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PLT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

TWO POWERFUL DESIGNS—ONE CONFERENCE

Strengths-based Education (The Gallup Organization)

Critical Friends Groups (The National School Reform Faculty)

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Teachers • Administrators • Teacher educators
Education students • Staff-development professionals

This conference will explore tools for achieving student engagement in higher education and K–12, and the structure and training that are prerequisites for applying those tools successfully. The National School Reform Faculty's Critical Friends Groups design provides the necessary framework and The Gallup Organization's strengths-based education program provides the necessary tools.

ENERGY through SYNERGY

Powerful Designs for Leadership

Richmond, Va.
July 26–29, 2007

All presentations, including general sessions and workshops by the National School Reform Faculty and The Gallup Organization, are scheduled for Richmond, Virginia, on Friday, July 27, or Saturday, July 28.

FOCUS ISSUES

Building peer support networks

Eliminating teacher isolation and drawing on colleagues to improve teaching practice are the essence of professional learning communities in K–12, and increasingly in higher education as well. Workshops on this focus issue will highlight successful programs in which educators are inspired to come together collaboratively to examine student work, help each other improve teaching practices, and give each other feedback that is challenging without being threatening.

Legislative/administrative advocacy

Non-educators dominate the ranks of legislatures, tax authorities, and regulatory bodies at all levels of government—even local school boards. Teacher-leaders have learned to identify the important issues and present the educators' point of view to those non-educators. Workshops on this focus issue may address effective approaches to specific advocacy issues, e.g., testing, standards, curriculum, and performance measures. Workshops may also highlight general techniques and strategies for identifying key education policy makers, understanding education issues from their perspectives, gaining access, communicating a point of view clearly and effectively, and maintaining a constructive, ongoing relationship.

Increasing K–12 and higher-education student engagement

Increased student learning and teacher fulfillment are now understood to be results of increased student engagement. Workshops on this focus issue will highlight approaches to increasing student enthusiasm and focus. Approaches might be based on what is known about, for example, parent engagement, brain function, gender differences, classroom management, student diversity, mainstreaming, positive psychology, or strengths-based education. Workshops on new teacher support and mentoring are encouraged.

Senior interests

Retirees have the time to do things that working educators simply don't have time to do. Conversely, having a place of employment allows working educators to take for granted things that may not be available to retired educators, e.g., computer training, routine use of the Internet, insurance and investment management, online travel management, and e-mail. Some workshops on this focus issue will highlight opportunities for the constructive, creative use of time; others will highlight skills and knowledge that are not easily available outside the workplace.

FROM THE TRENCHES

Trading Off "Sacred" Values: Why Public Schools Should Not Try to "Educate"

by Edward G. Rozycki

Few people want to return to the paternalistic, authoritarian policies, practices and procedures that characterized public schools (of the past)*. But on the other hand, most people want schools that provide a quality education, as well as schools that accept the pluralist society we now have and foster cooperation—not conflict—between persons who disagree on basic values.*

—Raymond Callahan, in *The Imperfect Panacea*[1]

Tradeoffs

Outside of public education, e.g., in business, engineering, the military, it is well understood that single-mindedly pursuing low price, high quality, or minimal time undercuts the other two factors. Things are just not, as a matter of course, cheap *and* excellent *and* quickly achieved.

Every day, often reluctantly, we make choices with complex and subtle tradeoffs. Many car buyers, for example, armed with information from, say, *Consumer Reports* or a related Web site, weigh price against style, durability, or safety, since oftentimes one quality may not align with another.[2]

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But public teachers and administrators, who in their private lives are as adept as anyone at executing subtle tradeoffs, often find it difficult to consider schooling or educational tradeoffs, even in circumstances of severe scarcity. Special education, for instance, overrides teaching to the middle.[3] With no discussion of tradeoffs, educators line up against No Child Left Behind and grouse privately that it ignores social and familial impediments while it undercuts much of the traditional curriculum.

The academic training of educators seldom exposes them to, much less trains them in dealing with, the tradeoffs routine to their jobs. Instead they are importuned to "individualize" instruction even as their students simultaneously move lockstep to formulaic curriculum. In many an education course, impractical exercises in "visioning" or "goal definition" fill time to meet credit hours until entry into the Real World—where the locution "You're being paid, so shut up and do as you're told" is reformulated for the educator's environment as "You're an employee of the system, so save your commentary for the proper committee and act like a professional."

Philip Tetlock comments:

> [P]eople can engage in tradeoff reasoning. They do it all the time—every time they stroll down the aisle of a supermarket or cast a vote. . . . We expect competent, self-supporting citizens of free market societies to know that they can't always get what they want and to make appropriate adjustments. From this standpoint, tradeoff reasoning should be so pervasive and so well-rehearsed as to be virtually automatic for the vast majority of the non-institutionalized population.[4]

But public school educators, burdened with preparing children to act as competent, self-supporting citizens of a democratic, free-market society, are discouraged from practicing what they are commissioned to inculcate in their charges. Is there method in this madness of teacher education? Does a rational basis for the system of public education exist? Indeed there does.

Politics, Not Technical Skills

We can best understand public education as serving a primarily political, rather than a technical, purpose. Public schools are only incidentally delivery systems for instructional content—a disappointing revelation for those of us who enjoy practicing and teaching more-or-less esoteric skills such as long division, algebra, foreign language, dance, instrumental music, English composition, and the like. Most public school administrators, like most parents, politicians, and business people, really care little about technical proficiency, or even teaching effectiveness, as long as you

can "manage" your class, or as one locution puts it, "how well you can maintain discipline." What matters most is that public schools protect values cherished in the communities they serve. This is the political and overriding purpose of the public education.

However, in a pluralistic, democratic society, important values frequently conflict with one another. It is here that the question "Whose important values?" arises. The desire to dodge this question, and its concomitant issues of elitism and differentials of power, generates what Tetlock characterizes as "chronic mismanagement of tradeoffs."[5] Avoidance behavior will involve the following slogans typically associated with such strategies:

a. *slow recognition,* if any, that core values clash ("We all want what's best for our kids!");
b. *lexico-graphic shortcuts,* i.e., methods of reckoning and comparison that gloss over or miss differences among options ("preparing students to be lifelong learners");
c. *dissonance reduction* to cope with undeniable value clashes ("a manifestation of a disability");
d. *decision evasion* such as buck-passing, procrastination, or obfuscation (restructuring the system, "re-visioning" outcomes, or reconceptualizing purposes).

Are schools unique in dealing with such problems in such ways? No. All large or pluralistic organizations do likewise.[6]

"Sacred Values"[7]

Educators at all levels—particularly those of us in academia—pay little heed to a social role that is important to understanding the political nature of public education. We educators like to imagine that within each student we are developing the "intuitive scientist," with attitudes and skills to seek out and understand causes and effects in the world. Similarly, by developing the "intuitive economist" in our charges, we may enhance the ability to recognize, weigh, and understand values.

Tetlock brings to our attention a third role: that of the "intuitive moralist" who acts to protect and enhance "sacred values." In his terminology, sacred values are not necessarily religious. (For example, academics, by and large, treat the foundational precepts of their disciplines as sacrosanct.) Rather, "sacred values," when perceived to be threatened, provoke certain types of behavior in their adherents: expressions of moral outrage; anger toward those who even suggest deviating from them; ostracization of offenders; and "moral cleansing," that is, compensating

through action for the offense of even thinking deviantly. (Don't argue with your parents, teacher, professor!)

We can see the immediate potential for severe conflict; indeed, controversies over sex education, evolution, and religious symbols represent such conflicts among different constituencies of the school community.

And then there are hypocrisy and political gamesmanship. Educators are told they must "take offense" to, or treat as disciplinary matters, behaviors that from many perspectives are no more than bad manners, inconsiderateness, or class-specific, e.g., the F-word, the M-word, the N-word.

It is quite clear that to avoid conflict in public schools, variations in sacred values must be clothed in slogans and exempted from close analysis. Sacred cows must all be assumed to wear horns. Enthusiasm for education, past the point of renewing funding for the relatively peaceful, therefore desirable, status quo, must be reined in. The slogans proliferating in both the professional literature and common media, such as "school community," "parental involvement," "zero tolerance," and "high standards," indicate a few of the many educational goals for which Americans are asked to supply funding. Instead of being treated as targets for student achievement, such slogans should be regarded as red flags that induce the voting herd to keep running in the same direction.

Schools Should Not Try to "Educate"

Are there alternatives to politicizing the schools? Yes: make them instructional delivery systems (IDSs). Give up on "education" if that means inculcating "sacred values." It can't be done honestly without ignoring, suppressing, or obfuscating tradeoffs of sacred values, whose adherents are usually too politically weak to resist.

Decide what minimal standards of socialization are necessary to make IDSs function. Purge state constitutions of any clause that makes a thorough and efficient "education" a right; civil rights, which define a political democracy, are the only sacred values with which the State should be involved. Leave all other sacred values to parents or their community surrogates to deal with. Finally, discard voucher plans. Since any combination of sacred values could conceivably constitute a religion, keep the State away from religion, and religion away from the State. Let those who profess such sacred values support them out of their own pocket.

Notes

1. Henry J. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education,* 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 195. My italics and parenthetical synopsis.

2. To explore emotional tradeoff difficulty, see Mary Frances Luce, John W. Payne, and James R. Bettman, "The Emotional Nature of Decision Trade-offs," in *Wharton on Decision Making,* ed. Stephen J. Hoch and Howard C. Kunreiter, 17–35 (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2001).

3. See Edward G. Rozycki, "The Ethics of Educational Triage: Is Special Education Moral?" *Educational Horizons* (winter 1999), available at <http://home.comcast.net/~erozycki/Triage.html>.

4. Philip E. Tetlock, "Coping with Trade-offs: Psychological Constraints and Political Implications," in *Political Reasoning and Choice,* ed. S. Lupia, M. McCubbins, and S. Popkin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), also available online at <http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/tetlock/rsch2.htm>.

5. Ibid.

6. See Luce, Payne, and Bettman, "The Emotional Nature of Decision Trade-offs," regarding downsizing in corporations.

7. See Tetlock, P. E., O. Kristel, B. Elson, M. Green, and J. Lerner, "The Psychology of the Unthinkable: Taboo Trade-offs, Forbidden Base Rates, and Heretical Counterfactuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78 (2000): 853–870.

Edward G. Rozycki, Ed.D., is a twenty-five-year veteran of the school district of Philadelphia. He is an associate professor of education at Widener University, Widener, Pennsylvania.

THE CUTTING EDGE

Schooling as a Fundamental Right: Should an Equal Education Amendment Be Enacted?

by Gary K. Clabaugh

Equal Education Amendment

Section 1. *Equality of educational opportunity under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, sex, income, or place of residence.*

Section 2. *The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.*

In making No Child Left Behind the law of the land, Congress and President Bush got their school-reform priorities backward. Before demanding that no child be left behind, they first should have remedied the educational inequalities that limit the learning of millions of American youngsters.

The Situation

How severe is such discrimination? Consider the School District of Philadelphia. Nearly 80 percent of its K–12 students live at or near the poverty level, and financial neediness spawns profound educational deficits. Nevertheless, a typical Philadelphia student has $2,215 less spent per year on his or her schooling than a usually less-disadvantaged suburban student. As a matter of fact, six of those suburban districts spend over $5,000 more per pupil per year than does Philadelphia.[1] Given the school district's maximum class size of thirty-two, that's $160,000 more per classroom, per year.

It would be one thing if such educational inequalities were confined to the Philadelphia area or to Pennsylvania. But outrageous inequalities in per-student spending persist in district after district and state after state. Here is a brief sampler of the sort of educational inequality that disadvantages so many American children.

