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**Professional Capacity and Accountability:
An Introduction**

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Abstract: This special issue furthers the conversation begun in the August 2014 of edition of *Education Policy Analysis Archives* in the article [Accountability for College and Career Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm](#) by Linda Darling-Hammond, Gene Wilhoit, and Linda Pittenger. That paper posits that as schools across the country take on the challenge of preparing all children for success in college, career, and life, states must in turn move toward creating more aligned systems of assessment and accountability. The authors recommend, “an accountability approach that focuses on meaningful learning, enabled by professionally skilled and committed educators, and supported by adequate and appropriate resources, so that all students regardless of background are prepared

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for both college and career when they graduate from high school” (p. 1). In this, the second of three focused volumes of EPAA, we hope to further that discussion and debate by focusing, one issue at a time, on each of the three elements of a truly responsible accountability system: 1) meaningful learning, 2) professional capacity and accountability, and 3) equitable and wisely used resources.

Keywords: professional capacity and accountability; meaningful learning; new paradigm; educational accountability; college readiness; professional readiness

Capacidad profesional y responsabilidad educativa: Introducción

Resumen: Este número especial continua la conversación iniciada en el 08 2014 de la edición de la Archivos Analíticos de Política Educativa (EPAA) [Accountability for College and Career Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm by Linda Darling-Hammond, Gene Wilhoit and Linda Pittenger](#). Ese artículo planteaba que mientras las escuelas de todo el país asuman el reto de preparar a todos los estudiantes para ser exitosos tanto en los estudios universitarios, carreras profesionales, y la vida, los Estados deben a su vez avanzar hacia la creación de sistemas alineados de evaluación y de responsabilidad educativa. Los autores recomiendan “un enfoque de responsabilidad educativa que se centra en aprendizajes significativos, apoyado por educadores profesionales cualificados y comprometidos, con el recursos adecuados y apropiados, de manera que todos los estudiantes independientemente de su origen se estén adecuadamente listos para completar los estudios universitarios, y carreras profesionales, cuando se gradúan de la escuela secundaria” (p. 1). Esta segunda parte de una serie de tres, quiere fomentar la discusión y el debate, centrándose en cada uno de los tres elementos de un sistema de responsabilidad educativa más auténtico: 1) el aprendizaje significativo, 2) capacidad profesional y la responsabilidad educativa y 3) recursos equitativo y utilizados de manera eficaz.

Palabras clave: capacidad profesional y responsabilidad educativa; aprendizaje significativo; nuevo paradigma; responsabilidad educativa; preparación universitaria; preparación profesional

Aprendizagens significativas e um novo paradigma de responsabilidade educacional

Resumo: Esta edição especial continua a conversa começada em agosto 2014 na Arquivos Analíticos de Política Educativa (EPAA) [Accountability for College and Career Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm by Linda Darling-Hammond, Gene Wilhoit and Linda Pittenger](#). O artigo argumenta que, enquanto as escolas de todo o país assumem o desafio de preparar os alunos para ser bem sucedidos, tanto na universidade, as carreiras profissionais e a vida, os Estados devem virar-se para a criação de sistemas alinhados avaliação e responsabilidade educativa. Os autores recomendam “abordagem de responsabilidade educativa que se concentram em aprendizajes significativos, apoiado por profissionais qualificados e educadores comprometidos, com recursos adequados e apropriados de modo que todos os alunos, independentemente da sua origem estejam devidamente preparados para completar os estudos universitários e carreiras profissionais quando se formarem no ensino médio” (p. 1). Esta segunda parte de uma série de três, se propõe a fomentar a discussão e o debate, centrando-se em cada um dos três elementos de responsabilidade educativa mais autêntico: 1) a aprendizagem significativa, 2) capacidade profissional e responsabilidade educativa, 3) financiamento distribuído de forma igualitária e utilizado de maneira eficaz.

Palavras-chave: capacidade profissional e responsabilidade educativa; aprendizagem significativa; novo paradigma; responsabilidade educativa; preparação universitária; preparação profissional

Professional Capacity and Accountability: An Introduction

In August 2014, the *Education Policy Analysis Archives* (EPAA) published *Accountability for College and Career Readiness: Developing a New Paradigm* by Linda Darling-Hammond, Gene Wilhoit and Linda Pittenger (2014). That paper posits that as schools across the country take on the challenge of preparing all children for success in college, career, and life, states must in turn move toward creating more aligned systems of assessment and accountability. The authors recommend “an accountability approach that focuses on meaningful learning, enabled by professionally skilled and committed educators, and supported by adequate and appropriate resources, so that all students regardless of background are prepared for both college and career when they graduate from high school” (p. 1).

