. Every department is responsible for reporting data and improving on it; if partnerships fail to follow suit, you make it possible for others to think you offer no value at all. To make a case for sustaining your existing resource levels, and put forth an argument for more (a case that no other department can make), you simply must track your activity and the outcomes of your work.

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# TechBoston Academy

It's not every day that the President of the United States and the co-chair of the largest charitable foundation in the world take the time to tour a school. But on March 8 of this year, President Barack Obama and Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Education Secretary Arne Duncan, joined together to tour TechBoston Academy in Boston, MA and to highlight the work being done there.

Why TechBoston? First, because it's *working*, taking a predominantly high-needs population and posting achievement that is nothing short of remarkable. And second (and related to the first), because the school is built from the ground up on the concept of community partnerships as a key to engaging students and helping them to reach their potential.

## History

Prior to founding TechBoston Academy in 2002, Mary Skipper spent several years with the Boston Public Schools, including time leading an innovative program called TechBoston Consulting, through which technically talented students delivered professional and affordable IT consulting services to the local business and nonprofit community. For students, this program provided real-world opportunities and experiences; for Ms. Skipper, working with business and community leaders to create work opportunities gave her invaluable direct experience in building community-driven education programs.

That experience drove her to propose creating a new school based on real-world connections with a central focus on leveraging technology and, in 2002, she opened the doors of TechBoston Academy with funding from the Gates Foundation.

## About TechBoston Academy

While TechBoston Academy is a public school in Boston, it is classified as a "pilot" school. According to the district website, "Pilot schools are part of the school district but have autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment, and the school calendar to provide increased flexibility to organize schools and staffing to meet the needs of students and families." This flexibility was critical to Skipper in designing a partnership-driven learning model.

TechBoston Academy was initially created as a high school, but added a middle school in 2009 and now serves students in grades 6-12. The school serves a primarily disadvantaged population, with an 86% free/reduced lunch rate, 15% English language learners, and 25% special needs served in a full inclusion model.

## The TechBoston Academy Learning Model

At TechBoston Academy, technology is central to the learning experience. Students are exposed to a wide array of technology: Laptops, smartboards, whiteboards, student response systems, Google Apps, and podcasting. These technologies are integrated throughout each subject, offering students multiple ways to learn.

In addition to a strong core curriculum, students also take courses earning industry certifications in IT Essentials, Microsoft Office and Adobe applications. In later grades, students enroll in advanced technology courses, choosing from Digital Art, Graphic Design, Computer Programming and Ecommerce. By the time students have graduated, they have been exposed to a breadth of software applications such as Adobe Premier, Adobe Photoshop and MS Publisher.

Academics at TechBoston Academy are rigorous and college-focused. Students have the opportunity to take honors courses in grades 10 and 11. In grades 11 and 12, students may elect to participate in dual enrollment programs at local colleges or take AP classes on campus. The school also has a seven hour extended day schedule to increase the time available for learning.

## TechBoston Academy

### Where:

Boston, MA

### Organization:

TechBoston Academy, a (public) pilot school in the Boston Public Schools system

### Challenge:

Serve a highly-disadvantaged population by leveraging the lessons of TechBoston Consulting Group, a student-led IT consulting service offered by the district

### Solution:

Create the TechBoston Academy, a technology- and partnership-driven school with the flexibility that comes from being a pilot school. Focus on a rigorous, college-prep curriculum with extended learning hours and numerous points of engagement for partners.

### Partnership:

Numerous: technology companies provide resources and staff training, volunteers and mentors participate in the school, many internships and career awareness opportunities

### Outcomes:

Remarkable academic gains, among the best in the state; 93% of students go on to college, versus district-wide 61%

But what really sets the school apart from others is business and foundation support. As a technology-focused program that connects students to their communities, TechBoston Academy has attracted a number of partners who support the school in different ways. The Gates Foundation was one of Skipper's founding partners, and still supports the school. Many technology companies have donated hardware and software, and also commit to training teachers on their use. Many other companies participate by volunteering, mentoring, and serving in other ways.

