

SERA Newsletter

Fall 2008



Southwest Educational Research Association – <http://www.sera-edresearch.org/news>

The Pres Says ...

Welcome back! I am refreshed and excited about all the possibilities for this fall semester. I hope you too are refreshed and excited about the duties that lie before you. Your SERA Board has been busy preparing for the 32nd Annual Meeting at the Saint Anthony Hotel in San Antonio. Make sure you mark your calendars. Details about hotel reservations and meeting pre-registration are found elsewhere in this newsletter. I look forward to seeing every member at the annual meeting!

Special thanks to Mary Margaret Capraro, President-Elect and Program Chair, for her hard work, tireless patience and incredible coordination with the Program Division Chairs and dedicated proposal reviewers. Judging from proposals submissions, we are expecting outstanding attendance at the conference. Be sure to check the SERA website for the conference schedule as time draws near.

I am excited that Robert Linn will be the President's Invited Speaker. His talk will immediately follow the luncheon and this is one you should not miss.

Kathy Mittag and Jim Telese, Local Arrangements Chairs have worked closely with the hotel staff, planning a superb experience and a spectacular luncheon! Please note the deadlines in the newsletter for hotel reservations and meeting preregistration. Again this year, if you do not register by the deadline your proposal will be rejected.

SERA depends on the commitment and active involvement of its members. Many have served as division chairs and reviewers for the proposals this year and we are adding new seats to our board. During the conference, each graduate student session will have a discussant, the discussant's duties include introduction, time management, but most importantly to facilitate discussion and provide insights; all other sessions will have a presenter designated as chair and whose role will be introducing the presenters and time-keeper. If time permits, the chair may also wish to facilitate discussion regarding the presentations. Please volunteer! There is no mystery process for becoming involved so ***don't*** wait to be asked.

Consider submitting your paper to the [Outstanding Paper Award](#). Graduate students can submit their paper to the [Outstanding Graduate Paper Award](#) and Deans Paper Award.

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Proposers will learn about the acceptance of their proposals in early November.

The tentative schedules will be available on the Web in December.

See you in February!!

[Robert M. Capraro](#)

Program Chair



Program Chair
Mary Margaret Capraro
Texas A&M University

“Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds.”
Alexander Graham Bell

Planning for the 2009 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX at the St. Anthony Hotel at 300 East Travis; San Antonio, 78205; 210-227-4392 is well underway. We have a wonderfully diverse set of proposals submitted to the conference this year. We received 257 proposals. Our division chairs are already at work making sure that all of the proposals receive a fair review. The results from these reviews will be made available to you by the first full week in November and the program ready for review before people leave for Winter Break.

We are excited to have two training sessions this year. On the afternoon of Wednesday, the first day of the SERA annual meeting in San Antonio, Victor Willson (*Texas A&M University*) will conduct a 4-hour training session titled, “*An Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling, with Some Discussion of Recent Developments.*” The fee for this session is \$30. On Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, an 8-hour training session will be offered on “*Step-by-step Guide to Conducting and Writing Rigorous, Comprehensive, and Insightful Literature Reviews: A Mixed-Methods Approach.*” The presenters will be Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie (*Sam Houston State University*), Kathleen M. T. Collins (*University of Arkansas at*

Fayetteville), Nancy L. Leech (*University of Colorado-Denver*), Amy B. Dellinger (*D.A.T.A., LLC*), and Qun G. Jiao (*Baruch College, The City University of New York*). This is an expanded session back due to popular response to their session at the New Orleans meeting. The fee for this session is \$60.

We will also have several workshops offered at no additional costs. These one hour sessions will be scheduled during the regular conference schedule: *Getting to Know SERA, Theoretical Framework or Literature Review, Item Response Theory (IRT)* and *After the Dissertation: Finding a Job in Higher Education.*

We are also very proud to have Robert L. Linn, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Education from the University of Colorado at Boulder and past president of AERA as the **2009 SERA Presidential Invited Speaker**. Read more about Dr. Linn on page 7 in the newsletter.

