

The Impact of TNPI on MetLife Fellows' Teaching, Students, Schools & Knowledge of Policymaking

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The Impact of TNPI on MetLife Fellows' Teaching, Students, Schools & Knowledge of Policymaking

This past year, we conducted an assessment of TNPI. We wanted to know if TNPI was having an impact on fellows' teaching, their students, their schools and districts, and their knowledge of policymaking. Open-ended surveys, interviews, and questionnaires have yielded rich data about the impact that the Teachers Network Policy Institute has had on the teachers who have participated as TNPI Fellows. In this monograph, we describe what we have learned from these tools. In addition, we include excerpts from four studies completed by TNPI Fellows. The studies provide the richest portrait of the work that is emanating from the Teachers Network Policy Institute.

Who Are the MetLife Fellows?

Annually, Teachers Network and its affiliates invite teachers to apply for MetLife Fellowships to join TNPI. In our application and screening process, we attempt to select fellows who excel in the classroom and have reputations as leaders when they join TNPI. We used an efficacy survey (see [Appendix A](#)) that was based on work by Gibson and Dembo (1984) to develop a profile of the teachers whom TNPI is attracting. The survey measures personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE). The two factors correspond to Bandura's (1997) theoretical constructs of teacher self-efficacy and teacher outcome expectancy. The former is the teacher's belief in his or her own ability to impact teaching and learning; the latter is a teacher's belief in the general power of education to influence learning beyond the impact of home and community. The 42 teachers who attended the 2003 TNPI summer institute completed the survey. Robert Tobias, research director at the Horowitz Center in the NYU Steinhardt School of Education, analyzed the data for us. Tobias' report (see Appendix 1) showed that this sample of TNPI teachers had relatively high levels of both PTE and GTE, especially in their belief in their abilities to handle difficult problems that arise in their classrooms. For the nine PTE items, TNPI teachers had a mean score of 5.09 (sd=.36) out of a maximum of 6. GTE scores were similarly high with a mean of 4.83 (sd=.27) out of 6.

The data from the efficacy survey (see Tables 1 and 2) seems to affirm that we are getting the types of teachers we are looking for—teachers who believe in the potential of teaching and are committed to the profession. The results suggest that these TNPI teachers are confident in their professional judgment and believe that educators have the power to be agents of change.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for the Nine Items of the Teacher Efficacy Scale's Personal Teacher Efficacy (PTE) Factor (n = 42)

Item #	Item	Mean	SD
1	When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.	4.88	0.86
5	When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	5.48	0.83
6	When a student gets a better grade than he usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	4.83	0.96
7	When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	5.43	0.83
9	When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	5.10	0.93
10	If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	4.54	1.24
12	If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	4.75	1.04
13	If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him quickly.	5.60	0.54
15	If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	5.21	1.07

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for the Four Items of the Teacher Efficacy Scale's General Teacher Efficacy (GTE) Factor (n = 42)

Item #	Item	Mean	SD
2	The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	4.63	1.13
3	The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	5.17	1.29
4	If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	4.60	1.25
8	A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.	4.93	1.09

We conducted an open-ended online survey ([see Appendix D](#)) to develop a profile of the fellows and to document the quality and quantity of teachers' involvement in TNPI and its variety of activities. We distributed the survey to 200 TNPI Fellows via our listserv, and 74 responded.

Our survey data suggests that TNPI is attracting teachers interested in being part of a professional network involved in research and policy. (See Table 3.) By offering multiple opportunities for participation, TNPI seems to have met its goal of being representative of classroom teachers.

Table 3: Teachers’ Rationales for Involvement in TNPI (n=74)

Opportunity to affect policy	22
Action Research	20
The Network	14
Make Voices of Teachers Heard	12
Professional Development	6
Keeping Current with Research and Policy	5

We took advantage of our recent summer institute to conduct a survey of teachers (See [Appendix B](#)) who participate in TNPI. This was a relatively new group of fellows. Seventeen of the 41 of the participants were new to TNPI, and 16 had been TNPI Fellows for one or two years.

We learned that these fellows were at different points in their careers and teaching in a variety contexts across all grade levels and in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Many were second-career teachers, bringing a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, and many entered TNPI from a wide range of pre-service programs.

Sixty-three percent of those surveyed were elementary school teachers; 15% were middle school teachers; and 22% were high school teachers. Seventy-one percent of the teachers were in urban settings; 24% in suburban settings; 12% in rural settings. Most of the teachers were mid-career: 66% have been teaching from 6 to 20 years; 15% have been teaching five years or less; 22% have been teaching more than 20 years.