Additionally, students have the opportunity to obtain jobs and internships to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real life situations.

As a pilot school, TechBoston Academy has had the flexibility to make unconventional hires to advance its mission, including a full-time partnership director and full-time educators focused on staff development. By focusing additional manpower in strategic areas, the school is able to concentrate its resources and generate outsized returns for its investment.

According to Megan Fidler-Carey, Director of External Partnerships, they work with their business partners as peers sharing a common goal, and not as a charity. "When you're a true partner, you can ask for what you really need," notes Fidler-Carey, "but when you're a charity, you get what you get. Having our businesses, universities, and others on board to scope out our needs together and fill them has made a huge difference for us."

### Outcomes

As Barack Obama said during his March 8 visit, "What's happening here is working. We know what works. What's required, then, to get results from any school is no longer a mystery. TechBoston Academy is a model for the rest of our nation."

What kind of results would draw such praise? Given the demographics laid out previously, TechBoston Academy's results are truly remarkable: Last year 75 percent of students scored proficient or advanced in math, a tremendous achievement and higher than state and district averages. Almost all of last year's seniors (93%) went on to college, compared with the district-



*President Barack Obama and Melinda Gates of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation talk with students while visiting a classroom at TechBoston Academy in Dorchester, Mass., March 8, 2011. (Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)*

wide average of 61%. And the school recently announced that their value-added gains in math were in the 99th percentile, meaning that they are doing more than almost every other school in advancing students in this area.

While the school does not have data isolating the impact of their partners' engagement, they are infused throughout the program and are an indispensable, core element of the TechBoston Academy experience. This unique school would not be what it is without them.

### Resource Links

TechBoston Academy  
[techbostonacademy.org/](http://techbostonacademy.org/)

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
[www.gatesfoundation.org/](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/)

### KPR Readers...

## Send Us Your News!

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[Brett@DeHavillandAssociates.com](mailto:Brett@DeHavillandAssociates.com)  
 or call 704-717-2864

# Research Roundup

*Recent reports and research summaries that can support your work*

Every professional in community/school engagement, whether new to the field or with years of experience, should have access to current resources that can guide your thinking and support your work. The following resources, all free and available online, provide invaluable information on community engagement, with an emphasis on business/education partnerships.

## Creating Effective Business-Education Partnerships

*Council of State Governments*

State governments are an important voice (and source of funds) in K-12 education, so it's encouraging to see the Council of State Governments, which advises states on all areas of governance, publish a policy paper that speaks specifically to business/education partnerships.

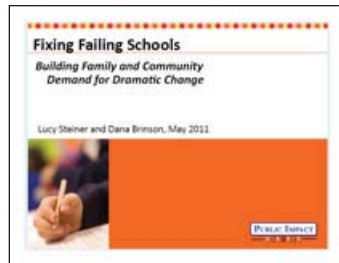


This is a solid overview that will be beneficial not just for state legislators but for anyone interested in the subject. It includes data on what the private sector already contributes, an outline of the many ways in which businesses support schools, case studies, information on the motives of businesses, information on business coalitions and associations, and recommendations for policymakers going forward. It is a timely piece given the budgetary challenges that state leaders are facing going into a new fiscal year.

## Fixing Failing Schools: Building Family and Community Demand for Dramatic Change

*Public Impact*

This detailed PowerPoint presentation addresses an issue that is often overlooked: How do you overcome historical distrust and build demand within the community for real educational change, such as replacing staff, closing or opening schools, bringing in independent operators, or some other disruptive change?



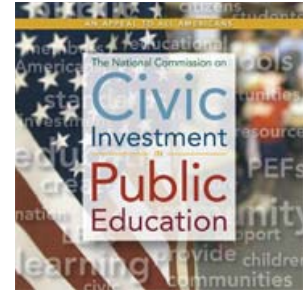
At its core, this is a communications problem—one that is best addressed by those with experience engaging their communities. These slides are helpful, in that they highlight why building demand for dramatic change among families and communities can be a challenge; why building demand for change is worth the effort; specific barriers that leaders need to tackle; and effective strategies

for overcoming barriers and building demand for change.