Graduate Students – make sure that you get your paper award submission to [Robert M. Capraro](#) no later than 5:00 pm January 16, 2009. The winner will be announced at the annual luncheon.

I look forward to seeing each of you this year in San Antonio. We hope to make it another wonderful event for SERA members.

[Mary Margaret Capraro](#)

Division	Submitted
I. Educational Administration, Policy, Leadership, & Program Evaluation	79
II. Instruction, Learning & Cognition	44
III. Methodology, Measurement & Evaluation	56
IV. Teachers & Teacher Education	27
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VI. Graduate Student Seminars for Work in Progress	38

Graduate Student News

Greetings to our graduate students! I hope that everyone was able to successfully submit a conference proposal, despite the interruptions caused by the hurricanes this season. By submitting, you may receive the opportunity to present your work to others and receive feedback from audience or session chairs. Please also remember to submit your paper for the Graduate Student Paper Award or the Dean's Award for Exceptional Graduate Student Research. The Graduate Student Paper Award is awarded to one graduate student for a completed work which reflects the graduate student's research (Division I through V paper; in the form of theses, dissertations, or other graduate student research). Please submit these to Dr. Robert M. Capraro via email attachment to rcapraro@tamu.edu by 5:00 p.m. January 16, 2009. The Dean's Award for Exceptional Graduate Student Research is given to students who have either a completed and or an incomplete paper. Please submit these to me by 5:00 p.m. December 19, 2008 via email attachment to tsha@uh.edu.

If you did not submit a paper this year, we still hope to see you at the conference. Past students have exclaimed SERA conferences as extremely helpful professionally and personally. Many have shared that they enjoyed coming to conferences because they have learned more regarding their area of interests, attended special sessions lead by top researchers, attended fantastic luncheons, enjoyed sight-seeing and exploring the local monuments, networked with peers, faculty members, and other students from all over the region, and of course got away from their families, jobs, or "normal" routines. We hope that all can come join us this year.

Please continue to look for information regarding the graduate student meeting,

fireside chat opportunities, and additional sessions geared towards graduate students in the 2009 Conference Program. Each university with strong attendance at the graduate student meeting will be selecting new volunteers to be members of the 2010 graduate student leadership council. By attending the graduate student meeting, each student will receive an opportunity to receive free publications and books, as well as receive the opportunity to elect a new 2010 graduate student representative. By attending the fireside chats, students have the opportunity to learn additional advice and tips from distinguished guest speakers. Additional sessions have also offered students the opportunity to learn more about completing their theses, dissertations, and publishing their work. There are lots of opportunities for participation, including the opportunity to work with the leadership council during the conference. If you are interested in volunteering your time during the conference, or have additional questions regarding submissions or the conference, please contact any of the council members for more information.

The current Graduate Student Leadership Council members are: **Jacob Chandler** (Sam Houston State), **Kristina Gill** (Texas Tech), **Kevin Kalinowski** (University of North Texas), **Gabrielle Ligon-Polk** (Lamar), **Suzanne Lindt** (University of Houston), **Darla Martinez** (at-large member), **Liz Ward** (University of North Texas), and **Ann Marie Willette** (University of North Florida). We also welcome **Susan Skidmore** (Texas A&M) to the council, taking the place of Danielle Kotara. We will all be at the conference in full force...and hope to see you there!

Ting-Ling Sha

SERA 2009 Graduate Student Representative
University of Houston

SERA 2009 TRAINING SESSIONS

On the afternoon of Wednesday, the first day of the SERA annual meeting in San Antonio, **Victor Willson** (*Texas A&M University*) will conduct a 4-hour training session titled, "An Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling, with Some Discussion of Recent Developments." The fee for this session is \$30.

On Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, an 8-hour training session will be offered on "Step-by-step Guide to Conducting and Writing Rigorous, Comprehensive, and Insightful Literature Reviews: A Mixed-Methods Approach." The presenters will be **Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie** (*Sam Houston State University*), **Kathleen M. T. Collins** (*University of Arkansas at Fayetteville*), **Nancy L. Leech** (*University of Colorado-Denver*), **Amy B. Dellinger** (*D.A.T.A., LLC*), and **Qun G. Jiao** (*Baruch College, The City University of New York*). This is an expanded session back due to popular response to their session at the New Orleans meeting. The fee for this session is \$60.

An Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling, with Some Discussion of Recent Developments



Victor Willson is Professor and Head of the Department of Educational Psychology, and Professor of Teaching, Learning and Culture in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A & M University. His research focuses on longitudinal modeling of human behavior and learning and on children's cognitive and psychoeducational development. He has published over 150 articles, books, reviews, and encyclopedia entries in over 40 different journals and venues. He is currently on the editorial boards of *Reading Psychology* and *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, and reviews for over 10 different journals in psychology and education.

**2009 Conference
February 4-7
St. Anthony Hotel
San Antonio, Texas**

Workshops

Step-by-step Guide to Conducting and Writing Rigorous, Comprehensive, and Insightful Literature Reviews:

A Mixed Methods Approach

Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie (Sam Houston State University), Kathleen M. T. Collins (University of Arkansas at Fayetteville), Nancy L. Leech (University of Colorado Denver), Amy B. Dellinger (D.A.T.A., LLC), and Qun G. Jiao (Baruch College, The City University of New York).

Anthony Onwuegbuzie, Ph.D., is professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling at Sam Houston State University. He teaches courses in qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed research. His research areas primarily involve social and behavioral science topics including disadvantaged and under-served populations such as minorities, children living in war zones, students with special needs, and juvenile delinquents. Also, he writes extensively on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodological topics. He has secured more than 200 refereed journal articles and 30 book/encyclopedia chapters. He has made more than 400 presentations and keynote addresses at regional, national, and international conferences. Also, he has won numerous outstanding paper awards. Dr. Onwuegbuzie is passionate about mixed research, writing numerous articles and book/encyclopedia chapters on this topic across several disciplines, including the forthcoming textbook entitled: *Mixed Research: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Taylor and Francis) and edited mixed research book entitled: *Toward a Broader Understanding of Stress and Coping: Mixed Methods Approaches* (Greenway, CT: Information Age Publishing). He serves as editor of *Educational Researcher* and co-editor of *Research in the Schools*.

Kathleen M. T. Collins, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. To date, she has secured more than 100 refereed journal articles, book chapters, and paper presentations at international, national, and regional research conferences. In addition, she has made several invited addresses to faculty and students including international keynote addresses in Australia and South Africa and has presented numerous 3- to 4- hour workshops on topics related to mixed methods research, writing literature reviews, and conducting action research projects. Further, Dr. Collins is lead co-editor of a forthcoming mixed research book titled: *Toward a Broader Understanding of Stress and Coping: Mixed Methods Approaches* (Greenway, CT: Information Age Publishing). Additionally, she is co-author of a forthcoming textbook titled: *Mixed Research: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Taylor and Francis). Currently, Dr. Collins serves as President of the Mixed Methods Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association and Guest Editor of a special issue titled "Multiple methods for novice researchers" *International Journal of Multiple Approaches*, Vol. 2(3).

Nancy L. Leech, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Denver. Dr. Leech is currently teaching masters and Ph.D. level courses in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, statistics, and measurement. Her area of research is promoting new developments and better understandings in applied qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies. To date, she has published more than 35 articles in refereed journals, and two books; *SPSS for Basic Statistics: Use and Interpretation*, and *SPSS for Intermediate Statistics: Use and Interpretation*, both published by Taylor and Francis. Dr. Leech has received several outstanding paper awards, including the Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA) Outstanding Paper Award in 2003 and 2004 and the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) Outstanding Paper Award in 2004. Dr. Leech is currently the program chair American Educational Research Association *Mixed Methods* SIG and previously was chair of the American Educational Research Association *Professors of Educational Research* SIG. She also serves as an editorial board member of *Educational Researcher* and *Research in the Schools*.