Fifteen of the 41 teachers had prior careers. These included sales, adult GED, a peer tutoring program at community college, accounting, education non-profit management, government program administration, education reform program administration, science lab technician, attorney, early childhood administration, head start consultant, mental health work, law school administration, advertising, automotive forecasting, British public service, human resources, LAN management, chef and waiter, US marine corps administration, mom, and book sales.

Survey respondents also reported a wide range of pre-service preparation including student teaching, multicultural education in the primary setting, education minor and student teaching, BS in secondary math, undergraduate secondary education, education program, college preparatory program, two courses, undergraduate and graduate degrees, in-service masters, intern program, one-week orientation, masters, three-week orientation, 20 credits, Teach For America, and professional development school.

In the online survey, we asked how and why fellows got involved in TNPI. Thirty percent of respondents claimed that principals and administrators alerted them to TNPI and recommended their participation. University contacts (22%), brochures or other public relations materials (22%), and colleagues (19%) were the next most likely sources of information. Only 8% had previous involvement with the Teachers Network. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: How Participants Got Involved in TNPI (n= 74)

Principal or Administrator	22
University Contact	16
Brochure or other publicity material	16
Colleague	14
Teachers Network Contact	6

Teachers gave six reasons for joining and staying with TNPI. Thirty percent claimed that the opportunity to have an impact on education policy at the local (as in school and community), state, and national levels was their main reason for joining. Closely linked was their interest in finding ways to make the voice of teachers heard (16%) by participating in a network (19%) that supports and provides a venue for teacher professional development and inquiry (8%). They also cited the collegial nature of TNPI and the opportunity that it provides for intellectual stimulation, intellectual challenge, and keeping up-to-date with current research and policy (7%).

Is TNPI Having an Impact?

Impact on Teaching

The survey and interview data make it clear that TNPI is having an impact on teachers’ teaching (See Table 5). Their comments suggest that TNPI provides a powerful form of professional development and that conducting and sharing action research is generative to this experience. The word “reflection” comes up repeatedly in their comments as do the words “critical” and “investigative.” While we did expect teachers to use data to improve their own practice, we were particularly pleased to learn that some of the teachers are trying new methods learned from others’ research.

Table 5: Impact of TNPI on teaching (n=74)

More reflective	20
More Critical / Investigative	17
Networking	17
Empowerment	10
Use data to improve practice	8
Try new methods from others research	5

In their own words:

It forced me to reflect on my teaching process in terms of a cycle of inquiry. Research is now a part of my habit of mind and practice.

Hearing about others' action research has given me many valuable ideas to try in my own classroom. For example, two years ago, I heard a colleague present his research about facilitating student discussions. The following year, I tried his strategies in my own classroom, and they worked beautifully. One of my class discussions was even videotaped by my district office.

TNPI has allowed me to "practice what I teach." By examining my role as a teacher in the world of policy decision making and thus social and political activism. As a teacher of "US History" and "Government and Economics," I am demonstrating to my students how an individual can work to affect change in the world around them, something I push them to think about and do through teaching both of these courses.

At the 2003 summer institute, we also conducted interviews (see [Appendix C](#)) of 24 teachers who had participated in TNPI for at least one year. These interviews yielded data similar to that collected via the survey posted on the listserv. These teachers claimed to be "more reflective" in their practice and more skillful in their teaching as a result of conducting action research.

The impact on teaching is also evident in the action research studies conducted by TNPI teachers. In particular, two of the studies that we provide as exemplars get to the heart of this. Through Penny Arnold's exploration of teachers' professional growth in a collegial study group, she learns about the importance of teacher collaboration and puts forth recommendations to increase these opportunities for teachers both at the school and university settings. Lara Goldstone documents how classroom community and parent communication are key to successful teaching. Her recommendations specify the type of professional development and supports that need to be in place for teachers to achieve their goals. Both Arnold and Goldstone have had their research published in educational journals.

Impact on Students

When asked to describe the impact of TNPI on their students, 46% of the fellows reported that TNPI participation resulted in their using research to improve practice. Over a third of the teachers claimed to have implemented new strategies and to have improved student achievement based on TNPI involvement. Other outcomes include initiating program changes (11%), providing new opportunities for students (11%), improving relationships with students (8%), and strengthening opportunities for student advocacy (7%). The teachers also said that because of TNPI their students engaged in research (5%), they involved families in the research (5%), and they were able to communicate clearer and higher expectations (5%). (See Table 6.)

