

September 2011

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**▶ Research Headlines**

**[Are today's youth less creative and imaginative?](#)**

*LiveScience*

Kyung Hee Kim, a creativity researcher at the College of William and Mary, studied about 300,000 creativity tests from the last 50 years and found that since 1990, creativity has steadily decreased among American children. Kim analyzed results from the Torrance test, an exam that measures an aspect of creativity called divergent thinking. In this test, the kids might be shown two circles and asked to draw something out of these shapes. As the Torrance test scores have decreased, SAT scores have increased. Kim said of these results, "If we just focus on...testing, testing, testing--then how can creative students survive?" She also added that research shows creative personalities who don't adjust to the school system can become underachievers and drop out of school.

**[Study measures academic toll of bullying](#)**

*Education Week*

Victims of bullying often suffer academically, but this is particularly true for high-achieving African-American and Latino students, according to a study by Lisa M. Williams, a doctoral student in sociology at Ohio State University, and Anthony A. Peguero, a sociology professor from Virginia Tech. The study used data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS), which asked students whether they were bullied in their 10th-grade year. They then compared

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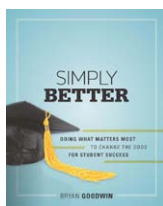
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the GPAs of these students from 9th grade, before the bullying occurred, to 12th grade. They found that African-American students who had a 3.5 GPA in 9th grade and were bullied in 10th grade experienced a .3 point decrease in their 12th grade GPA. Latino students' GPAs dropped .5 point from 9th to 12th grade. In comparison, white students saw their GPAs decrease by .03 point. Williams said, "We urge [policymakers] to invest resources in protecting students from bullying, which will have implications for achievement, especially in the achievement of racial and ethnic minorities."

### [Good elementary teachers equally important as small class sizes](#) mlive.com

Having consistently good elementary school teachers is just as important as having a small class size, says a study by Spyros Konstantopoulos, an associate professor of education at Michigan State University. Konstantopoulos used data from the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio study (known as Project STAR) to analyze reading and math scores of several thousand students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Although Project STAR was initially designed to study the effects of class size on student achievement, Konstantopoulos analyzed the same data and found that the teacher's effectiveness is just as important for student achievement over time. That means, for example, that a kindergarten teacher can have a significant, measurable effect on a 3rd grader's math and reading scores. In previous studies, this connection was unclear, Konstantopoulos said.

## New from McREL



[Simply Better](#) identifies key principles and strategic "touchstones" of what it takes to help all students become successful learners. In addition, McREL's Bryan Goodwin provides readers with a What Matters Most Framework that focuses schools on changing the odds for under-served children. Begin applying the *Simply Better* touchstones by taking a free, 20-minute self-assessment to identify the areas in your school or district where focused

improvements are likely to result in big gains for student learning. Visit [survey.changetheodds.org](http://survey.changetheodds.org) to get started.

## Report Roundup

### [Betting on teachers](#)

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup

The 2011 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools, asked 1,000 Americans what they thought about teachers and the quality of public education. Survey results showed that more than 70 percent of Americans say they have trust and confidence in the nation's teachers. Sixty-nine percent give the teachers in their community a grade of A or B. However, nearly one in two Americans believes teacher unions hurt public education. The poll also showed that 41 percent of Americans give President Obama a grade of an A or B for his support of public schools.

### [Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011](#)

National Center for Education Information

The National Center for Education Information asked 1,076 teachers what they think about a wide array of issues facing the teaching profession. One major finding is that teacher support of eliminating unions and eliminating tenure has grown to 19 percent and 33 percent, respectively, approximately four to five percentage points higher than 15 years ago. In addition, teachers who agree that pay should be based on job performance increased from 42 percent in 2009 to 59 percent in 2011, but only 10 percent of teachers support evaluating a teacher primarily on student achievement. The report's author, C. Emily Feistritzer, noted that newer teachers are "considerably more open" to education reforms than their veteran counterparts. For example, teachers with five or fewer years of experience are twice as likely as teachers with 25 or more years of experience to support evaluating teachers based on student achievement.

