

AMERICAN Educator

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
WINTER 2002

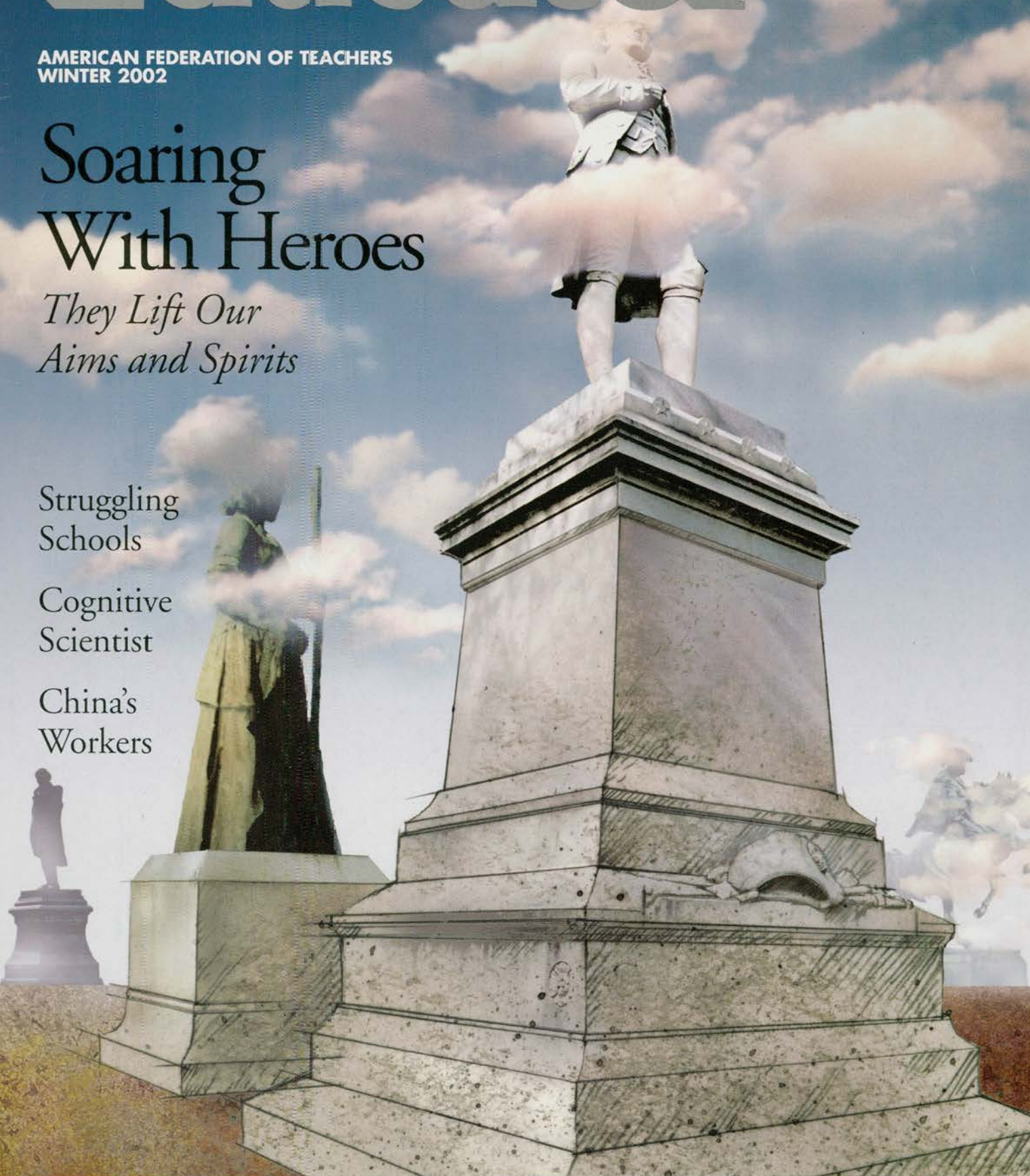
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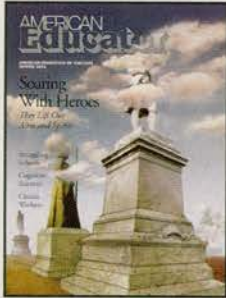
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The Professional Journal
of the American
Federation of Teachers
Volume 26, No. 4
Winter 2002