- Camden, N.J., $15,485 / Brick Township, N.J., $9,472—a difference of $6,013
- Palo Alto Unified, Calif., $10,709 / Victor Valley Union High, Calif., $5,125—a difference of $5,584
- Yonkers, N.Y., $15,148 / North Syracuse, N.Y., $9,856—a difference of $5,292
- Atlanta, Ga., $11,502 / Columbia County, Ga., $6,580—a difference of $4,922
- Pittsburgh, Pa., $12,242 / Reading, Pa., $7,340—a difference of $4,902[2]

These differences, typical over most of the nation, would buy a whole lot of educational resources. Yet America's politicians, fully aware of this situation, are piously demanding that no child be left behind. Such hypocrisy is truly breathtaking, even by Washington standards.

In general, low per-pupil spending correlates with low family income and depressed property values. Consequently, needy kids living in impoverished areas typically attend under-resourced schools. But even when family income is roughly comparable, dramatic per-pupil spending inequalities still persist. In Illinois, for example, the Chicago-area Arlington Heights School District, with a median household income of $81,495, spends on average $14,595 per child. Plainfield, another Chicago-area district, with a median household income of $97,112, spends just $6,582. That is a remarkable difference of $8,033 per child, and this time the lower-income district spends the most.[3]

Why Care?

From a pedagogic point of view, this rampant inequality in educational resources makes no sense. It also makes no sense in terms of its morality. And it certainly does not enhance the nation's competitiveness—a concern that topped the list of complaints about our schools in *A Nation At Risk*, the prominent 1983 report on American education from the National Commission on Excellence in Education. You may remember that this report fueled the widespread dissatisfaction with the state of America's public schools that has been with us ever since.

It is hard to overstate the deleterious impact of the nation's educational inequalities. In *Brown v. Board of Education,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954), a unanimous Court recognized that "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments." Yet child after child continues to be disadvantaged simply because of where they live. Such arbitrary inequality is profoundly unfair to all impacted students, parents, and educators. What is more, given the importance of schooling to the electoral process, free speech, and national competitiveness, it is most unwise for the nation.

Judicial Remedy Fails

There was a time when the judiciary seemed to offer a solution. In the early 1970s a number of state and federal courts ruled that educational inequality violated disadvantaged-students' rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, in the landmark *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez,* 411 U.S. 1 (1973), the U.S. Supreme Court provided a different interpretation. It ruled that the right to an equal education—indeed, the right to any schooling whatsoever—is neither explicitly nor implicitly guaranteed by the Constitution.

The Court acknowledged that inequalities between school districts do, in fact, deprive many U.S. youngsters of equal educational opportunity. But a majority of the justices were quick to add that there was "no evidence that the financing system discriminates against any traditionally definable category of 'poor' people or that it results in the absolute deprivation of education."

In other words, since educational inequality impacts a wide variety of "poor" people, and because such youngsters are not totally dispossessed of public schooling, just shortchanged, the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution does not apply. One wonders if the justices would have reached the same conclusion had one of their own been included among the victims. But, of course, their own, not to mention the children and grandchildren of most congresspersons and executive branch officials, probably attend private schools.

Justice Marshall and Justice Douglas vigorously dissented. In fact, Marshall, with Douglas concurring, wrote:

> [T]he majority's holding can only be seen as a retreat from our historic commitment to equality of educational opportunity and as unsupportable acquiescence in a system which deprives children in their earliest years of the chance to reach their full potential as citizens. The Court does this despite the absence of any substantial justification for a scheme that arbitrarily channels educational resources in accordance with the amount of taxable wealth within each district or state.

Justice Marshall emphasized the unlikelihood of a political solution to this inequality.

> The right of every American to an equal start in life, so far as the provision of a state service as important as education is concerned, is far too vital to permit state discrimination on grounds as tenuous as those presented by this record. Nor can I accept the notion that it is sufficient to remit these appellees to the vagaries of the political process which, contrary to the majority's suggestion, has proved singularly unsuited to the task

> of providing a remedy for this discrimination. I, for one, am unsatisfied with the hope of an ultimate "political" solution sometime in the indefinite future while, in the meantime, countless children unjustifiably receive inferior educations that "may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. . . ."[4]

Marshall's skepticism concerning a political solution has proved accurate. Thirty-three years after *Rodriguez,* the political process has largely ignored the situation. That is why it is time to consider amending the Constitution to make equal educational opportunity the civil right of every public school child in America.

Lasting Change

Unlike the Johnson-era Great Society school legislation that lost its momentum in the Reagan years, a constitutional amendment would apply the consistent and persistent pressure necessary to sustain educational equalization from Congress to Congress and administration to administration. And judicial scrutiny would pack the muscle necessary to ensure state cooperation.

Would an Equal Education Amendment muster sufficient support to pass in the Federal Legislature? Would the required two-thirds of the states ratify it? Maybe yes, maybe no. But just raising the issue of a constitutional amendment focuses attention on the problem.

What would an Equal Education Amendment look like? It might read something like this.

Equal Education Amendment

Section 1. Equality of educational opportunity under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, sex, income, or place of residence.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Opposition

Who would oppose such an amendment and on what grounds? In a nation where a proposed minimum wage of $15,000 a year was denounced in Congress as excessive and inflationary, there should be no scarcity of opponents.

And what would be the stated grounds of opposition? One would be that an equal education amendment establishes excessive federal control over what are properly state and local matters. But that concern seems bogus now that Republicans have taken the lead in the most mas-

sive federal contravention of state and local control of schooling in our history—No Child Left Behind.

A far more potent source of opposition would be those who benefit from the present inequality. They are sure to be a potent force for the status quo unless massive new spending eliminates the need to take from the advantaged to help the disadvantaged.

Differences in state wealth mean that this task necessarily falls to the federal government. How likely is it that such federal funding will be forthcoming? Given present priorities, not likely at all. Consider the cost of maintaining our imperial stance in the world—more than half a trillion dollars just to invade Iraq, with costs still climbing, for example. That alone renders major new federal education spending doubtful. Other special interests would have to suffer too in order to educate the nation's young justly.

Make no mistake: the federal government commands the necessary resources to provide every child with equal educational opportunity. But to do so legislators and the White House would have to rearrange national priorities. We might, for example, have to invest more in our children and less in the warfare state. And while that might better serve national security, it would also threaten the financial interests of many powerful people who paid to get those politicians elected in the first place.

The Real Advantage

This gets us to the real advantage of putting an Equal Education Amendment on the table: it forces hands and reveals agendas. It forcefully puts a question out there that most politicians dearly want to dodge. What is more important to you: providing every American child with equal educational opportunity, or continuing to serve the special interests you are beholden to? Perhaps it's high time that we ask that question.

Notes

1. "Education Funding & Quality," The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, 2007, available at <http://www.pilcop.org/efq.mpl>.

2. Ibid.

3. Gaps in Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) between the Highest- and Lowest-Spending Large School Districts in the Same State*, 2003–04 (includes only districts with enrollments of 10,000 or more). Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Education Finances, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2006), table 17, National Center for Educational Statistics, available at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/ coe/2004/section4/indicator35.asp>.

4. *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez,* 411 U.S. 1 (1973).

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For Those We Won't Reach: An Alternative

by Wade A. Carpenter

One Problem, Two Audiences: A Three-part Solution

The problem is that for far too many people, schools don't work. The audiences are (1) alienated, bored students and (2) young and old teachers. The solutions are (a) uncommon schooling, (b) amateur teaching, and (c) paying students to learn. Although these ideas may seem revolutionary, they are hardly original; each has been tried before and each has worked. Now maybe it's time to put them together.

The Problem

While driving along a few weeks ago, I heard a radio talk-show host describe high school as "America's bootcamp." As in the military, if one doesn't pass it, one isn't likely to become a "soldier," much less an "officer." The analogy is good enough, I suppose, but I hope that wasn't the sum of his thinking, since taken alone this is the most impoverished view of schools I've ever heard. He mentioned nothing about actually learning worthwhile information, much less about developing the mental capacity or the gumption to do something worthwhile with it. School as he described it is just a shared ordeal to be completed by any who wish to prosper thereafter.

I suspect there are plenty of Americans who share this man's assumptions. Sorry, Mister Host, but we can do much better, and we shouldn't settle for just being an outrageously expensive testing site. At the other extreme is the messianic view of public schools developed by John Dewey and recited almost automatically by most American teachers and teacher educators.[1] Sorry, Dr. Dewey, "whole-child education" is not a realistic goal for schools. We cannot do it. We can help, without doubt, and do better than we've been doing, but let's stop trying to do the whole job for the whole child, now, before we hurt any more children. Wholeness can be seen as a gift of God, demonstrably the result of

decades of life lived fully. It is not a diploma, and it is certainly not a standardized test score. Surely there's a middle ground between the job we should not do and the job we cannot do. It may take some revolutionary thinking to break out of the (usually false) dichotomies we've debated for the past century, but that's okay: revolutionaries make the world go 'round. Then it will take patient evolution to make it happen. That's okay, too. For those of us who have been altruistic enough to envision schoolteaching as a way of redeeming kids from dead-end circumstances, our duty now may be to redeem them from dead-end schooling.

Uncommon Schooling

Common schools carry an impossible burden, arising from diversity of purpose, diversity of kids, and perversity of politicians. Horace Mann tried to establish a common school with one purpose, to instruct all citizens in the knowledge and skills that would make them worthwhile Americans.[2] But the common school quickly devolved into a public school. As Joel Spring reminds us, public schools serve public purposes[3]—the purposes of the publics, all three hundred million of them. They are political, they are high-profile, and they are soft targets. Hence, almost unavoidably, (a) teachers' responsibilities will continue to increase with little if any respite; therefore (b) teachers will always be failing at something and schools will always be attracting negative publicity; and therefore (c) we'll always be supplying cheap issues for ambitious politicians. The futility of fixing education in the public sector was best exemplified by the gentleman who was in charge of the one thing nearly everyone agrees *should* be a government responsibility:

> The charge of incompetence against the U.S. government should be easy to rebut if the American people understand the extent to which the current system of government makes competence next to impossible.
>
> —Donald Rumsfeld[4]

Scaaaary! To make matters worse, we who teach cannot blame this mess entirely on the officeholders and office seekers. Let's face it: we have overpromised.[5] And worse, we have come to believe our own hype that our ragged band of underpaid, narrowly prepared, and over-regulated miracle workers can solve all of America's problems between 8:15 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The fact that schools have reached most of the kids is a tribute to a lot of heroic people; as the old saying goes, "That's pretty good for government work." But the number of failing kids and departing teachers suggests that we need reinforcements, especially people less bound by red tape and economic necessity than we are.

Next, let's consider that however charitably the "whole child" dogma for public schooling was intended, it can also be frighteningly totalitarian. Schoolpeople love the proverb about it taking a village to raise a child (or at least since it's supposedly from the Third World, we feel it's too sacrosanct to challenge). Actually, the idea comes from ancient Sparta—the child is property of the state[6]—so it's okay to ask if we *really* want to depend on a government-run institution to teach our children truth and freedom. Likewise, "whole child" education implies spiritual and moral formation, but every day, regardless of which gang of belligerents (i.e., political parties) is running things, government demonstrates its incompetence in issues of faith and morals. Political conservatives respond to schoolpeople and other big-government advocates by claiming that the family is the better vehicle for child rearing. While in general I agree, I've also seen way too many dysfunctional families to believe the family is *adequate*. We need mediating institutions, and lots of them.

Schools are coercive: kids put up with regimentation and abuse you and I wouldn't tolerate for an hour. For many, especially those not in advanced placement or something of the sort, the situation becomes intolerable. As discussed previously in this column, for the past few years I've been seeing the worst teaching ever—almost uniformly low-level, rote, test-driven minimalism.[7] Nowadays it seems that if one is not in AP, one is pretty much SOL. Thirty years ago I was angry at how often I saw black kids sitting in the back, unengaged. Fifteen years ago it was primarily Latino kids, and I got angry again. Now I'm regularly seeing the *smart* kids, of whatever ethnicity, literally bored stupid, and once again, I'm fuming. I see little creativity, flexibility, or spontaneity, and only a few half-hearted, unconvincing (and mostly childish) attempts to accommodate differing learning styles. I see no confidence in kids' ability to think deeply or divergently. But I can't blame the teachers for that: the politicians have created a self-fulfilling prophecy. The bulk of the educational literature suggests that what I am witnessing is not a local phenomenon: No Child Left Behind and its fallout have created a system obsessed with raising scores on tests that no one would consider "rocket science." When we attempt to homogenize kids by rules and rubrics rather than distinguish them by reason and response, we should not be surprised when they resist. They *ought* to. Unfortunately, institutional inertia is probably powerful enough that we may expect dumbed-down curricular tripe and pedagogical *traif* to be with us awhile.