Table 6: Impact of TNPI on students (n=74)

Used research to improve practice	34
Implemented new strategies	14
Improved student achievement	14
Initiated program changes	8
Provided new opportunities for students	8
Improved relationships with students	6
Strengthened opportunities for student advocacy	5
Engaged students in research	4
Used research to involve parents and families	4
Communicated clearer and higher expectations	4
Students took more responsibility for learning	4
Develop new curriculum	3

While TNPI was not designed to have a direct impact on classroom learning, when asked to write and/or talk about whether participation in TNPI has had an impact on their students, the teachers collectively came up with a dozen ways in which TNPI has affected their students. It is interesting to note that the action research component of TNPI was implemented in order for teachers to have data to back up policy recommendations. We found that for a majority of the teachers, their students are direct beneficiaries of the action research studies. The teachers are using research—their own and those of other teachers—to improve their practice, implement new strategies, and even, in a few cases, to develop new curriculum. Teachers are also able to provide new opportunities for students through their TNPI involvement, including generating student advocacy.

Here are a few quotes that illustrate the above:

I really think my students have benefited from this directly. The action research that I did this year, for example, involved applying the foreign language standards in a way I had never thought of before and the technique that I used (by the students' own accounts) turned out to be an incredible learning experience for them.

My action research projects are always about student achievement. I may be studying my role in a collaborative partnership or my growth as a teacher, and that growth is all the more powerful if it means my students' achievement levels rise. For example, in my 2001 research on students' ability to reach second grade reading standards, nearly all of my students met the standards, in part, because of my involvement in a collaborative relationship.

The research of other TNPI members has been useful in my own teaching. Research on classroom seating, student interaction, teacher-directed lessons, and time management have helped improve my teaching.

Lamson Lam’s action research study offers an excellent example of how students benefit from their teacher’s TNPI involvement. He shows how parent involvement in test preparation not only helped his students do well on standardized tests but freed him up to take more time with his classroom instruction and provide depth to the curriculum. Lam has been presenting his research to multiple audiences this year so other teachers and their students may benefit as well. His research is scheduled to appear in the May 2004 issue of *Educational Leadership*.

Impact of TNPI on Schools and Districts

When TNPI participants claim that TNPI has had an impact on their schools or districts, they are specifically drawing on their own experiences of conducting action research and attending monthly meetings. These are the sources from which teachers build their expertise and advocacy. Twenty-seven percent of the teachers reported that due to TNPI, they have been instrumental at the school and/or district level in improving professional development. They have also presented their work at faculty and district meetings (22%) and have engaged with colleagues around professional issues (9%). Almost 10% of the teachers reported having brought about policy changes at the school or district level. (See Table 7.)

Table 7: Impact of TNPI on School/District (n=74)

Improving professional development	20
Dissemination	16
Engaging others in action research	7
Policy change	7
Better delivery of services	6
Re-examination of curriculum	5
Improved leadership	5
Brought in funding	4
Caused changes in outreach activities to parents and community	3

TNPI is, above all, a professional development program for participating teachers. Over a quarter of the fellows reported that due to their participation in TNPI, they have been instrumental at the school and/or district level in improving professional development for others. They have also presented their work at faculty and district meetings and have engaged with colleagues around professional issues. In Chicago, for instance, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan officially recognized TNPI as “an outstanding opportunity to capitalize on the expertise of exemplary teachers to develop effective policies that strengthen student achievement.”

Ten percent of the teachers claim to have brought about policy changes at the school or district level. Salient examples of local influence and involvement include:

- *Fairfax County (VA) Fellows' work with area schools and universities:* Fellows focused their action research on the need to effectively groom teacher leaders and, as a result, helped to develop a cutting-edge master's degree/certificate program in teacher leadership
- *Los Angeles Fellows' proposal to the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA):* Based on their research on the efficacy of networks, fellows' recommendation for salary point credit for teacher network collaboration was adopted by the union and became part of the UTLA contract proposal to the Los Angeles Unified School District
- *New York City Fellows' role following the victory in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity suit:* Fellows have been asked to play a role in providing the remedy (i.e., determining how best to use newly allocated funds to improve classroom practice and student achievement) for schools throughout New York City.

Fellows have even had success effecting policy on the state level. During the 2002 Wyoming legislative session, the Wyoming Fellows met with 18 legislators, including key members of the Joint Education Committee and Joint Appropriations Committee, to discuss their research and advocate for continued funding for Professional Development Schools (K-12 schools that have partnered with institutions of higher education to provide teacher preparation programs at a school site, and as a result, increase teacher quality in hard-to-staff schools). The Joint Appropriations Committee had previously cut funding for Professional Development Schools; when an amendment was proposed to restore funding, the amendment failed on its first and second readings. After consultation with the Wyoming Fellows, however, the amendment to restore funding passed—and continued to gain legislative support. The amendment was included as part of the final state budget, and was signed into law by the governor.