SANDRA FELDMAN

President

American Federation of Teachers

Ruth Wattenberg

editor

Lisa Hansel

assistant editor

Sandra Hendricks

copy/production editor

Jennifer Chang

production/editorial assistant

Christine Fetzko

editorial intern

Andrew Bornstein

designer/art director

American Educator (USPS 008-462)

is published quarterly by the

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.

Washington, DC 20001-2079

Telephone: 202-879-4420

American Educator is mailed to all AFT teacher, higher education, and other school-related professional members. Annual subscription price: \$1.75 (included in membership dues) and available only as a part of membership. Others may subscribe by mailing \$8 by check or money order to the address above.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to

American Educator

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.

Washington, DC 20001-2079

Members: To change your address, please cut out your label with code numbers from the back of the magazine and mail it with your new address to the address above.

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Letters to the Editor may be sent by regular mail to the address above or via e-mail to amered@aft.org.

Signed articles and advertisements do not necessarily represent the viewpoints or policies of the American Federation of Teachers.

General advertising office

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.

Washington, DC 20001-2079

Telephone: 202-879-4420

Advertising Sales Representative

Peter Li, Inc.

801 Wells St., Suite 901

Chicago, IL 60607

800-799-5080

312-939-1344

American Educator is produced with the assistance of members of Local 2, Office and Professional Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, and members of AFT Staff Union. Composition and printing are done in 100 percent union shops.

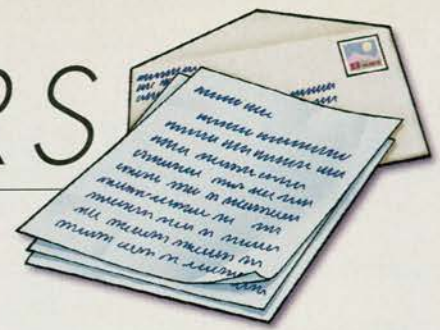
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LETTERS



Barzun Inspires

"Curing Provincialism" (Fall 2002) moved me to write to you. I am reading Jacques Barzun's *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Cultural Life, 1500 to Present* slowly and enjoying every bit of it. I became a teacher at the age of 49; Mr. Barzun is an inspiration. Thank you for interviewing such a great man and intellect.

—IRMA FIGUEROA

PS 176 @ Truman High School
Bronx, NY

The Rewards of Teaching

Thank you for Patrick Welsh's article, "Why I Teach" (Fall 2002). It was a refreshing and encouraging reminder of all the special things that teaching offers to those who make a commitment to helping young people on their path to adulthood. I, too, heard a lot of negative remarks from others when I first decided to become a teacher 17 years ago. One remark I will always remember was when a woman said to me, "You must be a masochist," and she had been a teacher for over 30 years!

Mr. Welsh's words not only reminded me of why I teach and uplifted my spirit, but they were helpful in a practical way. I went right online and found a copy of Denise Levertov's "The Mutes" and Richard Wright's "Between the World and Me." I can't wait to use them with my own students. So thank you and Patrick Welsh for that, too!

—RICHARD CARLANDER

San Fernando High School
San Fernando, CA

Having read Patrick Welsh's article "Why I Teach," I now know why I

walk around each morning with the emptiest feeling in my stomach. After 33 years of loving what I did (teaching English to high school students), I recently "threw in the blackboard eraser and chalk."

Everyone assures me that I've done the right thing. "It's time to dedicate your last years to your family and friends," they say. While Mr. Welsh writes about how difficult it is to articulate his love of teaching, I felt as if he had clearly spoken my very thoughts. He stated, "For those who truly love teaching, the classroom is a place like no other, a place whose magic is deeply felt but hard to articulate." With that thought and the belief that some of us "have something to teach that kids cannot live without," I have decided to go back into the classroom somehow and stir up a few more years of magic. Thanks for Mr. Welsh's article—he gave me the needed incentive to move on with the idea.