## An Appeal to All Americans

*National Commission on Civic Investment in Public Education/Public Education Network*

Last year, the Public Education Network (PEN) created a commission to make a renewed case for civic investment in education, with notables ranging from Linda Darling-Hammond to Richard Riley playing a role. "An Appeal to All Americans" is their first complete report.



This document takes on three tasks: First, it clearly lays out a case for public engagement in, and support for, K-12 education; it outlines the work that organizations such as Local Education Funds (LEFs), Public Education Funds (PEFs) and many others are already undertaking in this challenge; and finally, it lays out, for the first time, a set of public accountability standards for organizations working in this field.

While the entire report is of interest, the standards are particularly noteworthy: They cover core topics such as Mission and Programs, Evaluation and Transparency, Responsible Stewardship, Legal Compliance, and Personal and Professional Integrity, and do so by outlining both the principles of each along with practical examples of the principles in action. The report also includes notes on implementation of these new standards, which will help anyone hoping to incorporate them as standard operating procedure.

The report concludes with profiles of several prominent education funds, which can serve as case studies for those new to the field or those looking for examples from which they can learn.

## Partnership is a Two-Way Street: What It Takes for Business to Help Drive School Reform

*US Chamber of Commerce*

This is the first of two recent reports prepared for the US Chamber by the American Enterprise Institute, and in both cases the reports have been prepared by teams led by noted author Rick Hess. In this report, Hess looks at business/education partnership programs



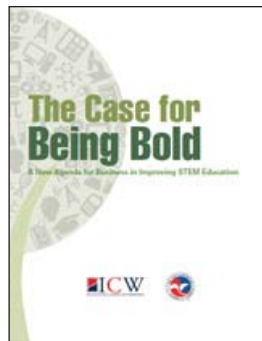
in three markets—Nashville, Austin, and the state of Massachusetts—to determine how key relationships were formed, how goals were set, and how the partners went about creating significant reform as collaborators. Each case study is presented in reach detail, and the report synthesizes these actions to provide practical guidance for business and education leaders interested in launching similarly effective partnerships within their own communities.

### The Case for Being Bold: A New Agenda for Business in Improving STEM Education

US Chamber of Commerce

This second Hess/AEI report looks through the filter of STEM education at how businesses can play a significant role in education reform. “Significant” is the key word here: past business support has taken a ‘nice guy’ approach, which has engendered feelings of goodwill but have not caused change in practices our outcomes. What is needed instead, according to the authors, is a bold approach to education engagement.

After making a clear case regarding the need for



reform, the report focuses on three areas—Making New Standards Count, Rethinking Teaching, and School Redesign—and outlines bold approaches to each, offering several examples to illustrate the ideas and to show not only what is possible, but what is already being done to drive change. The report closes with suggested next steps, a resource directory of STEM reports, and additional data to confirm the need for change.

### Resource Links

Creating Effective Business-Education Partnerships  
[knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/content/creating-effective-business-education-partnerships](http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/content/creating-effective-business-education-partnerships)

Fixing Failing Schools: Building Family and Community Demand for Dramatic Change  
[www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/building\\_demand\\_for\\_change\\_in\\_failing\\_schools-Public\\_Impact.pdf](http://www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/building_demand_for_change_in_failing_schools-Public_Impact.pdf)

An Appeal to All Americans  
[www.publiceducation.org/pubs\\_20110526\\_report.asp](http://www.publiceducation.org/pubs_20110526_report.asp)

Partnership is a Two-Way Street: What It Takes for Business to Help Drive School Reform  
[icw.uschamber.com/publication/partnership-two-way-street-what-it-takes-business-help-drive-school-reform](http://icw.uschamber.com/publication/partnership-two-way-street-what-it-takes-business-help-drive-school-reform)

The Case for Being Bold: A New Agenda for Business in Improving STEM Education  
[www.aei.org/paper/100211](http://www.aei.org/paper/100211)

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