For an accountability approach to be truly responsible for the outcomes our children deserve and our communities require, it must support a system that is cohesive, integrative and continuously renewing. It should enable schools to offer high-quality education, reduce the likelihood of harmful or inequitable practices, and have means to identify and correct problems that may occur.

The authors suggest that, “While considerable discussion and debate will be needed before a new approach can take shape, this paper’s objective is to get the conversation started so the nation can meet its aspirations for preparing college- and career-ready students” (p. 1).

In this, the second of three focused volumes of EPAA, we hope to further that discussion and debate by focusing, one issue at a time, on each of the three elements of a truly responsible accountability system: 1) meaningful learning, 2) professional capacity and accountability, and 3) equitable and wisely used resources.

In this issue we focus on Professional Capacity and Accountability. The issue opens with an article by Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, and Hargreaves that makes the distinction between internal accountability and external accountability. The authors argue that policy makers must go beyond external accountability, where often they currently start and stop, and focus on investing “in conditions essential for increasing ‘internal accountability,’ that is a collective commitment and responsibility to improve student learning and strengthen the teaching profession. (p. 4). From the premise that internal accountability requires professional capital, the authors lay out five components that have enriched the growth and development of each and every child and include specific policy actions related to each of those components.

The next two articles add to the conversation from two different perspectives. Snyder and Bristol offer provide a conceptual framework for a model of professional accountability for improvement. The authors explicate the model in three ways: describing particular slices of the work of four organizations that show what such a model can look like in particular contexts; suggesting an overview of what a complete system of professional accountability for improvement would require; and offering the career of a teacher in an imagined future where school, district, state, and federal contexts are designed and provide resources for a cohesive constellation of policies, programs, and practices that increase learning for children, adults and the entire system.

The third article was written by a team of California-based teacher leaders who were part of the Accomplished California Teacher (ACT) network operating under the auspices of the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University. The ACT members were widely recognized as accomplished teachers who were deeply committed to growing a profession of teaching that served each and every child well. In this article, they lay out their conception of an accountability system for teaching that can develop highly qualified teachers and bring them into the classrooms of our most challenged students.

The issue also includes five brief videos to bring both different perspectives and a different medium to add to the conversation. In alphabetical order:

Richard Carranza, Superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District provides the perspective of both the Superintendent of a large urban district that is part of a consortium of districts to revamp their systems of accountability and of a student who entered the public schools as an English language learner. He explains how San Francisco and the other districts in the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) consortium are using capacity as the driver for school improvement.

Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, brings the perspective of working at the state level focusing particularly on the nature, and appropriate roles, of assessments in supporting the learning of children and the adults who work with them daily.

Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association takes an equity perspective, arguing that all of our children need to the kind of educational opportunities that currently only some of our children have. Equity, she argues, will require great teachers. She then describes a system that would assure that teachers have the preparation, support, and resources needed to be great.

Becky Pittard is a Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Math Teacher at Pine Trail Elementary School in Ormond Beach, F. She brings the perspective of a teacher leader who while continuing to work with children has also been involved in the creation of standards and the professional development of fellow educators. She emphasizes how important it is to provide the time that is needed for educators to think about and learn together about the content, the craft, and especially the students who are in the care of our teachers.

Marc Tucker, President & CEO, National Center on Education and the Economy, argues that the U.S. needs to build a system to support educators rather than to blame educators. To do so, will require focusing simultaneously on equity and excellence, take time, and can be supported by learning from other countries that have done so.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (interviewed by Linda Darling-Hammond) addresses what schools should be responsible for and how to help schools meet those responsibilities. She argues that it is essential to support schools to grow the capacity of educators always in the service of children succeeding in life, college, and career.

Together this set of articles and commentaries offers perspectives from policymakers and practitioners working at the federal, state, and local levels to transform the narrow test-and-punish accountability of the NCLB era into an accountability system that develops and supports a teaching profession that is truly responsible for the growth and development of each and every one of our children.

We look forward to continuing this essential set of conversations with you in these three issues of EPAA.

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Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond is Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University where she is Faculty Director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Her latest book is *Beyond the Bubble Test: How Performance Assessments Support 21st Century Learning* (Wiley, 2014).

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Dr. Jon Snyder is the Executive Director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Prior to joining SCOPE, he had worked as a researcher and a teacher/educator at Teachers College; the National Center for the Restructuring of Education, Schools, and Teaching; the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future; the University of California, Santa Barbara; and as chief academic officer/dean of the College at Bank Street College of Education. He remains engaged in researching teacher learning, conditions that support teacher learning, and the relationships between teacher and student learning.

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