

The NERA  
 Researcher is a  
 quarterly  
 newsletter for  
 members of the  
 Northeastern  
 Educational  
 Research  
 Association

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# The NERA Researcher

Volume 46, Issue 2

June 2008

## The President's Message—Research in a Supportive Community



**David Moss**

**F**or those of us who live and work on an academic calendar, another school year has come and gone. For those few years that I worked in the “real world” beyond the academy, I recall missing the annual markers and rites of passage of the academic year.

Commencement has been a perennial favorite of mine. I suspect I am one of the few individuals who genuinely enjoys donning medieval garb and participating in an hours-long ceremony in which scholastic and scholarly achievements are honored. Rarely a crowd pleaser is the commencement address. Of course loved ones and friends are present to witness the name of their graduate uttered by a Dean or Provost and handed a diploma (or at least see them march in their cap and gown amidst the throng of their fellow classmates). With the exception of a select group of celebrities and public intellectuals who seem to offer just the right combination of pithy advice and humor packaged into a quick 12 minutes, the vast majority of graduation speakers are berated for their long-winded, dry soliloquies. I have witnessed a few frighteningly poor commencement addresses over the years, but for the most part they are well crafted – if a bit too long – and delivered in a generous spirit by someone who has tread the path that new graduates are eager and ready to embark upon.

Interestingly, one of the more popular and widely disseminated graduation speeches in recent decades was in fact, never a real graduation speech at all. The “wear sunscreen” speech (believed to be delivered by Kurt Vonnegut at MIT in 1997\*) was actually an article published in the Chicago Tribune in June of that year. It was subsequently made into a spoken-word music single, and permanently entered the lexicon of popular culture. I believe this “speech” was so well received because it offered simple, genuine, and thoughtful advice in a way that resonated with members of society used to receiving their information in pre-packaged sound bites. Beyond the sunscreen advice, I particularly liked:

Do one thing every day that scares you.

Understand that friends come and go, but with a precious few you should hold on.

Given the context of NERA, these sentiments hold special meaning. Our common cause as an organization is research and education - two inherently complex endeavors indeed. For nearly four decades NERA has been a place that scholars of all stripes can come and stretch their methodological and conceptual boundaries in a safe and supportive environment. Presenting your first paper can be scary – but from my perspective, sitting in the audience and watching a graduate student with whom you have mentored make *their* first presentation is down right terrifying. For at least a few days every year, doing something that scares you can be accomplished surrounded by those who genuinely want you to succeed. Thus, an organization like NERA is perhaps ideally poised to advance the boundaries of policy and practice by

*(Continued on page 3)*

## NERA Membership Committee Report, June 2008

The NERA Membership Committee has been actively pursuing its two main goals - to retain current NERA members and to recruit new members. We are currently focusing our efforts on the 2008 annual conference and have set a goal of 300 attendees! Email reminders regarding conference registration and submission of proposals have been sent to all current members. We have also been actively recruiting new members through emails, phone calls, and listserv announcements. Many current members have graciously helped to spread the word about NERA by forwarding along the Call for Proposals and by posting information on their university's listservs. Thank you to all who have been so helpful.

Please consider helping us in these efforts by posting conference flyers and forwarding along conference information. Feel free to email the NERA Membership Committee at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com) with any questions or comments.

Meg Monaghan,  
University of Connecticut

## NERA 2008 Board of Directors

### President:

David Moss  
University of Connecticut  
[david.moss@uconn.edu](mailto:david.moss@uconn.edu)

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[Sireci@acad.umass.edu](mailto:Sireci@acad.umass.edu)

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Thanos Patelis (2007-2010)  
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[TPatelis@collegeboard.org](mailto:TPatelis@collegeboard.org)

Lynn Shelley-Sireci (2007-2010)  
Westfield State College  
[lshelley@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:lshelley@wsc.ma.edu)

## NERA 2008 Chairpersons

### Committee Chairs:

**Lorne H. Woollott Distinguished Paper Committee**  
Craig S. Wells  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
[cswells@educ.umass.edu](mailto:cswells@educ.umass.edu)

### Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award

Diane E. Liebert  
DLE Associates  
[diane444@comcast.net](mailto:diane444@comcast.net)

### Thomas Donlon Mentoring Award

Samantha Feinman  
Lecturer, Pace University  
[sfeinman@pace.edu](mailto:sfeinman@pace.edu)

### Teacher-as-Researcher Award

Dolores Burton  
New York Institute of Technology  
[dtburton@optonline.net](mailto:dtburton@optonline.net)

### Graduate Student Issues Committee Chair:

Andri Ioannou  
University of Connecticut  
[andri.ioannou@gmail.com](mailto:andri.ioannou@gmail.com)

### Program Co-Chairs:

Helen A. Marx  
University of Connecticut  
[helen.marx@uconn.edu](mailto:helen.marx@uconn.edu)

Thomas H. Levine  
University of Connecticut  
[thomas.levine@unconn.edu](mailto:thomas.levine@unconn.edu)

### Program Co-Chairs' Assistant:

Meg Monaghan  
University of Connecticut  
[mmonag01@yahoo.com](mailto:mmonag01@yahoo.com)

### Current NERA Membership

Professional	173
Retirees	6
Graduate Students	91

**The President's Message**  
Continued from page 1

encouraging world class research in a genuinely caring environment - thus, the notion that we should hold on to our friends.

Professional circles are transient by their very nature. At NERA, I have noticed a subtle but important shift in our membership in recent years. Many long-time members have moved out of our region and are enjoying well-deserved retirements. At the same time, I have seen a steady influx of new members who are bringing fresh ideas and helping NERA build upon decades of excellence in educational research. NERA continues to be a place where professional friends evolve into personal ones, and lifelong relationships are fostered. Sharing research which moves forward the frontiers of knowledge in a supportive community of scholars – this is NERA.

Be certain to submit your research proposal and consider bringing a new colleague or friend to Rocky Hill next October. In fact, before the end of the day today, be sure to photocopy this edition of the *Researcher* and personally invite someone to present and/or attend.

I look forward to seeing each of you in the fall and be sure to enjoy these fleeting summer days – oh, and don't forget to wear sunscreen.

Sincerely,

David M. Moss  
NERA President  
Associate Professor, Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut

\* Kofi Annan was the commencement speaker at MIT that year and the text which circulated in Vonnegut's name was actually written by columnist Mary Schmich. In this article she fantasized about being able to deliver an actual commencement address.

**“an organization like NERA is perhaps ideally poised to advance the boundaries of policy and practice by encouraging world class research in a genuinely caring environment”**

## Message from the Editors

**“consider bringing a new colleague or friend to Rocky Hill, CT next October.**

Greetings NERA Members! Summer is just about here and it's a wonderful time of year to rest, relax and vacation. However, we hope that before you relax too much, you get your proposals in for the 39<sup>th</sup> annual conference.

In this issue, the “Call for Proposals” announcement is repeated as a reminder to take action before the deadline passes. Also, in this issue there is information about the pre-sessions, keynote speaker and how to register.

We encourage all existing members to not only participate in the conference this year, but also, as David Moss writes in his presidential message to,

“consider bringing a new colleague or friend to Rocky Hill next October.”

We hope you find this issue of the *The NERA Researcher* informative. As always, please let us know if you have ideas on ways to improve this publication. We welcome input from our readers. Finally, please have a relaxing and enjoyable summer.

The Editors

Jennifer Kobrin  
The College Board  
[jkobrin@collegeboard.org](mailto:jkobrin@collegeboard.org)

Kevin Meara  
Educational Testing Service  
[kmeara@ets.org](mailto:kmeara@ets.org)

## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

### Conference Theme: Strengthening Educational Research

The Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) invites you to enjoy outstanding colleagues, pre-session leaders, conference workshops, and our keynote speaker, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, as we use our 39th Annual Conference to talk about strengthening educational research.

At a time when many question the relevance and rigor of educational research, identifying the challenges and barriers to conducting high quality research is more pressing than ever. With an eye toward impacting policy and practice, how can we strengthen educational research?