—DONNA GASPARI

Newly retired teacher
Mastic, NY

Foreign Languages Are Central to the Liberal Arts

Admittedly, foreign language is not one of those subjects taught universally to all students, but it is one that has long been acknowledged as a necessary part of a liberal education. Students learn more than just a vocabulary. I hope you are able to include some acknowledgment of this large group of dedicated teachers in some future issue.

—MARTHA W. HICKEY

Associate Professor of Russian
Portland State University
Portland, OR

I wish to express my profound surprise that nowhere are foreign languages mentioned in the Fall 2002 edition of *American Educator*. It is particularly distressing in this contemporary period where we have seen how the lack of knowledge of foreign language(s) has hurt our country. We can no longer live with our heads in the sand, isolated from the rest of the world, only to come out of hiding when the mood strikes us. We must arm all our children with the knowledge of a foreign language. This prepares them to understand and work with peoples of other cultures as well as provides a tool for them to use in learning subsequent foreign languages throughout their lives.

—JANE BLACK GOEPPER
Retired teacher
Cincinnati, OH

In fact, foreign language is addressed in the fall issue: In his interview, Jacques Barzun calls foreign language "very necessary" and argues that

It, too, deprovincializes, because it presents the world from a different angle through the very fact that the vocabulary is differ-

ent and deals with reality in its own particular way. The things that you can or can't say in a given language, what makes sense to the French or the German in contrast to what makes sense to us, are mind-opening. In addition, there is practical utility in mastering a particular language: It serves to give access to a whole literature, and possibly further one's career.

Nonetheless, the editors thoroughly agree with letter writers that foreign language is vital, never more so than today, for all the reasons they put forward and more. American Educator hopes to bring these arguments to our readers in future issues.

—EDITOR

Latin on the Rise

I read with interest the interview with Jacques Barzun titled "Curing Provincialism: Why We Educate the Way we Do." As a former department head of Continental Corporation for 20 years in Los Angeles, I appreciated Barzun's comments about the value of Latin in promoting literacy in English and laying foundation for acquiring modern languages as needed. Latin improved my own understanding of how English works, and gave me a foundation for learning French, German, and travelers' Italian later in life.

I disagree with his comment that the battle for Latin has been permanently lost. It is true that Latin enrollments plummeted in the 1960s, during a period of widespread experimentation with new courses and curricula. The attrition was especially noticeable in California and the western states, which did not retain as many traditional courses as did the Midwest and East. Since then, schools have returned to the basics and to more traditional subjects in order to equip students academically for future careers.

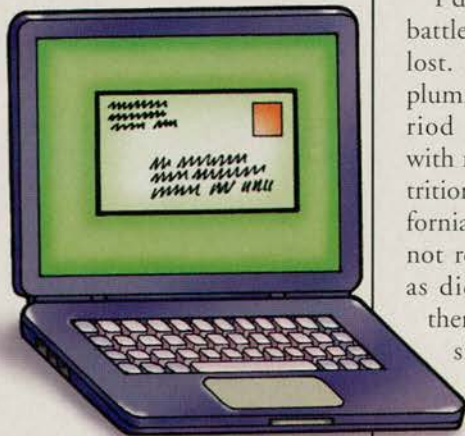
Starting in the late 1970s and increasing in the '80s and '90s, Latin has made a comeback in the schools. It continues to be the fourth most widely-taught language after Spanish, French, and German. In recent years, high school enrollments in French and German have declined a bit, while Latin enrollments continue to hold firm. In the spring of 2002, 114,000 students took the National Latin Exam, up from 6,000 students in 1978 and increasing yearly. Rising en-

rollments have contributed to a nationwide shortage of Latin teachers.