Increasingly throughout the nation, participating teachers have assumed active leadership roles on their schools' governing boards or as peer coaches, mentors, and staff developers. During the past four years, five MetLife Fellows have served on the Education Commission of the States' national advisory boards: MetLife Fellow Janet Price on Governor Geringer's National Advisory Council on Teacher Quality (99-00); MetLife Fellow Judi Fenton on Governor Shaheen's National Advisory Council on Early Learning (00-01); MetLife Fellow Wade Fuller on the National MetLife Advisory Board on Change in Education Initiatives (00-01); and, MetLife Fellow Jane Fung on Governor Guinn's Council on Child Literacy (01-02). This year, MetLife Fellow Lara Goldstone is serving as the teacher representative on ECS Chair Governor Warner's national advisory council. MetLife Fellow Jane Fung has just been appointed to serve as the teacher representative on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's advisory board.

Here are some quotes from teachers on what they have accomplished locally:

Based on my experience with TNPI, I decided to work with some of my colleagues to start a teachers network. I have always been one to work on my own, and even though the group has only worked together for a few months, I have seen how dramatically different everything can be when you get input from a variety of perspectives.

TNPI has provided data and documentation to support the expansion and continuation of ongoing support programs for novice teachers in our district.

Using the action research that I conducted on the value of networking, I was able to speak to the school board on using networks as a form of professional development. I was able to get approval to facilitate two salary point credit classes—one on action research and one on networking.

Rachel Zindler’s study offers an excellent example of how the exploration of classroom issues, in her case the inclusion of special education students, can lead to policy recommendations on the school and districtwide levels. Through her action research, in which she carefully documented student interactions and teacher interventions, Zindler was able to make the case for the supports that need to be in place for special education students and their families to succeed in inclusion settings.

Impact of TNPI on Knowledge and Understanding of Policymaking

In our open-ended online survey, we also focused on the essential goal of TNPI, which is to familiarize teachers with education policymaking. When we asked fellows to describe the impact TNPI has had on their knowledge and understanding of policymaking, over 40% claimed that participation in TNPI had increased their understanding of policy and over 40% cited skill development, such as their ability to engage with policymakers, as a benefit of participation in TNPI. Therefore, over 80% of the fellows reported increased knowledge and enhanced skills related to education policymaking. Additionally, almost 10% of the teachers said that TNPI is providing them with opportunities for leadership. (See Table 8.)

Table 8: Impact of TNPI on Knowledge and Skill Development for Ed Policy (n=74)

Increased understanding of policy	30
Communicating directly with policymakers/Developing relationships with policymakers	16
Skill development	16
Opportunities for leadership	7

According to the survey and interview data, the overwhelming majority of the fellows are achieving our goal of having increased knowledge and understanding of policy making. Through involvement in the institute, they are communicating and developing relationships directly with policymakers. Almost half have developed skills enabling them to influence policy and for some teachers, TNPI is an opportunity for leadership.

Here is how the fellows describe the impact TNPI has had on their understanding and skill development in the policy arena:

It has helped me to understand the “big picture” of policymaking. Before, I was concerned with “my students,” “my families,” and as long as I was getting what I needed to educate my kids, it didn’t matter much what else was happening. I’ve learned how “my classroom” is dependent upon and interwoven with the rest of our district, state, and national mandates.

As a result of participating in TNPI, I am more confident as a speaker and writer. I have been able to speak on education panels on teacher quality, professional development, and early literacy. I had the opportunity to represent teachers on Governor Guinn’s early literacy advisory for the Education Commission of the States. I had the opportunity to engage in monthly educational issues with teachers from across the country.

Watching the expansion of TNPI and its greater role in education discussions whether on the local or national level makes clear the power of research and the need to bring that research to those in power to make changes in educational policy. Power is not something that is obtained overnight. It is a process that has to be nurtured and sustained.

Impact of TNPI Over Time

We sent out a questionnaire (see [Appendix E](#)) to the 11 founding fellows who are still actively involved in TNPI as advisors. Nine responded. Five have become school administrators; two are clinical faculty at New York University; one is directing a teacher center; and one is now on staff at the teachers’ union. Except for the latter, all credited TNPI with their ongoing commitment to public education, and with their motivation and ability to take on leadership roles in schools.

The founding fellows cited the following reasons for joining the institute: networking, the possibility for making change in their schools, connections to luminaries in the field and policy arena, exposure to readings and research, and a reason to stay in the profession. Their experiences with TNPI, in particular Saturday meetings, national institutes, and online discussions, provided them with the networking they craved, and also engaged them in an ongoing, energizing discourse about education policy. One founding fellow offered this description: “It made us powerful change agents instead of burnt-out cases.”