Amy B. Dellinger, Ph.D., has been an active member of SERA since 1997. Dr. Dellinger, as co-owner of D.A.T.A., LLC, provides evaluation, research, and data analysis consulting services to educational and health-related agencies in Louisiana. Her research interests include validity issues and their relationship to the review of literature as well as research on the role of self-efficacy beliefs in education and health-related environments. Most recently, Dr. Dellinger was published in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* and *Teaching and Teacher Education*.

Qun G. Jiao, M.Ed., M.A., MLIS, is a professor and librarian at Baruch College, City University of New York, in the New York City. Professor Jiao holds a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of South Carolina, an M.A. degree in Educational Psychology from Columbia University Teachers College, and M.Ed. degree in Teacher Education from Miami University. His major research interests involve the psychological aspects of student learning, especially in the effects of library anxiety on college students, cooperative learning among graduate students, and mixed methods research. Professor Jiao has published numerous scholarly articles in national and international journals of library and information science, computer science, and education. He is the author of five scholarly books.

***“An idea can turn into dust or
magic, depending on the talent
that rubs against it.”
William Bernbach***

SERA 2009 Presidential Invited Address -- Robert Linn



The 2009 SERA Presidential Invited Address will be presented by **Robert Linn**, *University of Colorado*. His presentation is titled, "Educational Accountability and the NCLB Law: Lessons Learned." Bob will also meet in a scheduled informal "Fireside Chat" **limited only to Graduate Students**, to talk with students about whatever questions or interests they may have (e.g., advice for getting jobs, how did you become AERA President?, any stock tips?, **What is the National Academy of Education (NAE), and what does the NAE do?**).

Robert Linn is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Education in the research and evaluation methods program. Dr. Linn's research explores the uses and interpretations of educational assessments, with an emphasis on educational accountability systems. His work has investigated a variety of technical and policy issues in the uses of test data, including alternative designs for accountability systems and the impact of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning. His teaching interests are in related areas of educational measurement and statistical analysis.

Dr. Linn is a member of the **National Academy of Education** and a lifetime National Associate of the National Academies. He has been an active member of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) for more than 30 years and has served as vice president of the AERA Division of Measurement and Research Methodology and vice chair of the joint committee that developed the 1985 Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. He is a past-president of AERA. He is a past president of the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), past editor of the *Journal of Educational Measurement*, and editor of the third edition of *Educational Measurement*, a handbook sponsored by NCME and the American Council on Education. He was chair of the National Research Council's (NRC) Committee on Testing and Assessment and currently serves on the NRC's Board of the Center for Education.

***"What would life be if we had no
courage to attempt anything?"***
Vincent Van Gogh

SERA Newsletter

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College Station

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Stacey Edmonson 2008-10
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Sam Houston State University –
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Graduate Student

Representative

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Houston – Houston

Historian

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Vince Paredes

Newsletter Editor

Linda Reichwein Zientek – Sam
Houston State University –
Huntsville

Associate Newsletter Editor

Julia Ballenger – Stephen F.
Austin - Nacogdoches

Elections News

About the Hare Electoral System

SERA ballots will be sent in the mail. We encourage you to vote. SERA elections use the Hare system. This system reallocates votes in races with more than 2 candidates until each position obtains a majority of the votes cast. Sometimes this system is also called the "Instant Run-off Voting System."

