



FirstSchool: Transforming PreK-3rd Grade for African American, Latino, and Low-Income Children (Early Childhood Education Series)

Sharon Ritchie, Laura Gutmann

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FirstSchool is a groundbreaking framework for teaching minority and low-income children. This work discusses the research and practice to date that defines FirstSchool as a critical approach to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps. Changing the conversation from improving test scores to improving school experiences, it features lessons learned from eight elementary schools whose leadership and staff implemented sustainable changes in their classrooms and schools. The authors detail how to use education research and data to provide a rationale for change; how to promote professional learning that is genuinely collaborative and respectful; and how to employ developmentally appropriate teaching strategies that focus on the needs of minority and low-income children.

“We can greatly benefit from applying the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of the authors of this important book to reforming early schooling, teaching, and learning for our most vulnerable children and thereby keep the promise of American democracy—namely, a level playing field and a chance to succeed fully on one’s merits. As a nation we cannot continue to tolerate failure or make excuses when examples such as *FirstSchool* suggest a proven way forward.”

—From the Foreword by **Aisha Ray**, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty, Erikson Institute

“Sharon Ritchie and Laura Gutmann have written a terrific book. *FirstSchool* is one of the few volumes that provides the details of this important educational innovation—a redesign of the pathway through which children enter public education. Given the formative importance of these early years of schooling and child development, this volume should be on the agenda of every school board meeting.”

—**Robert Pianta**, dean, Curry School of Education, director, Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, University of Virginia

Book Features:

- Case studies illustrating developmentally appropriate practices that can be applied across varied PreK–3 contexts.
- Key principles used by FirstSchool and its partners to reinvigorate the professionalism of teachers.
- Concrete guidance for choosing and using relevant data, enriching the curriculum, improving instruction, and developing home-school partnerships.

Contributors: Cindy Bagwell, Richard M. Clifford, Carolyn T. Cobb, Gisele M. Crawford, Diane M. Early, Sandra C. García, Cristina Gillanders, Adam L. Holland, Iheoma U. Iruka, Jenille Morgan, Sam Oertwig

Sharon Ritchie is the director of FirstSchool at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. **Laura Gutmann** is a research assistant for the FirstSchool project with experience in nonprofit management and early childhood education.

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Keith Barnett:

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