Professor Marilyn Cochran-Smith will address our theme in her keynote address. We also have top authorities ready to offer pre-session workshops that will help you with elements of your craft. Tom Schram will lead a pre-session

on qualitative data analysis. Hariharan Swaminathan and H. Jane Rogers will provide a workshop on current topics in item response theory; (see page 5). Stan Shaw will also offer a session during the conference on grantwriting. Each of these professors has a well-deserved reputation for their own scholarship and their ability to help others learn to produce high quality research.

Finally, we plan to pilot some mentoring roundtables, allowing mid-level and senior scholars to work with a small number of doctoral students and junior faculty, again in the spirit of strengthening educational research. Our meeting should provide access to resources, ideas, and contacts that will support and inspire you in your work. We are very excited for the time we'll spend together this fall; we hope you'll be able to join us for another vibrant conference!

### Keynote speaker: Marilyn Cochran-Smith



Marilyn Cochran-Smith holds the John E. Cawthorne Millennium Chair in Teacher Education for Urban Schools at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Dr. Cochran-Smith served as President of AERA in 2004-05. During her six years as editor of the *Journal of Teacher Education*, she led the review of almost 2000 manuscripts. She co-chaired the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education, which reviewed the findings and rigor of a wide swath of research in teacher education. In addition to her national leadership in educational research, she directs the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction for the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. All of these experiences have put Dr. Cochran-Smith in a unique position to think with us about the problems and possibilities of educational research, and to offer perspective on how we can strengthen our work. Cochran-Smith is the author or editor of 7 books and more than 100 articles, chapters and editorials. Her recent books include: *Walking the Road: Race, Diversity and Social Justice in Teacher Education* (Teachers College Press, 2004); *Policy, Practice and Politics in Teacher Education* (Corwin, 2005); and *The 3rd Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Enduring Questions in Changing Times* (Routledge, 2008).

## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

### Conference Pre-Session Workshops



**Tom Schram**

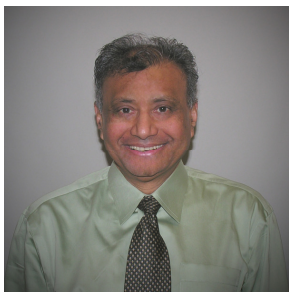
### Thinking Through Qualitative Data Tom Schram, University of New Hampshire

How do we work with and through data generated through ethnographic fieldwork? What are some foundational tools of inquiry for making sense of what people do and say? This workshop will address these questions and related issues that include:

- How might we think about the central analytical task of the ethnographer?
- What are the essential operating assumptions of the ethnographer?
- How can we generate and frame data sets from field notes?
- What sorts of questions can we ask of our data to move our analysis forward?
- How do context and sequence matter in qualitative data analysis?

In addressing these questions, Tom will draw upon examples from his own research and his experience working with doctoral students across a range of qualitative studies. Workshop participants will be encouraged to share their own insights, experiences, frustrations, and ideas about making sense of data generated through qualitative fieldwork.

*Tom Schram is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of New Hampshire. He is an educational anthropologist who has conducted fieldwork in the United States and Brazil, and currently teaches graduate seminars in qualitative research design, ethnography, field relations and qualitative data analysis.*



**Hariharan Swaminathan**

### Current Topics in Item Response Theory Hariharan Swaminathan and H. Jane Rogers Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut

The purpose of this NERA pre-session workshop is to introduce participants who already have a basic understanding of item response theory to current topics that are not normally covered in a basic course. The topics include:

- Dichotomous and polytomous item response models
- Computer software: WINSTEPS, BILOG, PARSCALE, MULTILOG
- Mixed format tests that include both dichotomous and free response items
- Scaling of mixed format tests
- Vertical scaling: problems and solutions
- Dimensionality



**H. Jane Rogers**

The participants are expected to have an understanding of the basic concepts of item response theory. As the computer programs (WINSTEPS, BILOG, PARSCALE, and MULTILOG) used in the training session are commercially available, they will not be provided to participants. Nevertheless, participants who have access to these programs are encouraged to bring their laptops so that they can follow the illustrations on their laptops (the data used for the illustrations will be provided).

Text: Hambleton, R.K., Swaminathan, H., Rogers, H.J. (1991). *Fundamentals of Item Response Theory*. Sage Press.

Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA)  
**39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**, October 22-24, 2008



## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**Conference Theme:**

### ***Strengthening Educational Research***

Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill in Rocky Hill, Connecticut

#### **Selected Program Highlights include:**

► Keynote Speaker: **Marilyn Cochran-Smith**

John E. Cawthorne Millennium Chair in Teacher Education for Urban Schools  
Lynch School of Education, Boston College  
President of AERA, 2004-05

► Conference Pre-Sessions

Qualitative Data Analysis with Tom Schram, University of New Hampshire  
Current Topics in Item Response Theory, with Hariharan Swaminathan and H. Jane Rogers,  
University of Connecticut

► Featured Sessions

Grantwriting workshop with Stan Shaw, University of Connecticut  
Teacher-as-Researcher Award Winner  
Graduate Student Issues Committee Session

**We welcome proposals for sharing research that reflect diverse approaches to and topics within educational research. Papers and posters need not be about the conference theme.**

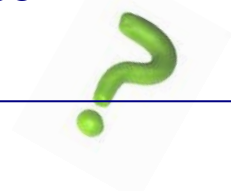
The 2008 Call for Proposals and Proposal Information are available now on the NERA website:  
<http://www.nera-education.org>.

Submissions are welcome now through **June 15, 2008**;  
we will notify regarding acceptance by August 1, 2008.

We welcome your questions about the conference or submitting proposals.  
Contact Helen Marx, Tom Levine, and Meg Monaghan at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com)

# Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

## Paper and Session Proposal F.A.Q.



### Conference Theme: *Strengthening Educational Research*

At a time when many question the relevance and rigor of educational research, identifying the challenges and barriers to conducting high quality research is more pressing than ever. With an eye toward impacting policy and practice, how can we strengthen educational research?

**We invite your proposal for papers and posters reflecting a variety of topics in and approaches to the study of education. Papers and posters need not be about the conference theme.**

Please follow all instructions as outlined below:

- All submissions must be submitted electronically.
- Proposals are due to the co-chairs by **June 15, 2008**.
- For each proposal you make, attach three electronic Microsoft Word attachments as described below to a single email titled "completed proposal," and email to [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com)

For each *Individual Paper* and *Poster* proposal, submit 3 separate files via one email:

- The NERA 2008 Proposal Cover Sheet, available at <http://www.nera-education.org>; choose annual conference and then choose proposals
- A 100-word Abstract
- A 1000-word Paper Summary w/ Title only (i.e., no authors listed)

For each *Theme-based Session* and *Working Group Discussion* proposal, submit 3 separate files via one email:

- The NERA 2008 Proposal Cover Sheet, available at <http://www.nera-education.org>; choose annual conference and then choose proposals
- A 100-word Abstract file (one abstract for the entire session)
- A 1000-word Session Proposal Summary w/ Title only (i.e., no authors listed)

- Do not submit complete papers as proposals.
  - Proposals are limited to 1000 words.
  - Abstracts are limited to 100 words. Include the paper title and the names and affiliations of all authors in the abstract. This information is not part of the 100-word limit for the Abstract.
  - Titles are limited to 15 words.
- Do not complete the shaded areas of the Proposal Cover Sheet.
- Please contact us via email should you have any questions! Helen Marx, Tom Levine, and Meg Monaghan at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com)

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Paper and Session Proposal F.A.Q.  
(Continued from page 7)

## **What kind of session works best for me?**

There are four types of sessions at NERA:

**Individual Paper Presentations** provide author(s) the opportunity to present a condensed version of a completed study. The research presented may focus on a problem from an empirical or theoretical perspective. Qualitative and quantitative designs are both welcomed. Presentations typically last 10-12 minutes for each paper and typically 4 papers are grouped into a single session. A discussion will follow the presentation of all of the papers within a session. The program co-chairs group individual papers into sessions; program co-chairs also assign a paper session chair to facilitate the session and a discussant to offer brief comments and lead discussion after paper presentations. (Feel free to contact us separately if you are interested in serving as chair or discussant at a paper session.)

**Poster Sessions** enable authors to present research in a visual format and allow for informal, individualized discussion and feedback about the research with colleagues. This is the preferred format to use for in-progress research.