The impact on their careers has been transformative. Several of the fellows wrote about how being part of a democratic group gave them a new vision of school leadership. They strive to carry out that vision by becoming leaders whose practice is shaped by democratic principles and child advocacy. As one fellow stated, “Democratic themes continue to bubble up in my leadership style. I fund all good teacher ideas—I haven’t heard a bad one yet—and we exist as a school culture on a foundation of professional trust.”

Each of these fellows reported that they would have left the field had it not been for TNPI.

Action Research

Since 1998, conducting action research has been a major component of TNPI. Fellows use data from their action research to develop recommendations for policy change.

According to our online survey, action research has become the most important TNPI activity for fellows' professional development. (See Table 9)

Table 9: Importance of TNPI Activities to Fellows' Professional Development

	High	Medium	Low
Action Research	64	7	2
Interactions with Policymakers	36	26	5
Listserv Discussions	9	44	14
Monthly Meetings	41	20	7
Presentations	23	37	3
Readings	29	30	10
Summer Institute	19	17	21
Website	0	15	45

Review of TNPI Research

In five years, from 1998-2003, TNPI teachers completed 177 action research studies. We broke these down into the following categories: topics identified in the study, school level, year completed, and geographical region. Sixty-five percent looked at *student achievement*. The next largest foci are *literacy*—36%, *professional development*--18%, and *collaboration*—14%. Almost half took place in elementary schools, almost a fifth took place in middle schools, and over a quarter took place in high schools; two studies spanned K-12.

For the most recent school year that I have data, 2002-03, TNPI teachers completed 61 studies. In 2001-02, they completed 37 studies. In the years 2000-01 and 1999-2000, they completed 18 each year. In 1998-99, they completed 43 studies. The largest number, 68 (38%) studies were conducted by New York City teachers. Ten other affiliates had anywhere from 2 (Lexington, KY) to 25 (Santa Barbara County, CA) completed studies.

Four Sample Studies

What follow are excerpts from 4 of the 177 action research studies completed over the past 5 years. The 4 studies are characteristic of the work that is being done around the country by TNPI Fellows. The research these teachers are conducting either on their own

practice or processes in their schools inevitably devolves to a focus in one of the following areas:

- school organization and governance
- the professional development of teachers including pre-service teacher education
- instruction and curriculum development
- assessment of teaching and learning

Each of the four studies is representative of one of the areas. These studies have all the elements that we have set out as essential requirements for teacher research emanating from the Teachers Network Policy Institute. Each of them captures the complexity of classrooms and schools, and each of them demonstrates the ways in which policies affect teaching and learning. Three have been published in journals read by teachers, teacher educators, and a large education policy audience. The teachers have presented their research at conferences, and they have been cited in various policy forums.

School Organization and Governance

The first, by Rachel Zindler, focuses on the ways in which the context and organization of a school affect classroom life. Zindler had recently taken a new position in her school as the general education teacher in a second grade inclusion team – a setting in which special education children are taught in classrooms with general education peers by two teachers, one of whom will have credentials in special education. Zindler's study, *Trouble in paradise: A study of who is included in an inclusion classroom*, illustrates the complex ways in which mandated programs, in this case special education inclusion, affect school organizations.

Seven of Zindler's 24 students were classified as special education students. These children struggled with a variety of developmental delays, such as expressive and/or receptive language processing disorders, physical disabilities, and social/emotional issues. Zindler questioned how truly "inclusive" her classroom was. She looked at what impact race, economic status, social skills, and language deficits had on students' social roles in the group as well as whether team teachers could effectively facilitate continuous, meaningful relationships between special education students from all backgrounds and their general education peers. She interviewed students and parents, recorded student comments during class discussions, took notes on class activities, and kept track of students' after school activities. She also kept records of the children's comments during the numerous community-building activities that took place throughout the academic year. A fundamental source of data was surveys of children's social choices that Zindler and her co-teacher conducted several times throughout the year. She created sociograms to depict the survey data and looked to them to provide a barometer of social grouping and alienation within the class.

Zindler and her colleague tried several interventions designed to facilitate friendships among students and across social boundaries. They held community meetings, set up structures in their classroom to support new friendships, paired *isolates* with popular students for fun and academic activities, and capitalized on the strengths of the children

with special needs. Implementing these intervention activities took more time to plan than was scheduled, writes Zindler: “We found that we needed additional time to discuss the children’s social needs, observe them in the playground, speak to their parents, and meet with specialists in the school to determine what supports they might need” (p. 20). The picture that emerges from Zindler’s data is complex in terms of the impact of inclusion on special education students and in terms of teacher collaboration. By certain standards, the class could be considered an accepting and inclusive environment for all children. Every student received compliments from his or her peers; most children felt that their classmates liked them; and all children were eventually selected as someone’s “favorite” friend. However, upon closer investigation, a disturbing fact emerged: the children who looked and sounded different were *not* as popular as their classmates. In fact, they formed their own, separate social grouping.