But educators still hope that somebody's reform will somehow enable us to reach all the kids, that it's just around the corner, and that anyone who opposes this year's "current best practices" (i.e., this year's bandwagon) is uncooperative, unprofessional, and even (if all other pejoratives fail) "traditional." Yawn. Unquestionably, malcontents, drive-by

teachers, and intractable old fogies have presented obstacles to constructive change from time to time, but it is also true that public school bureaucracies have promoted trendy, tendentious, and transitory changes with appalling consistency, while simultaneously maintaining tepid, tedious, and trifling customs for decades.[8] Indeed, the privatizers are right to point an accusatory finger at the semi-monopoly the public schools enjoy. In his study of *Bureaucracy*, James Q. Wilson wrote:

> Innovation is not inevitably good; there are at least as many bad changes as good. And government agencies are especially vulnerable to bad changes because, absent a market that would impose a fitness test on any organizational change, a changed public bureaucracy can persist in doing the wrong thing for years. The Ford Motor Company should not have made the Edsel, but if the government had owned Ford it would still be making Edsels.[9]

It is, of course, easy to poke fun at government operations, but private schools can't meet the call for universal education, either, even if they wanted to, which they don't. Although they may or may not be splendid for those populations they intend to serve, without a massive (and massively problematic[10]) voucher program those schools will remain limited to moneyed families and whatever smattering of minority and poor kids they can pick up by way of scholarships that do not seem due for any massive infusions of new money. But we've been locked in fruitless arguments over vouchers for so long that we fail to consider third options. Allow me to suggest that the private-versus-public-school argument is intellectually limited and pedagogically limiting. Maybe we can provide education that's neither standardized nor bowdlerized, public nor private. For now, in its nascent stage, let's call it "personal" education.[11] It could be funded by any number of well-heeled sources, ranging from philanthropists to foundations, corporations to churches, civic organizations to political parties. Nothing new: That's already being done, through "uncommon" venues like scouting, parks and recreation leagues, the Y, reading circles, great books clubs, Sunday schools, church youth groups, and countless other providers. They teach different curricula, differently, to kids with different talents and interests, and most seem to do it pretty well. There is typically a great deal of personalization, enthusiasm, and intensity. So why are we wedded to common schools, public and private? Schools as we now have them are, at best, third best. One-on-one teaching (the apprenticeship model) works. One-teaching-few (the discipleship model) works pretty well. But we've chosen big schools with big classes and "professional" teachers to do everything for everybody. That choice has led to overload and dilution. And that choice can be reconsidered.

Amateur Teachers

Only in the past couple of centuries has the word "amateur" come to imply "sloppiness" or "incompetence."[12] It comes from the Latin for "to love" (*amo, amas, amat* . . . remember?), and an amateur was one who did something out of love, and therefore, with care, enthusiasm, and commitment. Let's also remember that just as education is not a *state* monopoly,[13] it does not have to be a *professional* monopoly either. Though doubtless aware of the positive aspects of professionalism, George Bernard Shaw put the downside perceptively when he remarked that every profession is a conspiracy against the laity.[14] Socrates was, of course, famously put out at those who would teach for a fee, and was especially sore about the libel of professionalism alleged against him by Aristophanes.[15] The rabbinic tradition favors the nonprofessional teacher, particularly in the instruction of the really important things. In the Talmud (*Nedarim* 37a) the teacher of Torah gets no remuneration, since that teaching is a *mitzvah*, a sacred deed. Historically, many rabbis made their living and maintained a level of intellectual independence by some trade or industry, as did some early Christian leaders (Acts 18:3, for instance, tells us that St. Paul was a tentmaker). Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) amended that principle by *allowing* a teacher to receive payment for teaching scripture "in a place where this is the custom" (*Hilchus Talmud Torah* 1:7), and in the 1560s the *Shulchan Aruch* grudgingly agreed that "the recent custom of paying teachers is permitted, since it is evident that [since he spends his time teaching] he puts aside other employment and business" (*Yoreh De'ah* 246:5). The specification is, however, that teachers' pay is not to be regarded as *sechar* (remuneration) but as *sechar batalah* (remuneration due to the suspension of other work). In short, teacher pay was regarded similarly to unemployment compensation. The teacher, in this system, works at another job (presumably for *real* money!) and teaches a few hours each week out of love of kids, of teaching, of subject, or of God.[16]

Perhaps the ancients knew something we have forgotten: adding extrinsic motivation when a person is already intrinsically motivated generally serves to weaken behavior.[17] In light of this, it seems odd that our society has decided to pay teachers, who are some of the most internally motivated people in the world,[18] and then overload and regulate the daylights out of them. It may be that over the past few hundred years we have gotten education backward: we should be paying kids to learn, and letting teachers teach. Maybe education should be freely given, and should be explicitly and substantially rewarding *for the kids.*

Paying the Students

But that brings us to the hardest suggestion for many: paying kids to learn. The idea is hardly novel: parents have long paid their children allowances in exchange for performing household chores, as a sensible way to introduce them to the world of money and its management, and to get the darned chores done without having to resort to cutesy Tom Sawyer-like fence-whitewashing tricks (which, as every parent learns, only works just so long![19]) or unnecessarily punitive measures. Few fear that the kids will develop an "entitlement mentality," if it's managed with any adult level of competence. So why not apply this to academics? Like the guy on *Comedy Central* who points out that nobody's asked about Muslim heaven from the *virgins'* perspective (how would *you* like to live your whole life virtuously, only to die and become a terrorist's sex slave for all eternity?[20]), perhaps we should ask ourselves about our little bit of heaven from the perspective of the kids. For instance, for years I've wondered just why we expect tenth-graders to be intrinsically motivated to read the poetry of John Milton. For those who are, I'm happy—if it ain't broke, don't fix it. But we all know that schools as we have them serve many kids much less well, and that two groups stand out in the gloomier statistics: the economically poor and the intellectually rich. Even in private and elite schools, personal mismatches between "child style" and "school style" account for many losses. Maybe those kids need more concrete rewards. Perhaps we should say something along the lines of:

> *Okay, kid, here's $X. This is your contribution to your family income, or your spending money, or your college savings, or whatever you and your parents negotiate. [Topic(s) Y] is your job for this semester. Learn it to [Level Z] and we continue your contract for next semester. If you don't, we don't.*
>
> Betcha they'd learn it.

Which brings up the next question: Okay, who's going to do all this? Let's start with the teachers. We may safely estimate that roughly 40 percent of new teachers will leave within the first five years, and, of course, the entire "baby boom" generation is retiring.[21] Most appear to remain fond of teaching, but have wearied of the . . . shall we say . . . "nonsense" that goes with it.[22] Many are still available, and given America's history of voluntarism, we may expect little trouble attracting good people to work a few hours per week in a structure as loose as this would be, with its kind of potential. Americans are already giving 2 percent of their annual income to charity as individuals, and including institutional giving, the charitable sector is estimated to comprise roughly one-tenth of the U.S. economy. And over and above the dollar

figures, 44 percent, or 83.9 million U.S. adults, volunteer, representing the equivalent of more than 9 million full-time employees at a value of $239 billion.[23] The goodwill and the teaching skill are already there.

Next, who will pay for it? As mentioned earlier, philanthropists and philanthropic foundations may be persuaded to buy in, as may religious organizations. They are already doing a great deal educationally, given the overall individual charitable giving rate of 2 percent. Imagine what could happen if the 64 percent of the American people claiming that religion is important in their lives gave to their churches and synagogues at a rate even approaching the biblically mandated *10* percent.[24] Political parties, civic groups, industry organizations, professional associations, and corporations might find tax advantages and other attractions. They could set their own criteria for teachers, for students and terms of contracts,[25] and for gauging success, free of government overburdens, but also unconstrained by the profit motive. Again, this is nothing new: many do anyway, except that they're paying adults instead of kids.

Finally, who is going to get this idea from the embryonic stage to the prospectus to the financial arrangements to the delivery of instruction, and when will it happen? I don't know, except that it won't be me (although I'll gladly volunteer), and it won't happen quickly. Although I am a pretty decent thought provoker, this venture would need a better project promoter than the author; I have neither the fundraising skills nor the charisma to create and sustain any such program. It would need someone younger and healthier than I to do the 24/7 bit working out the bugs. But what I am sure of is that something like this *will* happen, and as Ralph Waldo Emerson reputedly said, you can get a lot accomplished if you don't mind who gets the credit.

So let's envision different kinds of schools serving different kinds of kids, schools in which teachers are allowed to teach, teaching kids who want to learn. Does that sound powerful? Of course it does. Does it sound scary? Yes. A runaway imagination might even regard this as subversive to the whole industry. But let me make two things clear: (1) This idea is not aimed at replacing or even competing with either public or private schools, nor is it aimed at undermining the job market for teachers; it is conceived as providing a short- to medium-term alternative for those kids neither public nor private schools are currently serving satisfactorily, and to do it with mature, qualified adults who are looking for new opportunities to contribute. And (2) there is no intention of robbing either public or private schools of money or resources that would otherwise go to them. Going to the public trough would be a bad idea, simply because the strings attached would inevitably dilute and defeat the whole purpose. And although it might attract funds that might otherwise go to professionally run private schools, I would encourage anyone interested to seek funding beyond current providers, simply because their agendas are already tied into current practices.

It will happen, sooner or later. Given the population of fully qualified teachers who are leaving the field prematurely and the supply of highly experienced people who are retiring and who would otherwise be sorely missed, now is a good time to start.

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7. Wade A. Carpenter, "Behind Every Silver Lining: The Other Side of No Child Left Behind," *Educational Horizons* 85 (1) (2006): 7–11.

8. John Taylor Gatto's *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1992) and *Underground History of American Education* (New York: Oxford Village Press, 2003) provide scathing coverage of how this has happened. Although these books are one-sided and hyperbolic, they are not inaccurate. See also Wade A. Carpenter, "Ten Years of Silver Bullets: Dissenting Thoughts on Educational Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* 81 (5): 383–389; and Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*.

9. James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy* (1989), quoted in John Couretas, "The Burden of Planning," *The National Interest* 84 (summer 2006): 134.

10. For a good overview of that argument, see *Educational Horizons* 83 (2) (winter 2005).

11. See Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952). Space prohibits a lengthy treatment here, but by way of quick introduction: personalism briefly mounted an interesting challenge to both individualistic capitalism and state socialism in European intellectual circles in the 1940s and '50s before being drowned out by its government-funded rivals' propaganda machines and the trendy, *avant-garde* existentialism of Camus or Sartre. It is worth a second look, being readable yet intelligent, moderate but unconventional, and compassionate but not maudlin. Jacques Maritain's "integral humanism," described in *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale, 1943), presents a similar but somewhat more individualistic foundation. Although explicitly religious, it has many possible applications for secular teaching. See *Educational Horizon*'s summer 2005 issue discussing Maritain's ideas. For other theoretical bases that are less connected with religious worldviews, the "deschooling" and "alternative education" literatures of the 1960s and '70s provide broad fields for exploration.

12. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., available at <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=amateur>.

13. Louis Fischer, David Schimmel, and Leslie R. Stellman, *Teachers and the Law,* 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2006), 388–389.