Why is Latin still in demand? It is a proven builder of English vocabulary and grammar skills at a time when literacy in America is at a low ebb. Over 60 percent of all words in the English language and about 90 percent of those over two syllables are from Latin. At the same time, students are learning the roots of some 80 percent of Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian words. They also lay a foundation for using other inflected languages, such as German or Russian.

So, I have to say that Barzun's prediction of the demise of Latin in the schools is premature. Because of the unique and useful benefits that Latin affords, it is an asset to any curriculum that strives to develop literacy, a sense of the past, insights into one's own culture and appreciation for other cultures past and present.

— VIRGINIA BARRETT
Editor of Pro Bono, the newsletter of the National
Committee for Latin and Greek
Cypress, CA



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what you think!

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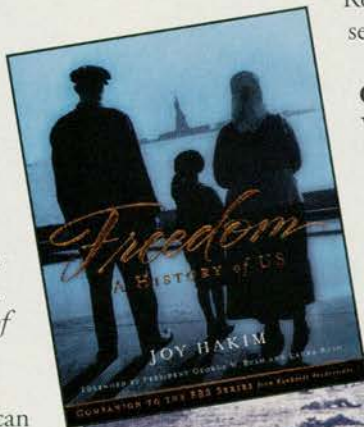
NOTEBOOK



A History of US Reaches Prime Time

Freedom: A History of US Debuts on PBS

Twelve years ago, *American Educator* readers were the first anywhere to learn of Joy Hakim's exciting new textbooks on American history. Titled *A History of US*, the 10-book series chronicled the tale of American history with verve and drama for a middle- and high-school audience. Since then,



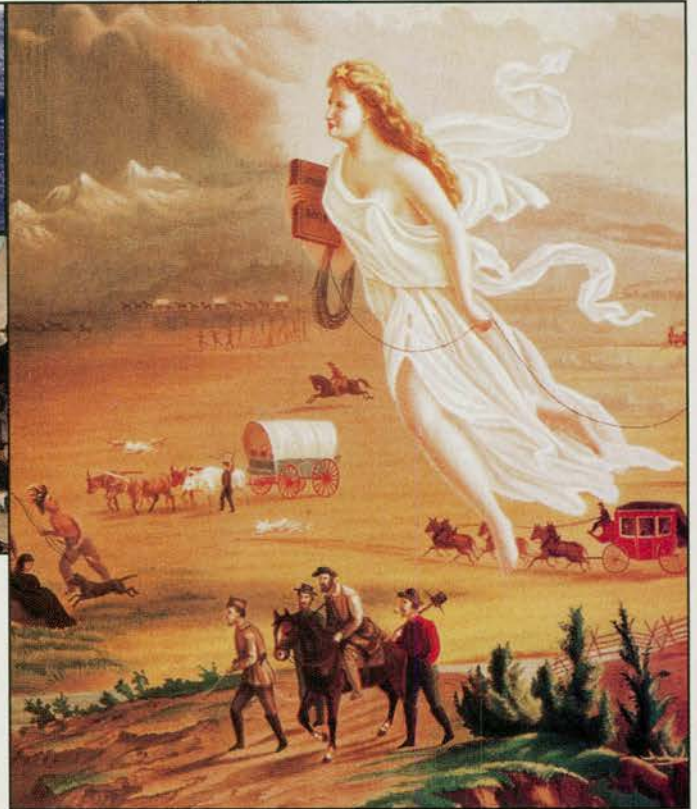
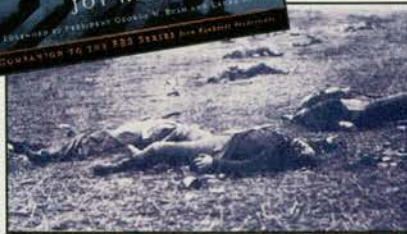
Morgan Freeman, Julia Roberts, and Robin Williams. Watch it yourself, assign it to your students!

Companion Book Worthy of Your Coffee Table and Reading List

In addition to watching the series, don't miss the companion book *Freedom: A History of US* that is already earning

great and small, are all alive, real people, and the idea that history might ever be thought of as a chore has clearly never entered her mind."

