Supplementary Education

The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement

Edmund W. Gordon,
Beatrice L. Bridglall, and
Aundra Saa Meroe

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford

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ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowmanlittlefield.com

PO Box 317
Oxford
OX2 9RU, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gordon, Edmund W.
Supplementary education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement / Edmund W. Gordon, Beatrice L. Bridglall, and Aundra Saa Meroe.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-7425-4260-2 (cloth: alk. paper) — ISBN 0-7425-4261-0 (pbk.: alk. paper)
1. Compensatory education—United States. 2. Children with social disabilities—Education—United States. 3. Academic achievement—United States. I. Bridglall, Beatrice L., 1968- II. Meroe, Aundra S., 1967- III. Title.
LC213.2.G67 2005
370.111

2004009250

∞™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

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Foreword

Child guidance and counseling, Head Start, compensatory education, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, equal educational opportunity, career education, human diversity and pedagogy, dynamic assessment and pedagogy, and now supplementary education are aspects of education that have claimed the attention of the senior editor of this book. In fact, some of these terms had their origins in his work and that of his colleagues. After almost sixty years devoted to the field of education, many of those years devoted to effort at improving the quality of schooling for less advantaged children, Edmund W. Gordon, with the assistance of his young colleagues Beatrice Lallmanie Bridglall and Aundra Saa Meroe, has turned his attention to the examination of several nonschool factors that they claim may enable schooling to be effective. They do so in this collection of essays and papers, some of which were initially presented in the 1999 Invitational Conference on Supplementary Education that was sponsored by The College Board and the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University.

Gordon and his colleagues argue that affluent and educationally sophisticated parents have long recognized that not only what happens in school is important for high academic achievement but also factors in the daily lives of children that happen out side of school and are in support of academic development are important. Gordon, Bridglall, and Meroe borrow a notion that I have advanced (*Waiting for a Miracle: Why schools can not solve our problems and how we can*). Directing their attention to a variety of experiences of persons from low-income families and people of color who have gone on to high levels of achievement, the editors develop the rationale for the importance of what they call "intellective competence"—critical literacy and numeracy, problem solving, analogical reasoning, knowledge and skill transfer,

self-regulation abilities—the metaproducts of high levels of academic achievement. With a high degree of consistency, Gordon and his colleagues claim that these persons have been the beneficiaries of experiences in a wide variety of developmental and enrichment activities that tend to be ubiquitous in the lives of children who grow up in privileged environments and tend to be absent in the lives of children who do not. It is this wide variety of activities that are complementary to school but are non–school based, that they call supplementary education.

Supplementary education activities include things like preschool education and child care, summer camp, dance and music lessons, travel, adequate health and nutrition, positive and caring adult models, reading to and with self and others, dinner table talk, peer and parental expectations, tutoring, and specialized professional help when needed. These are the things that those of us who know try to make available, as a matter of course, for our own children. Thus supplementary education is not at issue because it is new; rather it is problematic because such experiences are not available to many of the children for whom schooling is of limited effectiveness. The authors of the papers collected here do not advocate that these non–school based activities should replace or supplant the things that schools do. By implication they argue that the impact of schooling should be strengthened. They rather explicitly argue for making these supplements more broadly available.

Supplementary Education addresses a challenge that has been in plain view, but is generally either missed, ignored, or underestimated. I was recently reminded of the power of the mainstream child rearing experience when my daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter Nicole, who live on the West Coast, visited me for a few days on the East Coast. I was struck with the matter-of-fact and yet systematic way Nicole's parents were providing her with what it will take to be successful. It caused me to reflect on the fact that I received a similar kind of experience growing up—even in a low-income, but well-functioning, high aspiration family. We provided my daughter with the same. In our competitive society, this mainstream child rearing and exposure style gives an advantage. But we will all be better off, and we will have a chance to create a better world, when all children are reared and exposed in a way that gives them a reasonable chance to be successful. *Supplementary Education* explores the issues and points the way.

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Associate Dean of the College of Medicine,
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April 2004

Preface

Our concept of supplementary education rests on Pierre Bourdeiu's notion that academic achievement is related to access to and participation in various forms of education-related capital such as health and nutrition, the material resources that money provides, cultural capital, human capital, polity capital, and social capital. We posit that access to such capital may be necessary if schools are to succeed at enabling academic achievement for students in general, and students of color in particular. We contend that it is the unequal distribution of access to these forms of capitals that severely limits the effectiveness of schools. The redistribution of access to such capitals may be beyond our immediate reach, but all may not be lost because concerned communities and families can and should influence the effectiveness of schooling.

In *Supplementary Education*, we argue that, while access to schools that enable and expect academic achievement is a necessary ingredient for the education of students, good schools alone may not be sufficient to ensure universally high levels of academic development. Supplemental educational experiences may also be needed. The idea of supplementary education is based on the assumption that high academic achievement is closely associated with exposure to family- and community-based activities and learning experiences that occur both in and out of school in support of academic learning. For low income and some ethnic minority student groups, opportunities to participate in such activities are generally under-resourced and underutilized in comparison to the access to and participation in such activities by many European Americans and Asian Americans from mid to high socioeconomic backgrounds.

This book is organized into three sections. The first makes the case for supplementary education. Specifically, it focuses on the need for universal access

to high levels of academic achievement and the challenge of reducing the "achievement gap" that exists between Asian American and European American students and their African American, Hispanic American, and Native American counterparts. Having posed the problem, the second section of the book is directed toward defining the construct and provides in-depth descriptions of some of the more colloquial expressions of supplementation in after school care, youth development, and other forms of supplemental education. The book closes with a discussion of the emerging institutionalization and need for more thoughtful and rigorous research on the supplementary education movement and a reflection by the senior editor, Edmund Gordon, on the idea of supplementary education. In this reflection, Gordon perceives supplementary education as an instrument in the negotiation of sociocultural marginality and places supplementary education within the context of family and community as forces that (1) influence the quality of academic achievement and (2) shape the political economic integrity of the societies that spawn them. Supplementary education, indeed, may be the hidden curriculum of high academic achievement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, as editors of this collection of papers that began with a small conference in 1999, gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to the late Professor Margaret Wang, who provided the initial support for that conference. Since that time, other contributors have been added. We are grateful for the strength these papers have added to the collection. We especially appreciate the support of Dean Birkenkamp, former editor, and our current editor at Rowman & Littlefield, Alan McClare. We also want to acknowledge the invaluable bibliographic assistance and support of Ms. Ines Sucre, reference librarian and information specialist at the Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Teachers College. Thanks goes to The College Board, which in the past two years, has provided support for the scholarly work of the senior editor.

Edmund W. Gordon
Beatrice L. Bridglall
Aundra Saa Meroe
February 2004

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CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION