



BANK STREET COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Occasional Papers

Invites contributions to
a special issue on

High Needs Schools: *Preparing Teachers for Today's World*

Bank Street's *Occasional Paper Series* is seeking essays that explore what new teachers must know to effectively engage students in a time when changing patterns of immigration, linguistic diversity, widening economic disparities, and resegregation of communities are radically changing the educational landscape. Many schools are struggling to meet these challenges while also responding to a continued emphasis on high stakes testing and a growing awareness of individual learning styles. High needs schools, schools lacking in material and/or human resources, paralyzed by inflexible bureaucracies and/or a failure of innovative leadership, exist everywhere. They are especially visible when clustered in urban communities. It is often the newest, sometimes least well prepared teachers, who find themselves assigned to these difficult settings.

Whether teachers are working in communities far from where they grew up or are returning to once familiar terrain, they frequently face students with very different life experiences from their own. These are students who because of race, class, culture, religion or language may challenge a teacher's taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be in a pedagogical relationship, let alone what it might mean to become an educated person. In order to be effective, teachers may need to re-imagine what they deem essential to their classroom practices and what will be needed by the students in their care. All teachers must be prepared to work in complex spaces defined by unfamiliar pasts and unknown futures.

We anticipate that some essays may seek to address the following kinds of questions:

- Do teachers who staff schools in which students face greater obstacles to success require a different kind of preparation than those staffing schools with proven track records?
- What knowledge, skills, and habits of mind will best serve new teachers who are preparing to work in schools where the threat of failure has become the norm and where test driven curricula abound?
- Given individual financial constraints and state mandated requirements, how can teacher preparation programs provide meaningful opportunities for their students to learn about the communities in which they will be working?
- What kinds of experiences will help teachers to become successful advocates when by choice or circumstance they find themselves deployed in high needs, traditionally under-served schools and communities?
- How can teachers honor their personal and professional commitments while engaging effectively with families and communities that may espouse very different values from their own?

While these questions aren't new, the search for answers takes on a special urgency with the ever growing disparities in student achievement, the creation of national standards and intensified testing that all foreshadow a universal curriculum imposed on an increasingly more diverse population. The Occasional Paper Editors anticipate that the topic will resonate with, and elicit responses from, teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, parents, and community leaders committed to a more just future.

If you have questions or would like to discuss your ideas, please contact Jonathan Silin jsilin@optonline.net or 631-740-4792.

Due Dates:

July 1, 2009 – Letter of Intent. Please send a brief description, approximately 250 words, of what you intend to cover in your paper as an e-mail attachment to Jonathan Silin (jsilin@optonline.net). The e-mail subject line must read “Special Issue Submission.”

December 1, 2009 - Manuscripts. Articles should be double-spaced and formatted in APA Style. Manuscript length should be approximately 3-4,000 words. Only unpublished manuscripts that are not simultaneously under review for publication elsewhere are eligible for consideration.