The never-ending American effort to establish, expand, and sustain freedom—and all of the interesting debates and events that effort has spawned—is the lens through which Joy



Hakim's books have won the Michener Prize, sold over four million copies, and been adopted by hundreds of schools as either core or supplemental texts. Now, Hakim's work has been made into a PBS documentary that will air in eight parts beginning in January 2003. *Freedom: A History of US* investigates the extraordinary idea that regular people can—and should—govern themselves. From the Age of Reason that sparked the American Revolution to today's struggle to be free in the face of terrorism, Hakim recounts "the American freedom drama" and inspires all of us to have "the energy and courage it takes to keep it growing." The series features the voices of such stars as Paul Newman,



rave reviews. David McCullough, author of the bestseller *John Adams*, said, "Best of all is Joy Hakim's way with the story. Never dull, never the least plodding, she brings refreshing spirit and common sense to the telling of every episode. The historic personages,

Hakim tells the story of America. As she has done in her books for students, Hakim offers a strong narrative political history, richly and intelligently laced with fascinating, remarkable social history. Plus the artwork—400 images in all—is stunning. The book is in bookstores and can be ordered at www.oup-usa.org/historyofus/freedom.html.

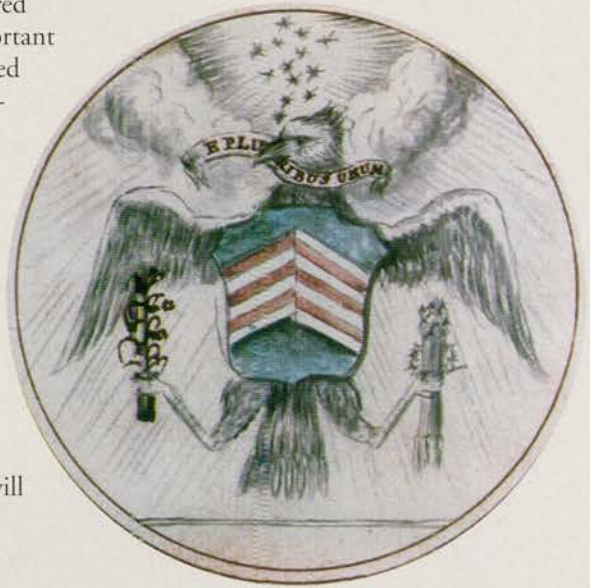
A History of US Textbook Series for Middle- and High- Schoolers Reissued

A History of US, the original 10-volume U.S. history series, now used in hundreds of schools, has been reissued in paperback and updated to include the events of September 11. To get a 20 percent discount off the list price (or more for large orders), call Gwen Slaughter at Oxford University Press and mention this ad: 212-726-6043. To read more about the series, visit www.oup-usa.org/historyofus/about_t.html.

The National Archives Comes to School

For a nation founded on shared ideas, nothing is more important than remembering our shared history. To increase all citizens' interest in our past, last September President Bush announced *Our Documents*, a collaborative effort run by the National Archives and National History Day, with support from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the USA Freedom Corps.

Through *Our Documents*, one hundred of the most significant documents in American history will be available online to the nation's teachers and classrooms. Spanning from the Lee Resolution of 1776 (which proposed independence for the colonies) to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (which prohibits racial discrimination in voting places and procedures), three new documents are being added each week to the Web site during the 2002-2003 school year. Each document is represented by a high-quality photo of the document, a transcript that makes the document completely readable, and a brief introduction to each document's historical context. There's also a teacher's toolbox with links to great resources such as sample lesson plans on teaching with key documents from the National Archives.



Original design of the Great Seal of the United States from 1782, part of the Our Documents collection. Work on a seal for the new nation began right after the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence.

Help Build a National Resource: A Bank of Document-Based History Lessons

To support teaching with these documents, National History Day, which has for years hosted an annual student competition (for more information, see Notebook, Summer 2002 *American Educator*), is now hosting a lesson plan competition for history, social studies, civics, and government teachers working in grades four through twelve. To participate, teachers must develop and pilot a lesson plan that describes the historical background of the selected documents and engages students in a critical analysis of them. Along with the lesson activity, teachers must write a 2-page report on its usefulness. Lesson plans should be submitted to National History Day by March 1, 2003. For more information on both the lesson plan competition and *Our Documents*, go to www.ourdocuments.gov.