14. George Bernard Shaw, *The Doctor's Dilemma* (New York: Penguin, 1911/1946), preface.

15. Plato's *Hippias Major, The Sophist, Apology, Republic*; Aristophanes' *The Clouds.*

16. *Shulchan Aruch*, the "Set Table," is a compendium of those areas of the *halachah*—Jewish religious law—that are applicable today. Compiled by Rabbi Yosef Karo of Safed, available at <http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch>. For more detail on this rather subtle thinking, begin with Shmuel Yaakov Klein, "Excerpts from *To Teach a Jew,*" available at <http://www.targum.com/excerpts/toteachajew.html>. So influential on Jewish thinking was Maimonides that Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "If one did not know that Maimonides was the name of a man, one would assume it was the name of a university," in *Jewish Virtual Library,* available at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Maimonides.html>. Not a bad epitaph for a scholar.

17. We should note that the current literature on motivation is not clear-cut, as summarized in Robert Slavin's *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice,* 8th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2006): "There is no simple relationship between extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation. In other words, we cannot blithely say that adding extrinsic rewards to intrinsically motivated people *always* undermines motivation. But we can say that 'The research on the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation does counsel caution in the use of material rewards for intrinsically interesting tasks'" (336); "the use of rewards as a motivational strategy is clearly a risky proposition, so we continue to argue for thinking about educational practices that will engage students' interest and support the development of their self-regulation" (50). My argument is not against this premise, only that it is being applied unsuccessfully for way too many kids, and I see little prospect for dramatically improving teaching methods in either the short or intermediate term.

18. Chapter 1 of Joseph Newman's *America's Teachers: An Introduction to Education*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), contains a fine overview of teachers' motivations.

19. This is not to minimize the delight of those glorious few weeks when one's eldest is old enough to mow the lawn but still young enough to think it's fun. Life is good.

20. B. J. Novak, available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBe9XXTMdoA>.

21. The basic source for most information on teacher attrition is E. D. Tabs, *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01* (Washington D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004301.pdf>; and MetLife, *Survey of the American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships* (2004–2005), available at <http://www.metlife.com/WPSAssets/34996838801118758796V1FATS_2004.pdf>.

22. Newman, *America's Teachers*. See also Richard M. Ingersoll, "The Teacher Shortage: Myth or Reality?" *Educational Horizons* 81 (3) (2003): 146–152.

23. For a good beginning on this, see Charles T. Clotfelter, "The Economics of Giving," in *Giving Better, Giving Smarter,* ed. J. W. Barry and B. V. Manno, chapter 4 (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, 1997), available at <http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/people/faculty/clotfelter/giving.pdf>.

For more recent and precise dollar figures, see *Giving USA* (2006), available at <http://www.aafrc.org/press_releases/trustreleases/0606_PR.pdf>; *The Charity Navigator: Your Guide to Intelligent Giving* (2006), available at <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm/bay/content.view/cpid/201.htm>; and *The Independent Sector,* available at <http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/gv01main.html>.

24. The Pew Research Center, *Faith-Based Funding Backed, but Church-State Doubts Abound* (2001), available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=115>.

25. This raises an issue that will deserve much more exploration, in a subsequent article: To whom will this offer be extended? My own experience suggests that most funders will want to involve the at-risk kids while they are young, before helplessness is learned too well and attitudes have hardened, and then concentrate their efforts on the unchallenged kids at the high school level. I believe they will get "more bang for their buck" that way, and will avoid most of the problems that would arise from trying to use less-formal schooling to remediate hard cases and veteran gang-bangers. However, I *hope* scholars of and advocates for those "tougher" populations such as Martin Haberman and Jeannie Oakes can prove me wrong, and I invite them to do so.

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Late to Class: Social Class and Schooling in the New Economy

by Jane Van Galen

Nowhere is there a more intense silence about the realities of class differences than in educational settings.

—bell hooks

What does it mean to speak of social class in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century? How can formal schooling level playing fields in a rapidly changing economic landscape where the social gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is ever widening?

It is relatively rare to ask such questions about the relationships between social class and education in the United States, in large measure because Americans have often not known how to think about social class. The deep American faith in education's promise of opportunity represents the contradictions that characterize American beliefs about opportunity and constraint. On the one hand, we believe that school can enable all motivated young people to attain the American dream of self-directed success. On the other hand, we tend to avoid questioning why so many hard-working families have found success elusive in the first place. As we work to prepare students for a new and as-yet unpredictable global economy, it is also time for a renewed interest in how social class shapes the education of young people.

Education's promise of opportunity does contain a kernel of truth. For several generations in the twentieth century, most parents performed manual labor to enable their children to aspire to *more*, and at the same historical moment the economy was creating more white-collar jobs attainable only through educational credentials (Goldin 1998). During this time, many students who did less well in school could still find high-wage jobs in industries and in trades.

In today's economy, however, poor and working-class parents are more likely to work multiple low-wage service-sector jobs, and many now

find themselves unable to navigate the ever-rising expectations of an increasingly competitive educational system. At a time when many families struggle to balance multiple jobs and parenting, doing well in school is more important than ever: wages have stagnated for those with only a high school education (Day and Newberger 2002), while intense competition among escalating numbers of applicants has transformed the ground rules of college admissions (Golden 2006; *Princeton Review* n.d.).

In this new economy, schools must do much more than promise students that hard work will be rewarded: they must provide the knowledge, support, advocacy, and access that will be needed as more students from marginalized groups aspire to higher educational attainment. In short, educators would be well served by understanding more about how social class shapes educational access, aspiration, and achievement.

Background: Understanding Social Class in New Economic Times

Social class is about not just income (as often suggested in the popular press) but also the degree of one's personal power and the extent to which one's work creates dignity and respect (Zweig 2000). According to Zweig, 62 percent of the workforce is working class, exercising little control over working conditions or other workers.

Yet beyond hierarchies of income, power, and status, recent research on class also has also revealed ways in which class is "implicit in everyday social processes and interactions," including classroom life (Reay 2005, p. 912). Sayer (2005, p. 1) elaborates:

> Class matters to us not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships, experiences, and practices which we have reason to value, and hence our chances of living a fulfilling life. . . . Condescension, deference, shame, guilt, envy, resentment, arrogance, contempt, fear and mistrust, or simply mutual incomprehension and avoidance typify relations between people of different classes.

Diane Reay (2005, p. 924) adds: "[C]lass is deeply embedded in everyday interactions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity even when it is not acknowledged." What may be most insidious, however, is that within our culture's unquestioning trust in the power of individuals to make their own way in the American economy, young people are likely to interpret their parents' and their personal struggles in a shifting economy as evidence of their relative worth and ability. In the complex process of becoming educated within social contexts of limited resources, public silence regarding class issues, complex family dynamics, and peer exclusion, some children come to believe very early that they deserve relatively little recognition or status (Jones 2006b).

Yet aspiring to "more" may be essential for survival in the new economy. The most rapid job growth is not among high-tech, high-wage sectors of the economy, but rather among low-wage service-sector jobs, few of which require high levels of education or skill and few of which pay wages sufficient to support a family (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2000). Recent volatility in technology sectors and the stock market, outsourcing, and the rise of contract work have even highly educated workers experiencing an unprecedented sense of economic vulnerability (Ehrenreich 1989, 2005; Berhnhardt et al. 2001; Perucci and Wysong 1999). As Reay (2006, p. 290) has observed, "[C]lass is . . . everywhere and nowhere, denied yet continually enacted."

The denial of class—and the need to teach more systematically about it—is fueled at least in part by media misrepresentations of social and economic stratification. To many politicians and reporters, the "middle class" includes everyone independent of public assistance or trust funds, even if families vary widely in educational backgrounds, economic security, and personal power. Further, popular representations of poverty and privilege stereotypically conflate race with class (hooks 2000; Jones 2006a; Moss 2003), yet most children in struggling homes in the United States are white. As Kirby Moss has observed, poor whites are rarely mentioned in public discourse about opportunity and the constraints upon it.

How then might schools prepare young people for adult lives in such economic and social conditions? Current reform efforts focus almost entirely on raising academic achievement, yet troubling evidence suggests that higher test scores alone won't open opportunities for young people from poor and working-class backgrounds. Even after achievement gaps have narrowed, attainment gaps remain: high-achieving students whose parents did not complete college remain much less likely than the children of college-educated parents to enroll in four-year colleges after high school (Choy 2001, 2002; NCES 2005); once there, they are nearly twice as likely to leave college without completing a degree (Choy 2001, 2002; NCES 2005).

Even those who succeed in school face uncertainty. Although they have stayed in school longer, the odds of "moving up" to jobs that pay more than one's parents' have declined in the past thirty years (Aaronson and Mazumder 2005). In spite of doing well enough in school to attain good jobs, middle-income families have experienced increasingly sharp declines in household income in the past decade (Hertz 2006). Young people in Canada and many northern European countries have better chances of upward mobility from family origins than do young people in the United States (Hertz 2006). Clearly, the relationships between education and adult success are complex.

Yet current school reform invariably holds teachers accountable for equalizing opportunity for all (Aronowitz 2003, p. 25), even as the economy produces jobs that generate ever-widening gaps in salary, security, and opportunity. This essay will outline several ways in which educators might better prepare young people of all backgrounds to understand, enter, and eventually act upon the changing economic landscape.

Becoming Educated within the Shifting Landscape of Class

How can young people make sense of the purposes of schooling in volatile economic times? Specifically, how can the children of parents on the margins of the new economy make sense of promises that they can succeed in life through hard work while they watch their hard-working parents struggle?

This is clearly a complex challenge. The research collected for *Late to Class* (Van Galen and Noblit 2007) reveals poor and working-class students tallying the relative costs of loyal identification with their economically vulnerable families against the untested hope that schooling can and will serve their interests. Meanwhile, we also see academically successful, middle-class students come to realize that they have precious little idea of how to navigate the rules of a game that are no longer stable or clear.

These contributions show young people living the central questions of class as they negotiate access to school resources, form peer relationships, or try to make sense of the place of schooling in shaping their futures. Yet rarely are they able to name the myriad ways in which social and economic influences shape their lives beyond their own agency. Instead, the research suggests, poor and working-class students most often learn to "settle" for what "people like us" deserve. For example, Julie Bettie (2003, p. 190) observes of girls at the center of these sorts of social confluences:

> Girls sorted through all of this and began drawing conclusions about what is or is not "for the likes of me and my kind" as

> friendships were increasingly organized by race/ethnicity and class [and] as girls began to formulate identities based on the possible futures they imagined for themselves.

Although academic work certainly contributes to how students can reasonably imagine their possible futures, the complex social fabric of life in schools and communities also affects those images. As Kaufman (2003) notes, one cannot merely work one's way into a higher social status; one's membership must be affirmed by those already present, and school can provide powerful indicators about the likelihood of realizing such ambitions. Children coming of age in declining industrial towns, isolated rural communities, or inner-city areas encounter daily reminders of the social distance between themselves and their more-privileged peers. Much more than higher test scores would seem necessary to invigorate the imagination of such young people.

Educators can find it difficult to envision what "more" might entail, for their imagination can be constrained by the seeming inevitability of current conditions. Sayer (2005, p. 1) poignantly argues that class is not simply a matter of some individuals earning more than others, but instead encompasses "condescension, deference, shame, guilt, envy, resentment, arrogance, contempt, fear and mistrust." How then might we prepare young people to cross formidable class boundaries? The contributors to *Late to Class* suggest that we might learn some lessons from the examples of those who have already made the journey.

Social Mobility: Understanding the Success Stories. We have long held deep-seated cultural beliefs about the power of schools to level playing fields, yet as Michelle Fine and April Burns (2003, p. 850) have observed, we lack good research or theory on the processes of social mobility through school.

An emerging body of writing by professionals from poor or working-class backgrounds (e.g., Dews and Law 1995; Muzatti and Samarco 2006; Welsch 2005) suggests that they feel out of place in their new social worlds as well as their old. Research on upwardly mobile women (Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine 2003, p. 293) reveals that mobility entails loss as well as gain: individuals assume "hybrid" identities through which they navigate their disparate social worlds. This complicated work is part of the "human costs of class mobility" of which bell hooks (2000, p. 156) writes. As Fine and Burns (2003, p. 850) observe, "So-called opportunities for mobility are rarely clean."