**Theme-Based Paper Sessions/Symposium Sessions** features multiple paper presentations within a common theme. Theme-Based Paper Sessions/Symposia are similar to the paper sessions, but are organized by a single participant for a group of presenters. Sessions run for the same amount of time as multi-presenter individual paper sessions. Chair and Discussant are provided by the group proposing the session.

**Working Group Sessions** allow the same group of individuals to meet once or twice over the course of the Conference for the purpose of discussing in-depth a common emerging research theme. Similar to the Symposium sessions, Working Group sessions are organized by a single individual or small group and require a proposal to be accepted for inclusion on the conference program. The goal of this session format is to establish or support collaborative ongoing research and/or publication efforts of participants. Often, Working Groups will continue to dialogue after the conference.

## **What information will be required when I submit my proposal?**

Each submission will be comprised of *three* electronic files attached to a single email titled “completed proposal” and sent to [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com)

**NERA 2008 Proposal Cover Sheet:** Complete this form in full. The cover sheet is available on the NERA website (<http://www.nera-education.org>).

**Abstract:** Indicate the full title of presentation or session, full name and affiliation of each author and/or presenter. Each abstract should include the statement of the problem, the research questions addressed, the methods used, a brief summary of the results, and educational implications. Abstracts for theme-based sessions or working group discussions should include the unifying theme of the session, and the names and affiliations of each of the participants. The abstract length is limited to 100 words. Abstracts of accepted proposals are printed unedited in the NERA Program.

**Proposal Summary:** The proposal summary file should not include the name or affiliation of any presenter(s), author(s), or organizer(s), as the summary will be circulated for blind review. In general, the summary should include the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework that supports the rationale for the study, methodology, results, conclusions, educational implications, and any special features of the session (e.g., technology used, expected audience participation, teacher-researchers involved, etc.). The proposal summary should not exceed 1000 words. NOTE: Proposals that cite other

(Continued on page 9)



**Paper and Session Proposal F.A.Q.***(Continued from page 8)*

papers, publications, manuscripts, etc. but do not include a reference list will not be accepted. In addition:

- Summaries for proposed *Theme-Based Sessions/Symposia* should include a description of the unifying topic;
- Summaries of proposed *Posters* should include a description of the planned display;
- Summaries of proposed *Working Group Sessions* should include expected contribution of each participant, expected outcomes of the working group (e.g., further research, publication, etc.), and a bibliography of readings in preparation for discussion.

**What are “subject descriptors”?**

The program co-chairs aim to have a diverse program overall, and to minimize conflicts of interest in scheduling simultaneous sessions. To aid in our decisions and in considering groupings of papers, please select three descriptors from the common list of descriptors below to describe your proposal. Put descriptors on the Proposal Cover Sheet.

- Action research
- Curriculum studies
- Early childhood education
- Education in the professions
- Educational measurement & psychometrics
- Educational policy
- Higher education
- History & philosophy
- Human development & counseling
- International education
- Learning & instruction
- Legal issues in education
- Literature & language arts education
- Mathematics & science education
- Multicultural education
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Professional development
- Qualitative research methods
- Quantitative research methods & statistical theory
- School evaluation & program development
- School accountability, improvement, & reform
- School organization & leadership
- Second language acquisition
- Social context of education
- Social studies education
- Special education & rehabilitation
- Speech & language
- Student populations research

**How will proposals be submitted?**

All proposals must be submitted electronically via email to the co-chairs:  
[neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com).

**When are proposals due and when will I hear about acceptance?**

Proposals may be sent beginning immediately through **June 15, 2008**. The program co-chairs expect to notify submitters of acceptance by August 1, 2008.

**Questions about submitting proposals?**

Contact the 2008 NERA Conference team, Helen Marx, Tom Levine, and Meg Monaghan, via email at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com).

## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

### Registering for NERA's conference is quick and convenient:

- Go to the NERA website, <http://www.nera-education.org/>.
- Choose "Annual Conference." You'll find one link that will bring you directly to the Marriott Hotel's reservations page and the special conference rates.
- Pay for your conference registration and room reservation using PayPal, a very secure portal for online financial transactions. The NERA website also provides a link for downloading a registration form, which you can print and mail along with a check if you prefer to register for the conference in this way.