Along with the *Our Documents* initiative, the White House also announced *We the People*, an effort that will be led by the National Endowment for the Humanities and will include: seminars for teachers; grants to scholars for work on the principles that define America; an annual, published lecture on the theme "Heroes in History"; and a national essay contest for high school juniors on "The Idea of America." (See www.wethepeople.gov.)

CHARLES THOMSON'S DESIGN OF THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES, 1782; ITEM 23, PAGE 180; PAPERS OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS; RECORDS OF THE CONTINENTAL AND CONFEDERATION CONGRESSES AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION; RECORD GROUP 360; NATIONAL ARCHIVES BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.



Heroes for Our Age

How Heroes Can Elevate Students' Lives

By Peter H. Gibbon

Human beings are deeply divided, eternally torn between apathy and activity, between nihilism and belief. In this short life, we wage a daily battle between a higher and lower self. The *hero* stands for our higher self. To get through life and permit the higher self to prevail, we depend on public models of excellence, bravery, and goodness. During the last 40 years in America, such models have been in short supply. Except among politicians and Madison Avenue advertising firms, the word *hero* has been out of fashion since the late 1960s as a term to describe past or present public figures. We are reluctant to use the term this way, doubtful as to whether any one person can hold up under the burden of such a word.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, *hero* was resurrected across the nation to describe the firefighters and police officers who lost their lives in the World Trade Center, rescue workers who patiently picked their way through the rubble, passengers who thwarted terrorists on a hijacked airplane, and soldiers who left on planes and ships. In difficult times, we turn to the word *hero* to express our deepest sorrow, our highest aspiration, and our most profound admiration.

Peter H. Gibbon is research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Over the last five years he has traveled extensively talking to students, teachers, and general audiences about heroes. He was a high school history and English teacher for 24 years and is the former headmaster of Hackley School in Tarrytown, N.Y. This article is excerpted from A Call to Heroism © 2002 by Peter H. Gibbon and reprinted with permission of the publisher, Atlantic Monthly Press.

In 1992, I gave a commencement speech to high school students in which I described three women of extraordinary courage: missionary Eva Jane Price, who in 1900 was killed in the Boxer Rebellion; artist Käthe Kollwitz, who lost her son in World War I and transcended her grief by creating one of the most powerful sculptures of the 20th century; and writer Eugenia Ginzburg, who spent 18 years in Stalin's gulag (see sidebar, page 14). *Newsweek* picked up the introduction to the speech and called it "In Search of Heroes." In this piece, I argued that irreverence, skepticism, and mockery permeated the culture to such a degree that it is difficult for young people to have heroes and that present reality in the classroom is an empty educational goal if it produces disillusioned, dispirited students. The heart of the article was that we had lost a vision of greatness, in our schools and in our culture.

People responded. From a remote mining area of the Appalachian Mountains, a high school teacher wrote that in 33 years she had observed that "the more affluent students' visions of greatness" had been "clouded by materialism." From the University of Illinois, an assistant professor of broadcast journalism commented that he had found "an increasing cynicism among my students that is most disturbing."

Since then, I have plugged *hero* into every available database; read hundreds of biographies and books on heroism; traveled the country talking to Americans about heroes; and interviewed educators, historians, journalists, ministers, politicians, scientists, and writers, asking questions that gave shape to my book, *A Call to Heroism: How did we lose our public heroes? Why does it matter? Where do we go from here?*



As a historian, I have been tracing the changing face of the American hero, researching what has happened to the presentation of heroes in history books, and analyzing ways revisionist historians have shaped teachers' attitudes, which in turn shape the way students respond.