Zindler surmised several reasons for this discrepancy. First, the majority of her students with special needs suffered from expressive and receptive language delays that may have impeded their ability to engage in conversation, share stories, and play with their schoolmates. While her students of average development became more linguistically adept across the year, the special education students were not acquiring verbal skills at the same rate despite explicit social instruction. They did not appear to learn how to negotiate challenging social situations. Consequentially, they seemed to rely on less language-based play, such as fantasy games, and fewer rule-oriented physical games, such as swinging on the monkey bars in the playground, than their general education peers whose language development was more advanced.

Second, because they did not live in the immediate neighborhood, and because of their parents’ busy work schedules, the children with special needs had difficulty participating in out-of-school activities, thus missing out on key opportunities for shared social experiences and non-academic interactions. When one parent reached out to the special education children and made efforts to integrate them into her son’s after-school life, they brightened up and seemed to feel more accepted. Zindler remarks, “It was astounding what a play date could do for these children’s self-esteem, engagement in the community, and social status” (p. 22).

Finally, when in school, the inclusion students’ schedules put them together and away from the classroom much of the time. Although Zindler tried to schedule group activities when she knew she would have full enrollment, students’ individual schedules were complex and often unpredictable, Zindler found it extremely difficult to keep all students involved in every activity. In giving them the special support that they needed, the school’s well-intentioned special education team was actually setting them apart from the mainstream.

In summarizing her study and focusing on its policy implications, Zindler takes aim directly at school organization. She suggests that in order to retain special needs students in the classroom as much as possible, team teachers require additional planning time to coordinate with service providers and to assess, reflect, and plan activities that meet the specific social needs of the group. Zindler also advocates that specialist teachers, such as

occupational therapists, speech pathologists, and counselors, receive preparation to work within the classroom setting, so that special needs children can have common experiences with their general education peers. In an effort to provide more opportunities for children with special needs to interact with general education peers during non-academic times of the day, Zindler suggests that schools provide subsidized, or no-cost, on-site daycare for working families. Additionally, schools should make every effort to translate materials for non-English-speaking families, and to provide transportation to school-wide events so that students from distant neighborhoods may attend social activities outside of school with their peers.

The Professional Development of Teachers Including Pre-Service Teacher Education

A study by TNPI Fellow Penny Arnold (2002) explores cooperating teachers' professional growth through involvement in supervision of student teachers at the high school level and participation in a collegial study group for mentors, as well as the impact of student teachers in the classroom.

Arnold's research focused on five teachers who met in a study group during the fall term to discuss the mentoring of student teachers. She gathered data via audiotapes of study group conversations, interviews with study group members, and surveys of participating teachers and their students. Arnold also kept a journal documenting her role as a cooperating teacher and as the facilitator of the study group.

She found that while the ostensible purpose of the study group sessions was the mentoring of student teachers, the actual content of the teachers' conversations as documented on audiotape focused on improving classroom instruction. Over three meetings, teachers devoted between 63% and 79% of their discussion to instructional issues; 4% to broader professional issues, such as research; and less than a third of their discussion to the mentoring role.

Through open-ended teacher surveys that focused on the role of mentoring, Arnold found working with a student was a catalyst for professional growth. The cooperating teachers claimed renewed confidence and reaffirmation of teaching values. They also reported that they were preparing lessons more carefully and that their teaching improved. Arnold surveyed students in the five classes that had a student teacher about differences or changes that they noticed and what they liked and disliked about having a student teacher in their class. Eighty students responded. They noted new seating arrangements, more homework, and claimed that their teachers seemed better prepared and more helpful.

Arnold's journal revealed her initial anxiety about taking on the role of cooperating teacher and her discovery that being a cooperating teacher, "may have nudged me to grow in ways that I had not been able to previously" (p. 126). As a result of her inquiry, Arnold posits that when teachers collaborate as mentors for student teachers and as problem-solving partners with colleagues, they grow professionally and classroom

instruction improves. Teachers who participate in such collaboration gain confidence, feel better prepared, and are more proficient. Taking on the role and responsibility of “expert” and having the opportunity to be reflective about the teaching task seems to create a purposeful focus for professional growth that has an immediate impact on the students in the classroom. Arnold recommends that:

- School districts create opportunities for experienced teachers to participate as cooperating teachers as an option for fulfilling professional development requirements. This would promote meaningful, job-embedded professional growth as well as teacher leadership.
- Teacher education programs offer collegial study groups for cooperating teachers as well as student teachers. This would enhance the benefits of teacher education programs for cooperating schools, teachers, and students.