For example, if 3 candidates were running for one office, and the first round rankings were:

CANDIDATES	Ger	Sue	Bob	Voter
	3	1	2	"A"
	3	1	2	"B"
	1	3	2	"C"
	3	2	1	"D"
	1	3	2	"E"
	2	3	1	"F"
	1	3	2	"G"
	1	3	2	"H"
	3	2	1	"I"
	4	2	3	First place votes

Because no candidate received 5 or more of the 9 first place votes, Voters "A's" and "B's" ranks for the last-place candidate, Sue, would be reallocated to the remaining candidates, and Sue would be eliminated as a candidate, as follows:

Ger	Sue	Bob	Voter
(2)	(1)		"A"
(2)	(1)		"B"
1		2	"C"
(2)		1	"D"
1		2	"E"
2		1	"F"
1		2	"G"
1		2	"H"
(2)		1	"I"
4		5	First place votes

At this point, Bob has a majority of the 9 votes, and would be elected, even though Geri had more first place votes than Bob in the initial round of vote counting.

To join SERA, please contact
[Vince Paredes.](#)

HEADLINE NEWS: HURRICANE DOLLY CAUSES SERA TO DETOUR FEBRUARY 2009 CONFERENCE FROM SOUTH PADRE TO SAN ANTONIO

SERA was scheduled to have its 2009 conference on South Padre at the Sheraton Hotel. Because of damages to the hotel incurred by Hurricane Dolly, the conference is moving to the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio.

The conference dates have not changed. This will be the fifth time SERA has met at the St. Anthony Hotel, and it is a wonderful venue. Complete renovation of the hotel will be completed by November 2008. The Riverwalk is less than two blocks from the hotel. A good time is always had by all when they come to San Antonio.

By [Kathleen Mittag](#)



[St. Anthony:](#) [A Windham Historic Hotel](#)

300 East Travis
San Antonio , Texas 78205
210-227-4392

A Preview of New Orleans for the 2010 SERA Annual Meeting, February 17-20, 2010

In 2010, we will hold the SERA Annual Meeting in New Orleans. This will be a great time to visit the city. The cultural riches and unparalleled service that define the New Orleans experience continue to flourish, as they have for centuries. The most celebrated and historic core of the city – including the Faubourg Marigny, French Quarter, Central Business District, Warehouse and Arts District, Magazine Street, Garden District, Audubon Park and Zoo and St. Charles Avenue – is thriving.

-- So Much To Do --



A Preview 2010 Meeting (*continued*)

The Audubon Insectarium, the largest freestanding museum in the United States dedicated to insects, opened June 13, 2008. It is the first major attraction to open in New Orleans since August 2005. In its first two months, it welcomed nearly 100,000 visitors.

The Southern Food & Beverage Museum (SoFAB) opened in the Riverwalk Marketplace on June 5, 2008. The museum is completely dedicated to the celebration of food and drink and its influence on the South.



Carriage Close-up by Photographer Carl Purcell
Photo courtesy New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau

The arts scene is exploding and our galleries are among the finest in North America. There are many cultural attractions, including: plantation homes, riverboat cruises, city tours, Mardi Gras World, Café Du Monde, Cabildo State Museum, New Orleans Historic Collection,

**"The closer people are to 'getting it right,'
the more significant become the ways in
which they 'get it wrong.'"**

William R. Robinson

Ogden Museum of Southern Art, Audubon Zoo, National World War II Museum, Harrah's Casino, New Orleans Museum of Art, Bestoff Sculpture Garden, Contemporary Arts Center, Louisiana Children's Museum, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and much more.



St. Louis Cathedral with Carriage by Photographer Carl Purcell
Photo courtesy New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau

Recently, we successfully hosted several major events with millions of visitors, such as Satchmo SummerFest, Essence Festival, the North American Leaders' Summit, French Quarter Festival, Jazz Fest, the Zurich Classic, the 57th Annual NBA All-Star Game, 2008 Mardi Gras, Allstate BCS National Championship, Allstate Sugar Bowl, and State Farm Bayou Classic. Major conventions are happening everyday.

We invite you to come and see for yourself!