### [i3 Grant Program: Innovative or not?](#)

Bellweather Education Partners posed the question: To what degree did the initial i3 program make progress toward their goals, and what can we learn from that experience to continue innovative public education for the millions of students who rely on the public school system? After surveying educational leaders, stakeholders, and public documents from the U.S. Department of Education, the authors found that among other positive outcomes, the i3 initiative brought national attention to the need for innovation in education and emphasized the need to scale up innovative practices. However, the report also noted that the i3 initiative has narrow eligibility requirements, defines "acceptable evidence" narrowly, and has a short timeline that leaves "little room for meaningful diligence."

### **Progress in a decades-old effort**

#### **Center on Education Policy**

In a report from the Center on Education Policy (CEP), researchers found that, with some variation depending on state tests and cut scores, achievement has improved in Title I students—lowest-achieving students or those attending a struggling school. Since 2002, CEP analyzed student achievement in grades 4 and 8, and one in high school, usually 10th or 11th grade, in the 19 states that enroll more than half of the nation's Title I students. CEP researchers found for some grades and subjects, more than 90 percent of the 19 states showed gains. The gaps between Title I and non-Title I students often were smaller than gaps between low-income and more affluent students, or between African-American or Latino students and white students. Visit the [CEP website](#) for more information.

 **News from the REL**

### **[Webinar: Achievement Data and Instructional Decision Making](#)**

**September 13, 2011**

Join the Regional Educational Laboratory Rural Working Group for a webinar highlighting research on using student achievement data to improve instruction in rural schools and

districts. The webinar will also include a moderated panel discussion with rural stakeholders regarding the implications that the recommendations hold for rural schools and districts.

## Events & Opportunities

### [Indiana Leadership Summit: Focusing Personnel Evaluations on What Matters Most](#)

Plymouth, IN, October 5, 2011

This event shows educators how to build a fair and reliable teacher evaluation system that aligns national teacher standards with research-based instructional strategies. Learn to use McREL's evaluation system to gather and analyze important data that, in turn, can inform decisions about professional development needs and school policies and procedures.

### **ACE Intervention recruitment**

McREL's Visualizing Science with Adapted Curriculum Enhancements (ACE) Intervention is designed to help science teachers increase their knowledge and improve the inquiry skills of students with visual impairments. McREL is seeking districts with three or more visually impaired, mainstreamed students to participate in a rigorous efficacy study of ACE Intervention. ACE Intervention has been piloted in Colorado, Pennsylvania, and New York. If your district is interested in participating, please contact John Ristvey at [jristvey@mcrel.org](mailto:jristvey@mcrel.org) or Sheila Arens at [sarens@mcrel.org](mailto:sarens@mcrel.org).

### **Cosmic Chemistry recruitment**

Cosmic Chemistry is a free, two-week, summer science program that uses the real-world context of space science to prepare students for high school chemistry. Through engaging activities, technologies, and interactions with NASA scientists and engineers, students learn the fundamentals of chemistry, including how isotopes improve our understanding of the solar system. McREL is seeking five schools to participate in this program during the summers of 2013 and 2014. Participants

receive all program materials and professional development necessary for implementation. Visit the [Cosmic Chemistry website](#) or contact John Ristvey at [jristvey@mcrel.org](mailto:jristvey@mcrel.org) for more information.

### [ASCD's 2011 Fall Conference](#)

Las Vegas, NV, October 28-30, 2011

ASCD's fall conference is focused on enhancing teacher effectiveness by addressing all the factors that research indicates improve student learning. This conference will explore the many ways that you can increase your personal instructional effectiveness or help your teachers be the best they can be. McREL's Principal Consultant **Jane Hill** will present on instructional strategies that best develop language skills for English language learners, and Principal Consultant **Elizabeth Hubbell** will discuss how to use technology with McREL's research-based instructional strategies from *Classroom Instruction that Works*.