There are separate links at the bottom of the webpage for registering for the conference and reserving hotel rooms; don't forget to reserve your room too!

**Please note:** Graduate students must register for the conference, even though they'll pay no registration fee if they are NERA members.

### Reserving Your Room at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill:

Conference attendees may reserve a double and split the regular cost, or may reserve a single room. The Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill is offering us single occupancy rooms at \$193.00 per night plus tax, and double occupancy rooms at \$271.00 per night plus tax. A room reserved for Wednesday night includes Wednesday dinner and Thursday breakfast and lunch; a room reserved for Thursday night includes Thursday dinner and Friday breakfast and lunch. To receive any of these special rates, reservations must be made through NERA's webpage by Wednesday, October 1, 2008.

### New Conference Quad Rate for Graduate Students and Free Conference Registration:

It will be even easier for graduate students to afford all the opportunities at our annual NERA Conference this October. The Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill is offering a special Graduate Student quad rate of \$427.00, which includes meals and accommodations for four students per night, and thus comes to \$107 per student. This special rate is available for graduate students ONLY. The graduate students are responsible for finding their roommates. One student will have to use a credit card to reserve the room for the quad. **Remember, each graduate student must also register for the conference individually.**

Conference registration requires a separate on-line form available through the NERA website. Graduate students pay only \$15 for their annual membership dues, and pay no registration fee for the conference.

### Member News and Announcements

NERA member Florence Omachonu is the new coordinator of the Graduate Reading Program at the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin in Platteville, Wisconsin. Congratulations, Florence!

The member news section has been noticeably empty in the last few issues of the *NERA Researcher* and we want to fill it! Please send news of publications, promotions, and other announcements to

Jennifer Kobrin at  
[jkobrin@collegeboard.org](mailto:jkobrin@collegeboard.org).

## Call for Nominations for the Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring

The Thomas F. Donlon Award for Distinguished Mentoring was established in recognition of Tom Donlon's long and valued contributions to NERA, particularly as a mentor to so many colleagues. Generations of scholars at Educational Testing Service, at Thomas Edison State College, in NERA and in myriad professions are devoted to Tom for the guidance he provided them. The award is presented at annual NERA conferences to recognize a member of NERA who has shown distinction as a mentor.

Nominations are sought for the annual award and nominees must be members of NERA and may be nominated by any

member (or members) of NERA to whom they served as a mentor. If you would like to see a member of NERA who was your mentor be recognized for his/her contributions, nominations must be accompanied by documentation indicating the ways in which the nominee distinguished him/herself as a mentor. The award is presented at the Thursday luncheon at the annual conference.

### Nominations should be sent by July 1st to:

Dr. Samantha Feinman, [sfeinman@pace.edu](mailto:sfeinman@pace.edu). Please contact Dr. Feinman for any questions about the Donlon Award or the nomination process.

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## 2008 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Competition

In 1990, NERA renamed its distinguished paper award to honor Lorne H. Woollatt, a distinguished New York State educator and an active member of NERA. The award, now known as the Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award, is presented annually to a NERA member whose paper is deemed exemplary by the Award Committee.

Any paper reviewed and accepted by the Program Committee and presented at the 2008 NERA Annual Conference may be submitted for competition. Only one paper can be selected so the Committee is looking for an outstanding paper. We encourage submissions from those who received high marks or positive feedback from the Program Committee reviewers, your session's discussant or others. The winning paper will automatically be accepted for the 2009 AERA Annual Meeting as part of a session sponsored by the AERA/SIG: Consortium of State and Regional Educational Research Associations (SRERA). The award also includes a monetary

stipend to help defray the recipient's travel expenses to AERA.

If you wish to enter your paper into the competition, please email two copies of your paper to the 2008 Committee Chair, Craig Wells at [cswells@educ.umass.edu](mailto:cswells@educ.umass.edu) no later than October 30, 2008. Please send one BLIND copy of your paper and one copy with your name and the following information: affiliation, address, email address and phone number.

