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Letter from the Editor

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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Teachers need to know research, but they don't. When I was a teacher, I didn't. Phrases like "theory into practice" and "research-based strategies" abound in the popular education press, but with little meaning. Students and scholars are familiar with the challenge of changing practice in light of research findings. Practitioners, however, likely see little connection between the proceedings of this or that conference and their day-to-day teaching duties. One solution to this disconnect, advocated in this space in Volume 4, Issue 1, is the creation of a new kind of scholar whose chief aim is the translation of research knowledge into consumable formats for educators and policymakers. However, most scholars in education have another equally important task, in addition to research: preparing educators.

To what extent are teacher preparation programs, declining in popularity even as they are made ostensibly more "attractive" as one-year and/or online programs, treating research literacy and practitioner inquiry as essential skills for teachers, instructional coaches, planners, and principals? Critical examination of research is a crucial, foundational skill for all practitioners, but in today's punctuated practitioner preparation programs it is frequently jettisoned to save room for content-specific and classroom management coursework.

Besides consumption of others' research, practitioners also need a repertoire of their own research skills for use in their classrooms and schools. Given the increasing ubiquity of Response to Intervention programs and Multi-tiered Systems of Support in schools, data collection—not just data interpretation—is becoming more of an essential skill for teachers. Teachers whose programs do not prepare them for single-case research design and action research design are simply not equipped for today's schools.

In the data-obsessed age of accountability, teachers and schools who are producing their own data are less vulnerable. Teachers and school leaders who do not know how to read research and conduct their own inquiry are more easily persuaded by the "research-based" marketing campaigns of textbook and curriculum companies. Witness the phenomenon of initiative fatigue and the revolving door of "best practices" which seem to change yearly. Without grounding in research knowledge, teachers are not autonomous from these advertising cycles. Let us teach our teachers how to critically consume existing research and conduct valid classroom-level inquiry to inform their own practice. Let us imagine schools themselves—not just schools of education—as the centers of research consumption and knowledge creation.

Sincerely,

Davis Clement
Editor-in-Chief