Instruction and Curriculum Development

Because teacher research focuses on classroom practice, many studies inevitably explore instructional issues. In this third study, TNPI Fellow Lara Goldstone investigates how to help Asian-American middle schoolers meet the New York State literacy performance standard related to speaking and listening. This was a great challenge for her because the standards themselves are in direct conflict with the cultural norms of the Asian-American community.

In the year prior to her study, Goldstone held class discussions three to four times a week, had students model each of the performance standards, and facilitated student reflections on their progress in discussions. She writes,

By the end of June, most students recognized that they had not even come close to “good enough” with regard to the standard for speaking and were, thus, unable to meet the standards. Why, I wondered all summer, had I not been able to train effective speakers? I suspected that there might have been a clash between our district’s expectations and those of the students’ parents. Many of the students have been educated at home and in more traditional Chinatown schools to believe that it is more appropriate to work quietly and not speak up, not to openly disagree with others, and not to speak without being called on. Might this cultural mismatch have been a factor? And, if so, could communication about the speaking standards with my students’ parents, who have been very supportive of my work with their children, help achievement? With this query in mind, I set out to find out more about parental involvement and to design a course of action. (page 65)

In preparing for her study, Goldstone reviewed research on second language learners and parent participation. She set up her study so that she would have an opportunity to talk with parents at the beginning of the year. Her intent was to see whether their cooperation would have an impact on student performance.

Goldstone's data collection fell into three categories: assessment of student achievement during discussions, notes from communication with parents about the speaking standards, and written and spoken comments from parents and students about speaking. To help her understand more specifically which criteria for speaking students were and were not meeting, she regularly assessed student discussion skills by using a check-off sheet during discussions. She also audio-taped discussions from the first three quarters and analyzed the tapes using the New Standards¹ criteria.

Goldstone monopolized the district's translator for her parent conferences and made a point of focusing her comments during those conferences on children's discussions grade often going way over the five-minute time limit in order to explain why this skill was important and how parents could help their children improve. She made notes from these conferences including the actual length of each conference. After each quarter, she asked students to write a reflection on their participation in discussions, explain what their discussions grade should be, and what influenced their performance. She also asked parents to fill out a survey about their children's discussion skills during the second quarter and after the third quarter.

Overall, Goldstone's students' abilities to meet the criteria for speaking improved over the first three quarters. In the first quarter, only 6 out of 66 students met most of the criteria, and 24 met none. By the third quarter, 52 students met most of the criteria, and only 4 met none. Of the 4 students who would never speak, two were children whose parents did not participate in parent-teacher conferences.

Goldstone's study suggests that student achievement increases when students feel comfortable speaking in front of their peers and when teachers communicate standards to parents and students. In terms of policy, Goldstone advocates:

- *At the classroom instruction level:* Teachers should carefully cultivate a respectful and caring community in their classrooms. Though some teachers see such work as fluffy or tangential to achievement, Goldstone suggests that it is essential in getting middle school students, especially those who are not confident about their English language abilities, to feel at ease expressing themselves in class. Such work, she notes, is highly contextual. She points out that there are a plethora of researched and published methods and curricula available for community building in the classroom. For new teachers, she suggests that observing expert teachers at the beginning of the year as they work to establish the classroom environment might be very useful.
- *At the district level:* Budgets should ensure funding for translators so that parents from different linguistic backgrounds can understand the standards and learn how to help their children achieve them. District professional development around standards should include discussions of cultural barriers, accountable talk, and effective communication with parents.

- *City-wide:* Performance standards should be translated into those languages other than English that are spoken in the school community so that all parents can read and understand them.
- *At the union level:* The teacher contract should allocate more time for parent-teacher conferences.

Goldstone makes the case that in order to level the playing field so all can achieve rigorous standards, students from every cultural and linguistic background must be given equitable opportunities to achieve. Paving the way for more teacher-parent communication with translators, conference time, and appropriate professional development are the first steps to success.

Assessment of Teaching and Learning

The fourth study is *If You Build It They Will Come: Developing Urban School Parent Partnerships for Test Success* by TNPI Fellow Lamson T. Lam (2004). Lam conducted his research in a fourth-grade class in an under-resourced, low achieving, and poor school. Only 3 out of 24 of his students had passed the third grade reading test, and only 3 had passed the third grade math test. Parent involvement was between low and nonexistent. Some teachers had less than half a dozen parents in attendance at curriculum night. Lam reports that a school-wide math workshop for parents was attended by only three parents.