Please note that the paper is to be based on your NERA presentation and should not include information that differs substantially from that which you actually presented at the NERA conference. Papers in the Research-in-Progress sessions are not appropriate for submission. In addition, papers should be limited to no more than a total of 20 double-spaced pages (not including Tables/Figures or References).

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### **TEACHER-AS-RESEARCHER AWARD**

Sponsored by

**NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

**39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008  
at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, CT**

The Teacher-as-Researcher Award is presented annually by the Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) to a preschool-grade 12 teacher who has conducted a self-initiated classroom research project or applied research findings to inform his or her own teaching. The project must be conceptualized, developed, and implemented as part of the nominee's own teaching practices and have had at least one cycle of tryout and evaluation. The project should also be related to a clearly defined theoretical focus and represent an innovation that has led to some real change in practice.

Classroom teachers are invited to apply directly for this award or be nominated by NERA members, school administrators, faculty mentors, or others familiar with the teacher's work. All applications/nominations should follow the format of the Teacher-as-Researcher Award application form and be postmarked no later than June 15, 2008.

The 2008 awardee will be invited to speak about the research project at a special session at the annual NERA meeting in October and be presented with the award at that time. The award includes a plaque, NERA membership, \$150 toward travel, and two full-days of meals and lodging at NERA's conference site - the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, CT.

Please send applications and address inquiries about the award to:

Dr. Dolores Burton  
New York Institute of Technology  
School of Education  
Wisser Library Room 336  
Northern Blvd.  
Old Westbury, New York 11568  
Email: [dburton@nyit.edu](mailto:dburton@nyit.edu) Phone: 516 686 7777 Fax: 516 686 7655  
For more information, see NERA website at: [www.nera-education.org](http://www.nera-education.org)

**NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (NERA)**

**TEACHER-AS-RESEARCHER AWARD APPLICATION**

**39<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE, October 22-24, 2008**

**Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, Connecticut**

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
(after June 1, 2008)

Phone: (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (home) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Attach the following information using the guidelines provided:

- I. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF PROJECT:
- II. PROJECT ABSTRACT: (Please summarize the research project in **no more than 250 words** including its purpose and outcomes)
- III. PROJECT DETAILS: (**maximum** of 1000 words)
  - A. Rationale of the project innovation and/or intervention from the literature:
  - B. Description of project procedures and participants:
  - C. Narrative description of the project outcomes including subsequent changes in practice that occurred or will occur as a result of the project:
- IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT TO EDUCATORS: (Describe how the project contributes to improved educational practice or professional knowledge of educators - **maximum 100 words.**)
- V. ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS TO SUPPORT APPLICATION  
(This section may include samples of students' work or other records of project, pertinent background material, and/or relevant bibliography)

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominating Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Affiliation, Phone Number, and Position of Nominating Person: (Please Print)

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Send three copies of the application coversheet and submission to: Dr. Dolores Burton, New York Institute of Technology, School of Education and Professional Services, Wisser Library, Northern Blvd., Old Westbury, New York 11568 or by email in a Word document attachment to [dburton@nyit.edu](mailto:dburton@nyit.edu). All proposals must be postmarked or emailed by 5:00 p.m. June 15, 2008.

## The Graduate Lounge

The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) of the Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) would like to congratulate Peter Swerdzewski from James Madison University for winning the 2007 Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award Competition. The awarding paper is entitled "Examinee Motivation in Low-Stakes Testing: Two Approaches to Identifying Data from Low-Motivated Students in an Applied Assessment Context." The abstract of the paper appears below, while the paper itself will be available on the NERA website.

A total of eight papers were submitted to the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC). The competing papers were reviewed by four independent graduate students - members of GSIC - and one board-appointed faculty expert.

We would like to thank the graduate students who

participated in this competition. All papers were of high quality.

Special thanks to Asil Ozdogru who initiated and coordinated this award. Also, special thanks to Thanos Patelis (GSIC Advisor) and Kristen Huff (NERA Board Liaison) for their support and guidance.

Finally, we would like to encourage all graduate students to participate in the 2008 Best Paper by a Graduate Student Award Competition. The deadline for submission will be within one week of the end of the 2008 NERA Conference. An announcement about the award will be sent to all NERA graduate student members beginning October 2008, and will also be posted on the NERA website.

