



Improving the Odds: Developing Powerful Teaching Practice and a Culture of Learning in Urban High Schools (the series on school reform)

Thomas Del Prete

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A much-needed counterpoint to the sweeping rhetoric of reform, this important book offers a nuanced depiction of the challenges and possibilities at the school and classroom level. Through the experiences of urban high school teachers who partner with their local university, Del Prete provides unique insight into teaching and learning in the midst of reform. He effectively illustrates why focusing on teaching practice and school cultures—more than standards and accountability—is a more fruitful way to achieve real and lasting change. With powerful portraits from classrooms serving diverse and low-income students, this book:

- Depicts the daily concerns and small victories of teachers determined to support all students in meaningful learning, and prepare them for postsecondary education.
- Characterizes the importance of a coherent school learning culture, based on one of the most effective small urban schools in the country.
- Illustrates the potential of university-school partnerships to support the development of teaching practices that will help close the achievement gap.

Thomas Del Prete is Director of the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education, and Chair of the Education Department at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. He has worked for more than two decades on teacher education, university-school partnership, and school reform.

“Tom Del Prete presents a fascinating case study of teachers at three high schools that really get it right when it comes to engaging all students in challenging content and higher-order thinking. In the process, he makes a compelling argument for creating high school–college partnerships that lead to a ‘culture of learning’ that engages teachers and improves student performance dramatically.”

—**David Conley**, CEO, Educational Policy Improvement Center, Director, Center for Educational Policy Research, and Professor, University of Oregon

"School-University collaboration is a phrase far easier to roll trippingly off one's tongue than it is to accomplish with effectiveness and integrity. In this fine volume, we read an account that rings true and can guide others hoping to pull off similar difficult collaborations. It is a book well worth reading and deserves to be studied with care."

—**Lee S. Shulman**, President Emeritus, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

"Del Prete provides a richly detailed account of how a team of teachers grows and nurtures a collectively built body of knowledge and practice that enables them to achieve remarkable results—year after year—with students from one of the lowest income urban communities in the state. If you want to know why we need to build a collaborative learning culture in schools, read this book. If you want to know how to do it, read it again."

—**Tom Carroll**, President, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF)

"Del Prete has written a book that describes what it means to prepare for and teach in an urban high school setting. At the same time, he masterfully weaves the contexts of policy, content area, and school culture into a compelling story that outlines what high-quality teaching should look like."

—**Lee Teitel**, Harvard University Graduate School of Education

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