Lam saw that his challenge was to turn around parent involvement. He believed that with a concerted effort and effective communication, parents would turn out and they could become effective partners in their children's success. He also realized he could not face the formidable task of preparing students for state tests alone. He decided to make parent involvement a major goal of his work by offering parent workshops on test preparation. Lam began by searching through education databases for information on parental involvement and its connection to student achievement. He compiled the third grade test scores of all his students. He asked teachers who had his students in third grade to rate the families' involvement during the previous year. He invited parents to a workshop and asked them to rate their own knowledge and involvement during the previous year. This data became his baseline against which he could assess subsequent student progress and parental involvement. He also examined attendance records between the workshops and the tests they were designed to address.

Lam reports that both the reading and math pass rates and the changes in pass rates between third and fourth grades of his students improved dramatically. The average math passing rate rose to 74% for his fourth graders compared to 48% in the previous year. An even greater gain was made with the reading tests: Lam's students passed the reading test at a rate of 92%; their third grade passing rate had been 65%.

After receiving test scores, Lam polled his students; he asked them who helped them the most in their preparation. The students gave 28% of the credit to their teacher, 26% of the credit to family members, and 26% to themselves. Like his students, Lam, too,

credits parent involvement as instrumental in raising student achievement as measured by test scores. He claims that by having parents engaged in test preparation he was free to take time with his classroom instruction and provide depth to the curriculum.

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APPENDIX A—Teacher Efficacy Survey

	Date:					
	Name:					
DIRECTIONS: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by circling the appropriate numeral to the right of each statement.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	MODERATELY DISAGREE	DISAGREE SLIGHTLY MORE THAN AGREE	AGREE SLIGHTLY MORE THAN DISAGREE	MODERATELY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. When a student gets a better grade than he usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. When the grades of my students improve it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. If parents would do more with their children, I could do more.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect them quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The influences of a student's home experiences can be overcome by good teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX B



2003 IslandWood Summer Institute

Background Survey for Summer Institute Participants

Name _____

Address: _____

Years of Involvement in TNPI _____

How and why did you get involved with TNPI?

Teaching –

What do you currently teach? Content area: _____
High school ____ Middle school ____ elementary ____

Where do you teach? Urban setting _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____

How long have you been teaching? _____

Did you have a prior career? ____ Yes ____ No

If so, what was that career(s)?

What was your preservice preparation?

APPENDIX C



2003 IslandWood Summer Institute

Interviews with Current Fellows

Date:

Time:

Tape #:

Interviewer:

Name of Interviewee:

Reassurance of privacy

This is essentially a probe of the survey questions and is designed for fellows who have at least a year of experience with TNPI. We want to take off from the survey (have survey in hand and follow it) and to collect more in-depth information around the following questions:

- What is the impact of TNPI on your teaching?
- What is the impact of TNPI on your students?
- What is the impact of TNPI on your understanding and ability to influence policy? (school/district/other)
- Is there anything else about your TNPI experience that you would like to talk about?

APPENDIX D

**Teachers Network
Policy Institute Survey**

TNPI Online Survey

First Name

Last Name

Address

What do you currently teach? (content area)

What grade level do you teach? (Select any of the following options that apply)

- elementary
- middle school
- high school

Where do you teach? (Choose one of the following options)

- urban setting
- suburban setting
- rural setting

How long have you been teaching?

Did you have a prior career?

- yes
- no

If so, what was that career(s)?

What was your preservice preparation?

TNPI

Years of involvement in TNP I?

How and why did you get involved in TNPI?

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Has TNPI had an impact on your teaching? Please describe.

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Has TNPI had an impact on your students? Please describe.

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Has TNPI had an impact on your school and/or district or other institution?
Please describe.

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Has participation in TNPI helped you to develop knowledge and skills related to
educational policy making? Please describe.

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Please rank order the following TNPI activities for their importance to your professional development. Begin with 1 as most important and continue assigning a number to each activity.

- Action research
- Interactions with policy makers
- Listserv discussions
- Monthly meetings
- Presentations
- Readings
- Summer institute
- Website
- Other

Are there other questions we should have asked?

Comments?

APPENDIX E

TNPI NYC Founding Fellow Questionnaire

1. What were you looking for when you got involved in TNPI? What was your agenda?

2. What have been highlights for you?

3. How did your TNPI involvement affect your career? Please reflect on how this may have shaped your relationships with students and their families, with colleagues, with administrators, and with others. Did it influence your career choices? If so, how?

4. Any other thoughts that might be of value in our assessment?