Sonya Carr, Southeastern Louisiana University, Local Arrangements Chair and SERA Member-At-Large

Adapted from the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau website (retrieved 10/03/08). For more information:

<http://www.neworleanscvb.com/index.cfm>

Meet The Board

Julia Ballenger Ph.D., associate professor and coordinator of the Principal Program in the Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University, received her doctoral degree from the University of Texas at Austin. Her area of specialization includes social justice, evaluation of principal program effectiveness, culturally responsive pedagogy, and gender equity. Dr. Ballenger is active at the local, state and national levels. Currently, she serves on the Executive Board of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, President of the Texas Council of Professors Administration, and Secretary of RWE, a Sig of AERA, and assistant editor for the NCPEA/Rice University Connexions Project and several other journals and newsletters in Texas. Dr. Ballenger has been actively involved in SERA through presenting her research and involving her doctoral students in presenting their research.



Vince Paredes Ph.D. is currently Data Model Architect for the Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA). Vince is leading the development of a comprehensive PK-12 data model for education under a contract with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Vince was most recently Vice President of Research and Development for ESP Solutions Group where he led the development of a strategic technology plan for the Houston Independent School District.

Vince holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin. He is a past president of SERA, a former high school band director, and manages the membership database for SERA.



J. Kyle Roberts Ph.D. has been a member of SERA since 1998 where he first presented a paper as a graduate student. Kyle has served as newsletter editor, member at large, program chair, president, and now is the webmaster. Kyle's research interests include teaching quantitative methods to novice learners and multilevel analysis (hierarchical linear modeling). Kyle has conducted numerous training sessions on multilevel analysis at annual meetings of the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the Southwest Educational Research Association. Kyle, along with Joop Hox, is the editor of the soon to appear "Handbook of Advanced Multilevel Analysis" (2009, Taylor and Francis).

Membership News

Don Allen is the Director of the newly created Center of Technology-Mediated Learning in Mathematics at Texas A&M University. The Board of Regents of Texas A&M University recently authorized the creation of the center. Professor of Mathematics Education **Gerald Kulm** serves on the Advisory Board.

Laura de la Vina has been promoted to assistant professor at South Texas College.

Cheryl Edwards, Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Southeastern Louisiana University, is the recipient of the Merritt Endowed Professorship for 2008-2009.

Stacey Edmonson, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University, reports that SHSU was awarded the PULSE Program (Preparing Underrepresented Leaders in Special Education), an \$800,000 four year grant from the US Department of Education, to prepare students to be educational leaders with a specialization in special education. The first cohort of students began Fall 2008 with 18 Master's degree students from across the greater Houston area.

Bob Elliott accepted the position of Assistant Professor and Director of the newly developed Aviation Science Technology Program at Eastern New Mexico University in June. Although the program is through the Portales campus, Bob will direct the program from the Roswell campus. Mr. Elliott attends Texas Tech University and his oral defense of his dissertation is planned for October.

In July, **Ron McBride** delivered an invited keynote address at the Taipei Physical Education University in Taiwan.



Kim Nimon transferred from Southern Methodist University to Assistant Professor in the Learning Technologies Department at the University of North Texas.

Maria R. Tello has been promoted to Associate Professor at South Texas College.

Jim Telese was promoted to Full Professor of Secondary and Mathematics Education at the University of Texas Brownsville.

Jinhao Wang has been promoted to Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment at South Texas College. Dr. Wang holds a full professor title at South Texas College.

La Vonne Williams transferred from the Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University- Kingsville to the Educational Leadership Department. Dr. Williams recently became engaged to Dr. *Alan Fedynich*, an Associate Professor and Research Scientist in the Department of Animal and Wildlife Sciences at TAMUK, and they will be married in mid December.