Andri Ioannou, Chairperson

### GSIC Members 2007-2008

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**Paper title: Examinee Motivation in Low-Stakes Testing: Two Approaches to Identifying Data from Low-Motivated Students in an Applied Assessment Context**

**Author: Peter Swerdzewski**

**Co-authors: Sara J. Finney, J. Christine Harmes**

**Abstract:** Many universities rely on data gathered from tests that are low stakes for examinees but high stakes for the various programs being assessed. Given the lack of consequences associated with many collegiate assessments, the construct-irrelevant variance introduced by unmotivated students is a major potential threat to the validity of the inferences that institutions can make from their assessments. Two approaches to evaluating examinee motivation are discussed in this paper: one that employs a global paper-and-pencil self-report measure of students' motivation on all tests completed during the course of a testing session, and another computer-based method that non-intrusively measures the amount of time students spend on each item in a test. This study provides evidence that the two motivation filtering methods provide similar aggregate test scores; however, more data was removed using the global paper-and-pencil self-report technique.

## Book Review

Noguera, Pedro, *City Schools and the American Dream*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 2003.

In this current era of educational accountability, school reform is at the forefront of political and social agendas. This is especially true in an election year. Despite multiple accountability and reform measures enacted in the past decade, our nation's schools continue to struggle to provide equal educational opportunities for all students. In 2003, Pedro Noguera anticipated these problems in his highly acclaimed work, *City Schools and the American Dream*. Written during the early implementation stages of "No Child Left Behind", Noguera argues that the issue underlying educational inequality is not *schools*, but the social and economic *contexts of schooling*. Noguera's "critical support and pragmatic optimism" reinvigorates the timeliness of this argument and makes this book more important than ever (p.22).

Noguera urges reformers to self-check erroneous assumptions about urban school performance. He begins by asking readers to rethink the term "urban" and how it is used in educational and media discourses. Rather than describing geographical locations, "urban" often describes communities with few economic resources and many people of color. In addition, Noguera challenges the deficit perspectives held by educators and policymakers regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students and families that equate difference with deficiency. He illuminates how these ingrained views influence large-scale decision-making as well as individual interactions within schools. More specifically, he calls readers to consider how these perspectives support narrow views of culture and negative stereotypes of lazy students and uninvolved parents. Without critical self-examination, there is a perpetuation of low academic expectations and lack of cultural capital found in homes and communities. The persistence and prominence of current research surrounding the achievement gap between Black and Latino students and their White, middle-class peers can serve as an extension of this deficit perspective without careful consideration of contextual factors. Noguera's work can be applied here in that he encourages educational researchers to consider the structural inequities that contribute to this phenomenon, and others that falsely position students themselves as the

source of the problem.

Noguera also argues that schools do not operate in a vacuum, but function within and are acted upon by their community. The racial, ethnic, and economic composition of a community impacts multiple facets of schools' roles and responsibilities. These include but are not limited to parent involvement, resource allocation, and specialized support services, such as health care and food programs. Reform efforts must take into account how these arenas impact the schools and their perceived role in the community. To serve children well, Noguera argues that the mission of schooling must be changed to also encompass the needs of the community. This contextual perspective will allow reforms to more effectively ameliorate the social and environmental issues that currently hinder the educational system.

Noguera begins his seven-chapter work by describing a general approach to urban educational reform. In chapters 2 through 6, he uses empirical research and case studies from the San Francisco Bay area to further develop and support his reconceptualization of reform efforts and urban schools. He addresses major issues, such as school violence, racial segregation, and the achievement gap. Finally, Noguera concludes by calling for reformers to redefine the mission of schools and of schooling to better serve the needs of their diverse students and their communities.

### Reviewers

Vanessa Kass, Aja LaDuke, and Meg Monaghan are Doctoral Candidates in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. The authors' diverse research interests include educational policy and school choice, bilingual and multicultural education, and gender equity in social studies. Please direct all correspondence to Meg Monaghan, 249 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2033, Storrs, CT 06269.

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# **The NERA Researcher**

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