We do know that social mobility through school is the exception rather than the norm; yet I believe that we can understand more about the constraints that young people face as they set out to cross class boundaries if we also understand more about the limitations upon them.

These contributions suggest that stories of success against the odds are often grounded in much more than hard work in school. In fact, we meet these academically engaged young people circumventing the limits of their lives and their schooling most often outside the traditional classroom. Richard Beach (2007) and his colleagues write of a rare and rigorous college-prep program created for students in a working-class high school. In other schools, staff members set up support systems to enable low-income students to construct positive school identities. Without such programs, identities may be constructed primarily from daily interactions with higher-status peers, many of whom assume that their superior academic and social accomplishments entitle them to exclude lower-status peers from their social circles (Bullock 1995, p. 125). Luis Urrieta (2007) documents the processes by which caring teachers recruit poor and working-class Chicana/o students into educational structures that will support their educational ambitions. Urrieta shows how the synchronized advocacy of community activists, teachers, and parents enabled students to imagine new possibilities for themselves. An afterschool literacy program created by Hicks and Jones (2007) encouraged young girls to work closely with peers and with university staff to immerse themselves in books and poetry so that they might better interpret the circumstances of their lives in an impoverished neighborhood.

These stories collectively reveal the complexity of upward mobility. For example, it's clear that the resources available to successful students in these schools are simply not available to all who might benefit. With the students introduced to us by Urrieta, for example, teachers often identified particular young women as smarter and otherwise "different," complicating their development of a healthy ethnic identity. The literacy program for girls started by Hicks and Jones was staffed by volunteers, a model clearly not sustainable beyond small programs.

However, even given those limitations, the examples suggest that much of what goes on "beneath the radar" in schools warrants our collective curiosity. We see here the potential of extra-institutional structures, of student-support groups that help form positive identities, of community members who can name the obstacles they have faced in pursuing possibilities that schooling itself did not afford. We need to understand the potential of all these support strategies, both to prepare young people to compete within existing economic conditions and to expand opportunities for others in their communities.

Poor and Working-Class Pedagogy. For all the potential of out-of-classroom supports, it is still within classrooms that the most powerful messages of possibility will be conveyed. Although we have envisioned varieties of gender-sensitive pedagogy and imagined various forms of multicultural education, we are harder pressed to imagine particular

forms of curriculum and pedagogy that honor the aspirations of poor and working-class students. Scholars such as Renny Christopher (1999) and Sherry Linkon (1999) have begun to write to broader audiences about teaching working-class students; ironically, however, that work is confined mainly to college classrooms, where relatively few poor and working-class students are found.

Our confused discourse about class hampers such efforts. MacKenzie (1998, p. 100) posits that class identity, unlike race, ethnicity, and gender, is assumed to hold little academic value. He explains:

> . . . life for many poor and working class students is erosively perplexed by the clinging, deep-rooted suggestion that their class identity is a badge of cognitive failure, an identity that an individual of sufficient merit can and should leave behind—and that one's parents, if clever and enterprising enough, and unless they're first-generation immigrants, should have already left behind. The message is this: Working class students must remediate their identities, and most of them will receive little or no respect until they do.

It is difficult to imagine curriculum and pedagogy that enable young people living on the margins of society to embrace both the security their families provide and school norms, in which "success" may imply disparagement of friends and family who are less educated or who work with their hands. Julie Lindquist (2004, p. 193), however, argues that effective pedagogy for poor and working-class students should be located exactly within these tensions; pedagogy for those on the threshold between embracing and merely tolerating school, she writes, must be aimed at "that experiential space where memory and ambition collide in the most potentially damaging, and potentially transformative, ways."

Imagining Transformative Schooling

There is much to be learned about the circumstances within which poor and working-class students might open themselves to transformation and in turn transform an economy so that everyone might attain dignity and security.

We know little, for example, about how strong relationships between teachers and students might serve as a bridge for children wary of their place in formal schooling. Following Noddings (1984, 1992), there is evidently much more to be learned about schooling that helps poor and working-class children sense that they will be received, recognized, and responded to in school while they explore new ways of being (Noddings 1992).

Nor do we know much about how teachers might connect the curriculum to the lives of these students. Stephanie Jones (2006b) offers a rich and rare example of literacy work that validates the lives of poor young girls despite their customary absence in children's literature or in the formal school curriculum. MacKenzie (1998), recommending a "pedagogy of respect," encourages educators to think about "what might be learned from the groundskeepers at work outside the . . . window, the electrician remodeling the library's lighting, the heating engineers" and the relationships between all such personnel and the professional staff at school. In the very halls of educational institutions, he argues, lie seeds of powerful lessons on class.

There may also be lessons on class in the lives of teachers. Because we do not ask, we know little about the class backgrounds of most teachers; as a result, we know little about whether those backgrounds help teachers create connections with poor and working-class students (Van Galen 2004). A research agenda oriented toward developing more effective schools for poor and working-class students would begin by acknowledging the life experiences of both researchers and teachers in the classrooms, because it likely does matter whether one's empathy stems from childhood memories or from primarily intellectual sources. Autobiography alone is inadequate preparation for serving poor and working-class students better, yet it may matter in how one assesses the urgency of that task.

A formidable challenge in teaching about class may lie simply in countering popular rhetoric that virtually everyone is middle class. In the new global economy, traditional job categories, cultural markers of class membership, and public discourse about class are all in transition. Students who might once have grown up understanding the inherently contradictory interests of bosses and workers from the artifacts of their parents' union status are now more likely to identify with global symbols of popular culture that cross class lines, such as clothing, MTV, and multinational fast-food restaurants (Walkerdine 2003; Willis 2004).

As Savage (2003, p. 536) observes, "Social relations [in previous generations] were organized around a powerful series of oppositions, between working class and middle class, city and suburbs, wage and salary, low- and high-brow, and so on. Class was a visible marker of social differentiation." Savage suggests that teaching children about their self-interest was more straightforward when class markers were clearer and even embraced as the core of one's family's identity. Now, most young people believe that consumption patterns can earn them membership in the middle class. He writes: "[I]t is now necessary to invoke a much more subtle kind of class analysis, a kind of forensic, detective work, which involves tracing the print of class in area[s] where it is faintly written."

Creating classrooms in which to undertake such detective work will require considerable imagination. We might imagine a pedagogy of class created with community members who can name the "in between-ness" of the upwardly mobile. We might envision partnering with community advocates who can envision alternative routes to mobility that sometimes challenge the structures of school, and sometimes sidestep school altogether. Cultural brokers with one foot firmly in the community and the other inside or beside the school may someday make the shifting rules of success clearer and, just as important, more subject to critical scrutiny. We cannot imagine change only for poor and working-class students, however, because we must also imagine that middle-class students will someday understand that becoming educated obligates one to examine one's own privilege.

We might also try to imagine multiple ways of capturing the life trajectories of young people from all economic backgrounds. Given what we know about the complex intertwining of K–12 schooling, higher education, labor markets, idiosyncratic circumstances, and structural obstacles to mobility, I want to look far beyond the end of K–12 schooling to learn much more about the relationships between education and the life one lives as an adult. I want to know where students' lives take them, and I want especially to know what they come to understand about the many possible permutations of "turning out well." Michael Apted's series of *7 and Up* films, or Lois Weis's project (2004), in which she revisited young adults she had first interviewed in high school, suggest the richness of understanding that is possible.

The work collected in *Late to Class* suggests intriguing new directions for educating poor and working-class students, while also generating new and complex questions about the scope of that work in these changing economic times. As Diane Reay (1995, p. 914) has observed, "Schools are the repositories of all kinds of fantasies, fears, hopes, and desires . . . and consequently schooling is fertile ground for exploring psycho-social and emotional aspects of classed identities."

There would indeed seem to be much to explore.

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Professional Learning Communities and the Eight-Year Study

by Robert V. Bullough, Jr.

Introduction

Increasingly, educational reform is linked to the concept of professional learning communities (PLCs). Definitions of PLCs vary, but generally the concept refers to a group of educators who "continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning" (Hord 1997, 6). The goal is to make educators more effective through "continuous inquiry and improvement" (ibid.). Central to this effort is gathering and acting upon data (DuFour 2005) and building a culture that supports continuous inquiry. The essential features of such a culture and community have been summarized by Stoll et al. (2006) as including "shared beliefs and understandings; interaction and participation; interdependence; concern for individual and minority views . . . ; and meaningful relationships" (p. 225). Such conditions benefit children and educators with sustained support and growth.

Stoll and her colleagues, concluding their review of the current state of PLCs and research, observe that there is a "paucity of longitudinal research" and that "little is yet known about the potential for establishing enduringly effective PLCs" (p. 247). The concept, they conclude, is new, and much work is needed to develop and then test its potential. Although the phrase "professional learning community" is novel, the concept certainly is not new. (Editor's note: the fall 2005 issue of *Educational Horizons* examined one version of PLCs, the Critical Friends Groups.) As researchers study PLCs to gain greater insight into their problems and possibilities, this article recalls an often-forgotten and consistently misrepresented moment in the history of American education: the Eight-Year Study, during which such communities formed and flourished. The history of PLCs, most recently described in *Stories of the Eight-Year Study: Reexamining Secondary Education in America* (Kridel and Bullough 2007), sheds light on current efforts to devise new tools for school reform.

The Eight-Year Study: An Unfolding Idea and Approach to Innovation

> Seldom have teachers and pupils been given such opportunities . . . to work together. . . . It remains to be seen whether teachers can realize the new opportunities for their own growth which progressive education offers them. (Denver Public Schools 1936, 44)

Sponsored by the Progressive Education Association (PEA), the Eight-Year Study (which actually ran for twelve years, 1930 to 1942—"eight-year" referred to the time spent in secondary school and college) began with two goals: "To establish a relationship between school and college that would permit and encourage reconstruction in the secondary school" and "[t]o find, through exploration and experimentation, how the high school in the United States can serve youth more effectively" (Aikin 1942, 116). The widely shared view was that the prevailing college admission standards made innovation in secondary schools impossible, even if badly needed given the era's rapidly changing social conditions. Under Wilford M. Aikin, a school headmaster, the PEA established the Commission on the Relation of School and College to address the problem (Aikin 1942). Funded first by the Carnegie Foundation and then the General Education Board, the commission would bring together educators from universities and secondary schools to examine the relationship between postsecondary and secondary education and to engage in school experimentation. Plans were made to enable roughly thirty schools (some were school systems) to experiment with their programs. Eventually, 284 colleges agreed to suspend established admissions requirements for five years in favor of alternative forms of documentation provided by the participating schools.

No specific program or curricular design was set out in advance; instead, school faculties were expected to experiment with the curriculum. The schools differed dramatically. Because of Carnegie influence, some were elite private institutions whose faculties had little interest in innovation. Others were large public school systems, including the schools of Tulsa and Denver, whose faculties were eager to reconsider traditional curricular assumptions.

During the early years of the study, school faculties and study leaders felt their way along. They began to understand schooling and the challenges of change in new and unanticipated ways. Initially, the directing committee assumed that merely freeing schools from college-admission standards would produce an outpouring of program innovation. What committee members discovered, however, was that change would come slowly, if at all. Encountering what Tyack and Cuban (1995) would

later describe as the "grammar of schooling," they gradually realized that school conditions, culture, and customary practices all stifled innovation. Teachers also often resisted change. In the summer of 1935, for instance, one school director complained that within many of the schools he saw only "ineffective 'tinkering' with the traditional college entrance requirements" (Denver Public Schools 1936, 115). Teachers seemed to "mistrust the freedom provided by the new requirements for college entrance" (ibid., 114). Such conclusions were echoed by the General Education Board's Robert Havighurst, who wrote in his diary that "the teachers of the thirty schools have been slow in making curricular changes" (Havighurst 1936, 3). Nonetheless, a few participating schools were making remarkable headway (Commission on the Relation of School and College 1943, 483–493).