Book Review

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In his book, *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, Mike Schmoker dedicated himself to telling it like it is and presenting his perspective as a great opportunity for schools to really make a difference. Schmoker (2006) stressed,

A new candor that has emerged in education and a willingness to see that historic improvement isn't about 'reform' but something much simpler: a tough, honest self-examination of the prevailing culture and practices of public schools, and a dramatic turn toward a singular and straightforward focus on instruction. (p. 2)

Focus on Instruction

When working toward improving schools, the focus must be on the actual classroom instruction. Schmoker (2006) purported that schools and educators often get caught up in improvement plans and instructional programs and end up spending too much time falling under the seduction of promises of success. Schmoker (2006) stressed, "Teaching needn't be exceptional to have a profound effect; continuous commonsense efforts to even roughly conform to effective practice and essential standards will make a life-changing difference for students across all socioeconomic levels" (p. 9). The focus must be on improving teaching. Schmoker (2006) stated, "The bottom line is that if we taught math, writing, and critical reading effectively, exactly as we know they should be taught, then students would do exceedingly well on state assessments" (p. 41). Improvement planning is not worth the time and paper put into it if it doesn't address improving actual classroom instruction. What students learn or do not learn occurs on a daily basis in the classroom.

The Buffer

Schmoker (2006) identified the primary deterrent to improving instruction as the buffer. He defined the buffer as all that prevents administrators from knowing what actually occurs in the classrooms. Most administrators and school boards have little knowledge of how effective their teachers are at actually teaching. Elmore (2000) as cited in Schmoker (2006) stated, "Direct involvement in instruction is among the least frequent activities performed by administrators of any kind at any level" (p. 29). Schmoker (2006) stressed that most school cultures have an alarming tolerance for mediocre instruction, worksheets, and busy work. Schmoker (2006) challenged, "We can make significant changes here, but not unless we're willing to take on this buffer, which prevents us from seeing these realities. At its heart is an unexamined addiction to privacy and isolation" (p. 22). Schmoker (2006) stated, "Isolation hides and protects ineffective practices and practitioners" (p. 25). Administrators at all levels must know what is going on in all classrooms in order to work toward improvement. If what is needed is not known, then how do you proceed?

Time to Get Tough

Schmoker (2006) stated, "We don't tolerate doctors who fail to wash their hands before surgery. It is time for the education professions to develop a healthy amount of what Roland Barth calls 'moral outrage at ineffective practices'"(p. 137). Schmoker (2006) stressed that when instruction is known to be ineffective little is actually done to make corrections.

A gap exists between what is known and what is actually done. Schmoker (2006) stated, "Education must own up, collectively, to the gap between what we know and what we do, between 'what we've always done' and what our clients need" (p. 45). Schmoker (2006) stated, "I continue to work with schools where patent malpractice is blithely tolerated. Schools . . . will need to be tougher, clearer, and uncompromising when essential, reasonable expectations aren't met" (p. 145). Teachers that are not effective or not teaching should be removed from the classrooms. To allow such malpractice to continue is unethical.

Evans (1996) as cited in Schmoker (2006) wrote,
Major change almost never wells up from the bottom. It begins near the top. And because it confronts the most destructive elements of the status quo, it won't always or initially be popular. If we're serious about better schools, we must be as bottom-up as possible; as top-down as necessary. (p. 144)

The time has come for today's schools to get serious about teaching and hold all educators accountable for doing the job for which they are paid. It may be a bumpy ride but one that is necessary. How can schools acknowledge classrooms where students are not being taught and stick their heads in the sand?

Inspect What You Expect

While there are several major points and themes throughout this book, the one that is the most prominent to me is the theme of effective supervision. If administrators do not know what is going on in their classrooms, then they will not be able to make improvements. I believe Mike Schmoker clearly lays the blame of failing schools at the feet of administrators that either do not know what instruction occurs in their classrooms, is unwilling to confront ineffective teaching, or a combination of both.

A problem develops when you do not inspect what you expect. If you let administrivia prevent you from inspecting your expectations, a problem might occur if too much time has passed from an implementation and the inspection. If things are not what they should be, the longer the teachers have been allowed to do things not as intended, the more difficult it will be to get them on track.

Larry Dwayne Ponder is an EdD student in the Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University. His area of study is in the self-contained and departmentalized classroom structures of third and fourth grade students in mathematics and science.