

A Mission of Outreach and Dissemination

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The Education Research Section, an interdisciplinary research unit within Princeton's Industrial Relations Section and the Woodrow Wilson School, supports research, publication, and teaching on matters relating to education policy and practice. The ERS also seeks to promote the development of research infrastructure (including data collection and support of collaborative projects) and the dissemination of research findings for the benefit of policymakers and practitioners in the education field.

The ERS is also one of the programs within the School, along with the Center of Health and Wellbeing (CHW) and the Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (CRCW), that have partnered with The Brookings Institution to publish *The Future of Children* journal. This journal seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policymakers, service providers, and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research. As part of this partnership, ERS has been instrumental in organizing many outreach initiatives around journal topics.

In January 2007, ERS hosted a conference *Childhood Wellness and Obesity: How YMCAs Can Help Communities Take Action*, in conjunction with the YMCAs of New Jersey and CHW. The conference was a follow-up to a conference held in the spring of 2006, *Childhood Wellness and Obesity: Tools to Help Schools Take Action*; both of *A Mission of Outreach and Dissemination* them were based on *The Future of Children* journal issue *Childhood Obesity* (March 2006).

Dr. Lisa Markman, associate director of ERS and outreach director of *The Future of Children* journal, noted the importance of the ERS-YMCA partnership: "YMCAs work directly with local schools on many important health issues. This conference was created in response to a request by the New Jersey YMCAs, who want to be a leader in this mission to fight obesity." The conference had over 180 attendees from local YMCAs and their community affiliates, including school administrators, other YMCA personnel, and community leaders.

The conference presented the best research regarding childhood obesity and highlighted best practices in the field that can help combat this growing epidemic. The special keynote address was given by Neil Nicoll, the President and Chief Executive Officer of YMCA of the USA (Y-USA). An overview of the journal was presented by Christina Paxson, a professor of economics and public affairs, director of the Center for Health and Wellbeing, and a senior editor of *The Future of Children*. The best practices panel addressed how YMCAs could help schools and other organizations increase nutrition and physical activities in their schools. Sandy Sherman, the director of Nutrition Education for the Food Trust and Charlene R. Burgeson, executive director of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education led this panel. Another panel examined how schools and YMCAs could partner effectively. This panel included Gary Graham, management consultant for YMCAs in N.J.; Cynthia Capaccio, food service director for Aramark at Montclair Public Schools; James McCall, Ph.D., coordinator of Health and Physical Education at the New Jersey Department of Education; Paul Mickiewicz, senior

program director for the Montclair YMCA; Dr. Jeanne Pryor, assistant superintendent of Montclair Public Schools; Kathleen Smith, coordinator of the Montclair Public Schools Health and Wellness Initiative; and William Lovett, CEO of the Metuchen Edison Woodbridge YMCA. More information about this conference and the highlighted panels can be found at www.futureofchildren.princeton.edu/ymca%5Fobesity.

In early May, the ERS partnered with the Policy Research Institute for the Region, the Princeton Program in Teacher Preparation, The Future of Children, and WWS to host a practitioners' conference entitled Excellence in the Classroom: Practical Solutions to Help Strengthen the Teacher Workforce. The conference linked the most compelling research regarding teacher quality to practical solutions in the field. Research panels addressed how data and professional development help to attract, enhance, and retain effective teachers. The keynote speaker was Tom Payzant, former superintendent for Boston Public Schools. More information on the conference can be found at www.futureofchildren.princeton.edu/classroom/.

In addition to the outreach conferences, the ERS conducts its own research in education and serves to build a community of faculty from various fields that are involved in research in education both domestic and internationally. More information about the ERS can be found at www.ers.princeton.edu.