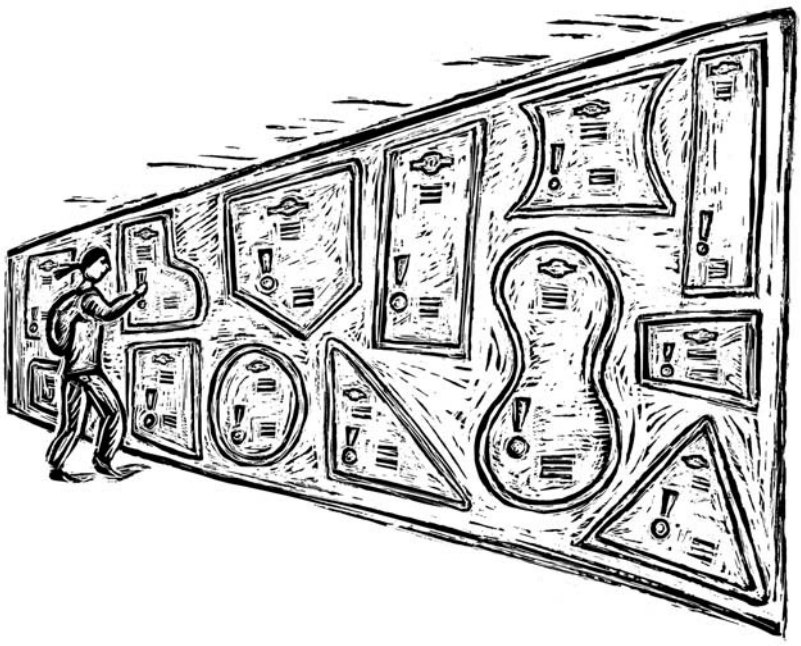
Changing Teacher Roles

As the study proceeded, the role of the teachers became increasingly complex, as it does in PLCs (Fleming and Thompson 2004). New tasks called for developing new abilities and setting aside old habits. No challenge was more difficult or threatening than developing a commitment to democratic social ideals and a curriculum that reflected those values. The commitment to democracy as a fundamental aim and focus grew slowly, paralleling the social upheavals of deepening economic depression and rising European fascism and Soviet communism. Linking the future of democracy to schooling was common in the American mind, but beyond making schooling available to every child free of charge, comparatively little thinking had weighed its programmatic and instructional implications. A member of the directing committee put the charge succinctly: in the quest to form "democracy as a way of life," the pupil must be brought

> back into the picture. After all he is the leading figure in the play. He is the future citizen, who will have to deal with all the desperate problems which we seem unable to solve and which are bound to constitute a part of our legacy to him. . . . He is entitled to have all the light that the school can furnish on underlying issues and he should have opportunity for the exercise of enlightened and independent judgment. (Bode 1937, 97–98)

To this end, faculties within the more-experimental programs began to develop working philosophies, each unique but centered on life in a democratic society, a view later described by Hullfish and Smith (1961) as involving "a distinctive way of coming at life" (p. 261). Over time, virtually every aspect of the school day was reconsidered. Producing these documents proved profoundly important to building a sense of belonging and direction among staff members, whose debates were often heated.

To achieve citizenship aims, several schools' core programs integrated the disciplines with various topics, problems, or student needs and emphasized teacher-pupil planning (Giles 1941; Giles, McCutchen, and Zechiel 1942). Educators in Denver, Tulsa, and Des Moines developed small schools ("Little Schools" in Tulsa), usually composed of just a few classes, within the larger public schools. Core teachers, inevitably confronting limitations in their content knowledge, found themselves dependent on other teachers. In addition, as in the core program at the Ohio State University School, teachers were challenged not only to work in new ways with other teachers but also to foster new and more-complicated relationships with students: "The role of the teacher has changed from guide of a conducted tour to guide of a group of explorers. The trend is in the direction of democratic leadership on the part of teachers" (Commission on the Relation of School and College 1943, 724). In the more-experimental schools, teacher-pupil planning became a central part of teaching; content could not be set out in detail in advance. As schoolteachers more and more found themselves called upon to participate in policy discussions and program reform, administrators began to grapple with the implications of democracy as a guiding philosophy of education. Teacher study groups and curriculum councils became common practices, with decentralization of authority and new responsibilities delegated to teachers.



Relationships between teachers and students and between school administrators and teachers changed. In several schools, the transmission approach to teaching gave way to more-interactive approaches; guidance became part of teachers' responsibilities; and leadership opportunities, for both teachers and students, expanded dramatically. These changes were evident in the participating schools of Tulsa: "The teacher is no longer the classroom drill master. He is most interested in the personal supervision and encouragement of pupil growth. The emphasis in the classroom is all on the pupil" (Moran 1940, 130).

Because textbooks no longer constituted a reliable basic curriculum, teachers found themselves searching for new materials, organized in new ways:

> The old security of set subject matter in required textbooks with definite pages of information to be covered every day has been removed from the teacher of a progressive education class. The old refuges of pure memory work and disciplinary subjects have been torn away. (Denver Public Schools 1936, 44)

For both teachers and students, moving away from reliance on textbooks proved difficult. Part of the solution was found in the concept of resource units (Alberty 1947), thematic organizations of materials developed by teachers to facilitate planning. Given these demands, new forms of teacher and school assistance were required.

Evolution of the Study

The schools' need for assistance in curriculum development soon became apparent. To this end, study leaders formed the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum in 1933 and chose V. T. Thayer, a participating school headmaster, as director. In a series of volumes written with significant teacher involvement, this commission developed an approach, centered on social and personal concepts of adolescent needs, for reorganizing general education in the various disciplines. Although some teachers embraced the view developed by Thayer's commission, the reports, consistent with study aims, were mere guides to innovation. As such, the schools confronted the difficulty of transforming reports into an actual implemented curriculum. To address this issue and provide support to teachers accustomed to working alone within particular disciplines, a group of "Curriculum Associates" with expertise in the various subject areas was appointed in 1936. Operating roughly like the "external facilitators" discussed by Cowan and Pankake (2004), who work from "best guess" (p. 69), the curriculum associates visited each school and, working only as requested, assisted the various departments with curriculum development and integration.

The associates' support proved invaluable to curriculum reform. A Commission on the Study of Adolescents was formed under the direction of Caroline Zachry to generate materials and explore methods, including case studies and case-study analysis, of helping teachers better understand adolescents for both instructional and curricular purposes (Blos 1941; Zachry 1940). At about the same time, the third organizational component of the study, the Commission on Human Relations, was established to study problems faced by young people and to create instructional materials, including the then-innovative use of motion pictures.

Both the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum and the Commission on Human Relations formed evaluation committees to develop means of data gathering that would guide program development and teacher decision-making as well as judge study results. In 1934 Ralph Tyler was appointed to lead the Committee on Evaluation for the entire study. The new committee quickly organized to assist faculties in clarifying their own assessment purposes: aims set by the participating schools would drive evaluation. The intent from the beginning was to gather data of many kinds thought useful for informed decision-making: data on not only academic performance but also school activities of students, their interests, and their concerns. The efforts of the evaluation committee encouraged and focused discussion on school philosophy and on making purposes clear. This work was further encouraged by a series of study-sponsored meetings and six-week-long summer workshops, an idea first implemented at Ohio State University in 1936 and quickly expanded (Heaton, Camp, and Diederich 1940).

The workshops began as an experiment to "test the hypothesis that a group of teachers can work with each other and the members of a highly accessible staff upon problems growing out of their separate situations" (Griffin 1941, 122). Within the workshops, which were initially led by commission staff, teachers were joined by university faculty, including distinguished social scientists; together they worked on problems teachers brought from their various settings—subject-specific curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and test construction, among other topics. Eventually various schools sent "teacher delegations" that they hoped would return to involve and support other teachers in inquiry. These teachers proved so enthusiastic about their mission that "when the first Denver workshop was formed in the summer of 1938 the attendance from Denver was large, sixty-seven in all, including both junior and senior high school teachers and administrators" (Denver Public Schools 1941, 145). A few of the teachers became staff members at later workshops. Across the settings, teachers, administrators, and staff shared promising developments at association-sponsored meetings and summer workshops. Each step in the

organization of the study was unprecedented. Nothing of this scope or with this purpose had ever occurred in American education.

Data and Decision-making

Throughout the history of the Eight-Year Study, appraisal and evaluation were tightly linked to diagnosis, program development, and clarification of program purposes. Contrary to much current practice, the variety of data gathered shed light on various aspects of student development. In fact, when it appeared in 1934 that the Carnegie Foundation's interest in standardized testing might shift the study's focus from curriculum development, several school heads and teachers revolted—arguing not against testing per se, but its narrow focus on traditional content. The protest favored a more-generous view of assessment, one that focused on student attitudes, beliefs, and values as well as academic performance.

This more generous view, championed by Ralph Tyler, was evident in the evaluation committee's work. Deemphasizing reliability, Tyler and his staff supported experimentation and implementative research, in which each school functioned as a demonstration site on its own terms and in accord with its own problems and opportunities. Evaluation could be reasonably objective and accurate, but the results were not wholly transferable or replicable. Hence, Tyler argued for the value of validity over reliability. Years later, Tyler referred to these efforts as a form of "action research." In addition and in contrast to the views of several prominent testing experts of the time, Tyler argued that teachers were fully capable of developing valid assessment instruments and warned against overreliance on test "technicians" who knew little about content and less about the challenges of schooling. Teachers, he thought (and the study proved), could not only effectively gather and use data to support systematic change but also do so with skill and intelligence. Lacking such involvement, Tyler thought, assessment would inevitably go awry—as many believe it has.

Teacher Growth and School Experimentation

Tyler's evaluation staff was organized to support school experimentation, but so was virtually every other aspect of the study. As noted, no specific outcome other than curriculum redesign was sought. Participants understood that quality programs depended completely on quality teachers, an insight that only recently has been appreciated: school reform involves teacher development, and that necessitates creating conditions supportive of teacher growth (see *Educational Horizons,* fall 2005).

The conditions necessary for teacher growth paralleled those required for school experimentation. Leadership in the study was widely shared, and teachers, often for the first time, received significant

responsibilities for determining the aims as well as the means of education. The more-experimental programs involved teachers in virtually every educational decision of consequence. Perhaps most important, educators determined which problems to study and engaged in data-driven cycles of reflection and action, often with the support of study staff. School heads engaged in less formal administration and more faculty development. Teachers were trusted to formulate issues for study and, as within the workshops, to carry those studies to a conclusion. Additionally, teachers taught other teachers and worked together on committees formed to test and disseminate ideas. Every faculty was assumed to possess sufficient talent and skill to produce an extraordinary program, and in most schools that assumption proved correct. Teacher participation in the workshops made the point. Teachers were not paid nor did they receive credit for their six weeks of summer work, but they came in large and growing numbers. When time restraints interfered with experimentation, new accommodations, even in the largest participating public schools, allowed teachers to work together during the school day—despite large class sizes, frequently approaching fifty students in the public schools, and severe economic restraints.

Traveling "With Adventurous Company"

There was, across the study, a sense of adventure. Teachers, school heads, and other participants could profit from abundant opportunities to push the boundaries of their knowledge and skills and to reconsider the purposes of their work in light of democratic social commitments. Such opportunities, however, were not limited to those directly and obviously tied to increasing student performance. Rather, the view of teacher development was generous, suggesting a rich and broad conception of teaching, one that went well beyond common craft or technical definitions:

> [T]he first requirement for growth of teachers through any means is that they work under conditions which are favorable to their growth as persons, and that to be a good teacher one must be first of all a good human being. (Giles, McCutchen, and Zechiel 1942, 231)

The view was that because teaching demands everything of teachers, investment in their entire beings, investment in the teacher as a person, was understood to be an investment in student learning as well. This insight was bolstered by an event that took place at the Sarah Lawrence Workshop in 1937. Because the campus of Sarah Lawrence College was relatively secluded, all participants were involved in workshop activities from early morning until late at night. Everyone lived and dined together on campus, and leisure hours encouraged informal as

well as formal discussions among those attending. Participants realized that "learning was taking place at the breakfast table as well as in the conference room or library and that the variety of associations was adding to the enrichment of [their] personal as well as the professional life" (Heaton, Camp, and Diederich 1940, 7). Plans were made so that in subsequent workshops, conditions would exist for maximizing informal interaction, leisure activity, and involvement in the arts. The importance of this development became apparent the next year when, at the Rocky Mountain Workshop, "75 percent of [participants] said the most helpful feature [of the workshop] was the 'unusual opportunity for personal contact'" (Ryan and Tyler 1939, 22). For core teachers, these developments were especially significant: the nature of interdisciplinary work requires a lively mind and the ability to make connections across subject-area lines as well as the ability to connect with other teachers.

Dimensions of Professional Learning Communities and the Eight-Year Study

Researchers associated with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory have identified five "dimensions" of professional learning communities, including "supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application of that learning, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice" (Hord 2004, 1). Considering those dimensions in relation to the Eight-Year Study underscores how the study anticipated PLCs and also reveals potential areas of concern or weakness that could affect their further development.

The Eight-Year Study brought together university and school faculty and provided opportunities for *shared leadership*, the first dimension of PLCs. Evidence is abundant that throughout the study's life, teachers came to hold increasingly influential positions, not only within the schools but also within activities sponsored by the Progressive Education Association. Focus on building *shared values and vision* is also evident, but considering this dimension points toward a potential concern. Reviews of the research and practice of PLCs (Stoll et al. 2006; Hord 2004) reveal surprisingly little attention given to the sort of social philosophy that characterized the Eight-Year Study. Rather, questions of social aims are now apparently taken as achieved when sufficient measured evidence of student performance is provided. This absence raises potentially serious issues: Learning to what ends, for what purposes? Short of a clearly articulated social philosophy, upon what basis are curriculum decisions being made? (Test scores?) How does one know that the most important aims are being achieved? Obviously students learn both more and less than what is directly taught in school. Participants in the Eight-Year Study understood that and sought to build school programs that

both directly and indirectly helped realize citizenship aims. The learning community that resulted was understood as an idealized reflection of the life that all citizens in a democracy could live, teachers and students included.

Collective learning and application requires that "school staff at all levels are engaged in processes that collectively seek new knowledge among staff and application of the learning to solutions that address students' needs" (Hord 2004). Conversations about teaching should be common, and inquiry into practice widespread. As noted, participants in the Eight-Year Study continually studied their practice, whether to create a core curriculum or to assess the quality of student learning. With assistance, teachers developed instruments to collect data on issues and problems and then used the data for decision-making. School districts supported those efforts at every level, from school curriculum and evaluation committees to workshop participation. Ironically, a central consideration was how to define "need" and determine a legitimate standard for a claim on school resources. That consideration, of course, returns us to questions of social philosophy. Perhaps most important, the most experimental Eight-Year Study schools were not only (or merely) interested in addressing student needs but also in creating them to make student, and teacher, life richer and more interesting. Needs were viewed not only as deficiencies, a point of view inherent in the above-quoted description of this PLC dimension, but also as possibilities with real consequences.

Supportive conditions includes the "physical conditions and human capacities that encourage and sustain a collegial atmosphere and collective learning" (Hord 2004). Given the economic situation of the 1930s, it is remarkable that adjustments in teachers' work were made in some schools, even though, comparatively speaking, the changes were relatively modest compared to what is now possible. Initially, the issue went unrecognized by the directing committee, but over time it grew in consequence. "Human capacities" include trust, respect, and a willingness to "accept feedback and work toward improvement" (ibid., 10). Despite initial resistance and suspicion, especially from on-site teachers not directly involved in the study, growth in trust and teacher capacity was reported at most schools. A distinctive feature of the Eight-Year Study is the high value placed on investment in teacher learning, broadly conceived (as noted in connection with the Sarah Lawrence workshop). That focus represents a more expansive conception of a learning community and its purposes than commonly assumed in the PLC literature.

Shared practice involves teachers' engagement in one another's classroom practice. The notion is that colleagues assist colleagues to improve. Teachers working in Eight-Year Study schools, particularly core teachers, often invited other teachers to work with the students in their

classrooms. Although there is no direct evidence that teachers engaged in criticism and feedback of one another's practice, it is reasonable to assume that such conversations took place. The organization of the study provided abundant opportunities for teachers to discuss their practice and to learn from one another, but given the working conditions, actual observations in the classrooms of participating teachers would have been very difficult at best.

Conclusion: Overcoming the Hurdles of Reform

Five lessons of importance to school reform emerge from this inquiry into the Eight-Year Study and PLCs. The first is the most important and perhaps least appreciated: school reform consists of teacher education and capacity building (Kridel and Bullough 2007). A second lesson is only now being rediscovered: powerful teacher education is more than a matter of learning about and practicing promising teaching techniques; it involves engagement in exploring, with others, pressing personal and professional problems and issues—the sorts of issues that now form the focus of the teacher-researcher movement. A third lesson underpins the first two: sustained school reform will require both a foundation of trust among teachers and life-enhancing relationships with one another and with young people. When the novelist James Michener, a teacher at one of the Eight-Year Study schools, reflected on the criticisms of progressive education, he underscored this aspect of teacher growth:

> A failure? [My teaching was] one of the greatest successes I've known. As to the effect on me: it made me a liberal, a producer, a student of my world, a man with a point of view and the courage to exemplify it. I wish all students could have the experiences mine did. I wish all teachers could know the joy I found in teaching under such conditions. (1986)

The meetings and workshops of the Eight-Year Study provided resources and support teachers needed to tackle compelling problems and issues in ways that deepened understanding, broadened perspective, enabled personal growth, and built community.

A fourth lesson emerges: powerful teacher education requires that schools, colleges, and universities join in a mutual quest for change and improvement. School faculties, however, must be wary of the university's intentions. Ironically, the Eight-Year Study was undertaken initially to free secondary education from the constraints of university admissions requirements. In the end, the grammar of university-based teacher education coopted the radical educative potential of the workshops. It is

this danger that makes the aim of "simultaneous renewal" of schools and teacher education institutions difficult.

Finally, a fifth lesson: the story of the Eight-Year Study is one of uncertain but thoughtful educational experimentation, of testing ideas, of gathering data, and of remaining open to contrary evidence in the hope and the belief that interesting, if inevitably temporary, solutions would be found to situation-specific problems. Tyack and Cuban would support this view and add:

> Better schooling will result in the future—as it has in the past and does now—chiefly from the steady, reflective efforts of the practitioners who work in schools and from the contributions of the parents and citizens who support (while they criticize) public education. (1995, 135)

In this process, each generation needs to learn from the experience of previous generations.

Ours is a faithless time, when threats, punishments, and externally imposed mandates are thought necessary to produce desired reforms. Such approaches to fostering change misunderstand teachers and especially what inspires them to extraordinary levels of performance. Reforms driven by distrust cannot endure, nor can they produce sustainable quality programs. Able teachers flee from working under such conditions. Like the Eight-Year Study, PLCs seek to build teacher strength and to get motivation right. Insofar as they do, they represent a ray of hope for a brighter future.

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Open Lessons: A Practice to Develop a Learning Community for Teachers

by Jianping Shen, Jinzhou Zhen, and Sue Poppink

Interest in improving the quality of professional development in this age of educational reform has intensified (Little 1993) as a growing body of research suggests that teaching practices matter in terms of student achievement (Stronge 2002). Some have argued for embedding professional development in the context of teachers' work in order to transform both teaching practices and the structures and cultures of schools in which teachers practice. These changes are necessary so that teachers can develop innovative teaching practices (Darling-Hammond 1994; Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth 2001; Holmes Group 1990).

Promoting this type of professional development will not be easy for several reasons. Teaching is tremendously complex work (Cohen 1989) and classrooms are complex social organizations (Jackson 1968). In addition, teaching practices are difficult to change (Cohen 1990; Shen and Ma 2006): they require both learning and unlearning by practitioners (Cohen and Ball 1990; Shen 1994, 2002). Beyond that, both the culture and structure of schools militate against changes in teaching (Little 1990; Lortie 1975; Sarason 1982).

Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001) developed a set of markers to guide the formation of a workplace-based professional community. The markers, which identify issues that should be addressed when attempting to change teaching practice within the context of schools, may be helpful in developing other professional-development activities in the workplace. One such professional-development activity that may be useful in an environment of trust is what we refer to as "open lessons." Open lessons, as described in this paper, are habitually used in Asian cultures, but not frequently in the United States (Paine 1990; Paine and Ma 1993; Stigler and Stevenson 1991).

The Challenge in Overcoming the Isolated Culture of Teaching

In this brief background statement, we describe the theoretical underpinnings of the workplace-based professional community that Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth developed, and the markers of professional community that they argued are important. Next, we describe how open lessons could help build a professional community.

The theoretical underpinnings of Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth's professional-development opportunity took into account the structural features of the high school, learning environments, and subject-specific pedagogy. As they write,

> After reviewing the educational literature on community, we formulated a model based on the structural features of the urban high school (e.g., time and resources), departmental organization (based on the work by Grossman and Stodolsky 1995), and intellectual features of cooperative learning environments (drawing largely on Brown and Campione's [1994] work on communities of learners; Brown 1992), as well as our own prior work on pedagogical content knowledge and subject specific pedagogy (Grossman 1990; Wilson and Wineburg 1993).

Many have written about the structural features of elementary as well as high schools to which Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth refer and how those structures isolate teachers from one another. Dan Lortie, in his seminal *Schoolteacher* (1975), wrote that there are three unique hallmarks of teaching. One is a culture of "individualism" that is reinforced by the structure of schools, which are organized in self-contained classrooms. Individualism and organization work against changing teaching into a more community-oriented undertaking. By individualism, Lortie means that public schools are "staffed by people who have little concern with building a shared technical culture" (p. 67).

Shen has pointed out that the isolation teachers feel in public schools is one reason for high teacher attrition rates (Shen 1997). Those who stay in public school teaching may enjoy the individualistic nature of the work, yet ironically, those who may be most willing to develop a shared technical culture are most likely to leave. Lortie made a similar argument by stating that the second hallmark of public school teachers is their "conservatism." He argues that "teaching . . . is more likely to appeal to people who approve of prevailing practice than to those who are critical of it" (p. 29); that is, most teachers like the practice of teaching in individual classrooms and the traditional methods of teaching in those classrooms.

Finally, Lortie argues that a third feature of the teaching labor force is "presentism"—that is, "the dominancy of present versus future orientations among teachers" (p. 86). Grossman and her colleagues addressed all three of these cultural issues in the way they built the professional community, which was composed of participants from two departments, English and history. Members of those two departments created a cross-discipline curriculum and read literature and history together. According to Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth, they did so to address these structural and cultural norms.

Much has been written about the occupational norms of privacy that impede joint work among teachers (Little 1990; Lortie 1975). The norms are maintained in part by the temporal organization of the school day, which limits teachers' interactions to fleeting encounters at lunchtime or to the rushed minutes before and after school.

Another theoretical underpinning of this work was a community of learners, as referred to in their organizing framework, which allowed teachers to cooperate on two specific tasks—writing the curriculum, and reading literature and history together. Finally came the third theoretical underpinning of this work: the teachers used ideas concerning (a) pedagogical knowledge, the "how to" of teaching; (b) disciplinary knowledge, the "what" of teaching; and (c) pedagogical content knowledge, or the knowledge of how teachers teach specific disciplines.

Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth found that the markers of creating professional communities in the workplace included

a. forming group identity and norms of interaction
b. navigating fault lines, that is, dealing with deeply rooted conflicts within the group
c. negotiating the essential tension, which in this case meant a tension between the two purposes of the group—teacher learning (the readings) and student learning (building curriculum)
d. accepting communal responsibility for individual growth

When we examined those markers of professional community, we began to think about other activities that workplace professional communities could undertake. Such activities may help groups work through these markers, realizing that the process of working together would take some time. We believe that open lessons might be such an opportunity. In open lessons, teachers develop a common lesson plan; then one teacher pilots the lesson with a group of students, who work to improve the plan before it is demonstrated a final time with a different group for colleagues to observe. The lesson may be either a polished one or something new that teachers are trying out. Teachers then discuss the lesson

with colleagues to think collectively about how to improve the lesson's content knowledge and pedagogy.

These open lessons are rooted in the markers that Grossman and her colleagues see as professional-workplace communities because over time, as they suggest, groups would need to

a. form a deep sense of trust, which would include norms of interaction, in order to share their practice with others
b. allow conflicts in understandings about subject matter and pedagogy to surface in order to understand one another's teaching
c. focus on both teacher and student learning
d. take responsibility for one another's learning.

ABCs of the Open Lesson

The practice of the open lesson has implications for helping overcome the culture of teacher isolation that prevails in American education (Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth 2001; Lortie 1975). Some researchers discussed the Chinese concept of the open lesson (e.g., Huang and Bao 2006; Ma 1999; Paine 1990; Paine and Ma 1993; Stigler and Stevenson 1991). Below, we will systematically introduce this practice and discuss its implications for the U.S. teaching profession. Open-lesson professional development can be important for sharing teaching experiences, demonstrating new teaching methods and techniques, overcoming the isolated culture of teaching, and improving the effectiveness of teaching.

What is an open lesson? An open lesson is a professional-development activity in which (a) someone, usually a teacher, teaches a lesson to his or her regular class; (b) colleagues—and sometimes researchers and parents—observe the lesson; and (c) the teacher and the observers discuss and reflect upon the lesson. The characteristics of the open lesson include the following: the students are usually the teacher's regular students; the content of the lesson is part of the standardized curriculum; the lesson is usually a demonstration or an exploration; and after the open lesson, there is always a session for collective reflection.

Who teaches open lessons? Classroom teachers present most of the open lessons, although university faculty or other researchers will occasionally do so, too. Classroom teachers who offer open lessons range from novice teachers to the exceptionally experienced. Novice teachers' lessons are usually exploratory, while those taught by experienced teachers are often for demonstration.

Who observes open lessons? The "observers" of open lessons could be teachers from the same school; those who teach the same subject matter within the same county- or city-based school system; or occa-

sionally teachers from all over the country. The number of the observers ranges from as few as three to five colleagues to as many as thirty to fifty teachers, and in very few cases, as many as three hundred to five hundred teachers.

Who sponsors open lessons? The organizers of open lessons could be the county- or city-based education bureau, the school, or the professional association. Every year the bureau will organize open lessons. It will designate teachers who will teach open lessons and then provide those lessons as a professional-development opportunity to other teachers—usually teachers of the same subject matter—within the administrative boundary. A school could also be an organizer. School-based open lessons usually involve exchanging between novice and experienced teachers and promoting certain types of school-based renewal. In recent years, some professional associations have also sponsored open lessons that usually transcend administrative boundaries.

A Case of an Open Lesson

The open lesson is a collective effort. From designing the lesson to reflecting on the lesson taught, teacher community is a common theme running through the whole process. The following is an example of an open lesson that took place in Jiading District, Shanghai (Zhen 2003). In 2003, a group of thirteen teachers who taught eighth-grade Chinese language arts and reading formed an action research group. They wanted to explore ways in which to connect students' experience with reading materials, with a particular focus on the affective domain of students' experience. They decided to offer an open lesson among themselves once a month. One of the teachers taught an open lesson in 2003. The content was a passage entitled "In Memory of Space Shuttle *Challenger*," which came from the middle school textbook series in Shanghai.

The first step in offering the open lesson was that the group of thirteen teachers developed the lesson plan together. This kind of collective approach, not atypical for planning an open lesson, reduced the pressure on the teacher who gave the lesson.

The second step was an instructional rehearsal. Essentially, the teacher taught one of his parallel classes as a trial run. It is common at the eighth-grade level that a Chinese language arts and reading teacher has two parallel classes, so it is feasible to have the instructional rehearsal in one.

The third step was to revise the lesson plan. After the rehearsal, the group of thirteen teachers discussed whether the lesson had achieved its instructional objectives—in this case, connecting student experience with the reading materials. After exploring the strengths and

weaknesses of the lesson, the group revised the lesson plan for the formal open lesson.

The fourth step was to teach the open lesson formally. Based on the revised lesson plan, the teacher formally taught the open lesson in his other regular class. The observers were the twelve other teachers in the action-research group. Because the classroom was able to accommodate the twelve additional teachers, the open lesson was offered in the regular classrooms. (It is common to move to a larger space if more observers are involved.)

The teacher first introduced the lesson:

> The first human flight was by the Wright brothers. Although it lasted only fifty-nine seconds and flew 259.75 meters, it demonstrated the ambition and courage of the human kind and laid a foundation for further explorations.
>
> However, the process of exploration was not without dangers. At 11:38 a.m., EST, January 28, 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded about one minute after liftoff. The crew of seven astronauts, including a teacher, died.
>
> This was one of the most significant tragedies in the history of space exploration. Then-President Ronald Reagan expressed his sadness for the tragedy, but vowed that the space exploration would continue and that more spaceships and astronauts would be sent into space.

The teacher then asked a question for students to connect their experiences with the tragedy: "How do you think of the tragedy of the space shuttle *Challenger*?"

The students then connected with their own experience and offered answers such as:

> "Exploration and failure always go hand in hand."
> "Exploration needs courage."
> "Exploration should be based on science."
> "Exploration creates the future for humankind."

The teacher then gave guidance about using students' personal experiences to substantiate the statements they made and drawing meaning from their experience. The teacher formally introduced the passage "In Memory of Space Shuttle *Challenger,*" and students began to read the passage. The open lesson continued. After the formal open lesson, the last step was to reflect upon the lesson that just had been taught

and observed. During the reflection, the teacher who taught the open lesson raised three issues for discussion:

a. How much time should be allocated to reading and how much to discussion?
b. How could the time spent on addressing students' spontaneous questions and the time allocated be balanced?
c. What kinds of questions could effectively raise students' interest in reading the passage?

There were two camps among the twelve teachers who observed the lesson. One group felt that it was a successful lesson. The positive comments included: much interaction between the teacher and the students; guidance for students about connecting their experience with the reading materials; and balance between understanding the passage and discussing the materials. The other group felt the lesson needed considerable improvement. The critical arguments included the following: (a) the designed instructional process was too complicated; (b) it took too long to begin the actual reading by the students; and (c) the teacher emphasized the importance of exploration, which limited the ways in which students connected their experiences with the reading materials. As we can see from the case above, individual as well as collective reflection can help teachers transcend the isolated culture of teaching and develop a professional community.

Implications of Open Lessons

Open lessons provide opportunities for developing the markers of community formation formulated by Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth:

a. forming group identity and norms of interaction
b. navigating the fault lines, or handling conflict
c. negotiating the essential tension, or negotiating how to address both student learning and teacher learning
d. creating communal responsibility for individual growth

The first marker, forming group identity and creating norms of interaction, is at least partially addressed in the open-lessons professional-development opportunities. The teachers and others don't just observe another teacher's lesson plan, but rather participate in its conception and implementation so that all the teachers have some stake in ensuring a solid and correctly implemented lesson plan. How they work together requires adjustment within the context of the group; that is, moving the

group from one of multiple individuals with individual perspectives to a true community of those with a respect for multiple perspectives would be an important aspect of implementing professional community.

The second marker, handling conflict, would also be addressed in open lessons because the two-stage process of implementing the lesson plan allows conflicts to surface before the final exploration or demonstration. In our example, the teachers were not of like mind at the end of the demonstration. Whether teachers would "agree to disagree" on the value of the lesson or not, the process of open lessons would enable them to handle conflict.

The third marker requires that the professional-development opportunity concern both student learning and teacher learning. Open lessons focus strongly on students' learning, the way the open lesson introduced here focuses on connecting students' experience with reading materials and is tried out twice on two different sets of students. However, it also focuses on the teacher's learning to teach. In China, with a largely standardized curriculum, teachers may be familiar with the content of the lessons, and the focus is more upon pedagogy. In the United States, with a less-standardized curriculum, teachers may increase both their content and pedagogic knowledge through an open lesson as teachers work together to create the lesson.

Finally, the fourth marker requires the community to take responsibility for individual growth. This marker is certainly inherent in the model of open lessons: the teacher teaching the lesson receives feedback from the community while the community ensures that the lesson is well executed, due to the collective nature of its formation.

In terms of overcoming the isolated culture of teaching and creating a professional community, open lessons have great potential. However, developing norms that would allow U.S. teachers to utilize open lessons fully may not be easy. As Lortie (1975) first noted and Little (1990) and others have affirmed, teaching has endured largely as an assemblage of entrepreneurial individuals whose autonomy is grounded in norms of privacy and noninterference, and the very organization of teaching work sustains that tendency.

Therefore, ground rules for open-lesson participation may need further development before undertaking such a task, which would work against the grain of teaching culture and organization in the United States. Those invited to participate in such a professional-development opportunity would need to be willing participants. If they are working in subject-matter-specific areas, they also would need to develop at least some rudimentary shared understandings of the purposes of the curriculum within the context of their school and across disciplines. They would also need to think deeply about the content and pedagogy of

each lesson: whether the content worked within their own state standards and benchmarks, and how they would assess student knowledge and understanding of the lesson.

Coda: Functions of Open Lessons

In China an open lesson is a major professional-development activity, introduced by educators from the former Soviet Union in the 1950s. The Soviet experts offered open lessons as a major vehicle to reform teaching in China. Ironically, open lessons are seldom taught in Russia today.

Open lessons provide a forum in which the theory and practice of teaching are integrated, the content of the lesson is part of the regular curriculum, and the teacher and the observers may engage in two-way reflection immediately after the lesson's conclusion. It is indeed job-embedded professional development. Even in today's world where videotaping and podcasting are readily available, the value of building a professional community to overcome the isolation of teachers is something that new technologies will not necessarily accomplish. The functions of open lessons are:

- First, an open lesson is a forum for sharing teaching experience. Through open lessons, novice and experienced teachers can exchange the wisdom they have accumulated. Open lessons provide interaction between the individual and the collective experience. Open lessons create an opportunity for learning across disciplines and administrative units.
- Second, an open lesson provides an opportunity for action research. "Teachers are action researchers" is a notion generally accepted in China since the mid-1990s. Teachers have many questions in their daily professional lives. The principles of teaching and learning, which tend to be general, cannot give specific answers to all the questions teachers have. They must therefore explore on their own. Open lessons provide a mechanism for exploring complex and perplexing issues in their professional lives.
- Third, an open lesson can also be a platform for demonstration. When a new curriculum is being implemented, or when a new teaching method is being promoted, open lessons offer an effective approach to demonstrating how to teach the new curriculum or how to employ the new teaching method. The open lesson is theory in action.

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This is the first of a two-part series on current practices in Chinese education.

Key to the Future

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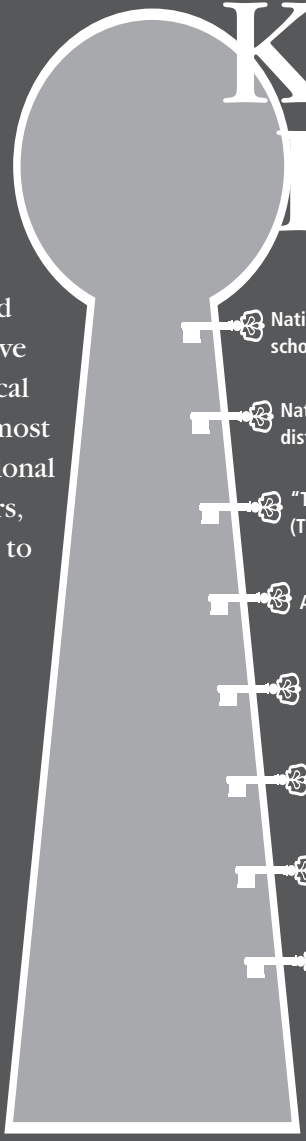

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