The most rewarding part of this odyssey has been the five years I spent talking to students about heroes. Most of my audiences have been in high schools—from a thousand students sitting on bleachers in a gymnasium to small classes in history and literature. In these talks, I challenge the notion that they are too old, too jaded, or too cynical for heroes. I quote Ralph Waldo Emerson, another true believer in heroes and a writer most students will know: "Go with mean people and you think life is mean" and "with the great, our thoughts and manners easily become great." In spirited debate, they agree, disagree, challenge, and probe. "Is Malcolm X a hero? John Brown? Why is Adolf Hitler any worse than Christopher Columbus?" They ask about celebrities, athletes, historical figures, politicians, and rescuers, and about such personal heroes as parents, teachers, and friends.

What is a Hero?

For most of human history, *hero* has been synonymous with *warrior*. Although we often link these words today, we do have an expanded, more inclusive definition of *hero* than the one we inherited from the Greeks. Modern dictionaries list three qualities in common after the entry *hero*: extraordinary achievement, courage, and the idea (variously expressed) that the hero serves as a "model" or "example"—that heroism has a moral component.

Today, extraordinary achievement is no longer confined to valor in combat. As well as military heroes, there are humanitarian heroes, cultural heroes, political heroes. Thomas Edison lit up the night. Harriet Tubman rescued slaves. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Beethoven is a hero of music, Rembrandt of art, Einstein of science.

Likewise, courage means many things besides physical bravery: taking an unpopular position, standing up for principle, persevering, forging accomplishment out of adversity. After her life was threatened, activist Ida B. Wells continued to condemn lynching. Franklin Roosevelt battled polio. Helen Keller transcended blindness and deafness.

The moral component of the meaning of heroism—and, I believe, the most important one—is elusive. In French, *héros* is associated with generosity and force of character. And in Middle English, *heroicus* means noble. In dictionaries, *heroic* is an adjective of praise: some of its synonyms are *virtuous*, *steadfast*, *magnanimous*, *intrepid*. *The Oxford English Dictionary* uses the phrase "greatness of soul." It's an imprecise concept, like the word *hero* itself. There are many different ways to describe it, but I believe greatness of soul to be a mysterious blend of powerful qualities summarized by Shakespeare in *Macbeth* (IV.iii.91-94), where he describes the "king-becoming graces" as:

... justice, verity, temperance, stableness, bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness, devotion, patience, courage, fortitude.

Heroes enlarge our imagination,
teach us to think big, and expand
our sense of the possible.



When Nelson Mandela received an honorary degree from Harvard University in 1998, the seniors sat in the front rows. My son, who was among them, commented that there was an aura about Mandela, something about being in his presence that evoked a surprisingly powerful response. I believe the response he was describing is awe, and it came from contemplating Mandela's extraordinary achievement, his profound courage, and his greatness of soul.

The greatest burden the word *hero* carries today is the expectation that a hero be perfect. In Greek mythology, even the gods have flaws. They are not perfect but rather hot-tempered, jealous, and fickle, taking sides in human events and feuding among themselves.

In America today we have come to define the person by the flaw: Thomas Jefferson is the president with the slave mistress, Einstein the scientist who mistreated his wife. As a society, we need to explore a more subtle, complex definition of the word *hero*, one that acknowledges weaknesses as well as strengths, failures as well as successes—but, at the same time, we need a definition that does not set the bar too low.

Some Americans reject the word *hero* outright and insist on *role model*, which is less grandiose, more human. People often ask me, "Why do we need heroes? Why aren't role models enough?" I like author Jill Ker Conway's distinction. In a lecture on extraordinary women, she stated "Women should have heroines, not role models." I asked her what she meant. Women, she said, are as physically brave and as daring as men, and the routine use of *role model* to describe

outstanding women conceals their bravery and diminishes their heroism. Conway's distinction argues that *heroine* is a more powerful word than *role model* and that heroism is a reach for the extraordinary.

The definition of *hero* remains subjective. What is extraordinary can be debated. Courage is in the eye of the beholder. Greatness of soul is elusive. Inevitably there will be debates over how many and what kinds of flaws a person can have and still be considered heroic.

Nevertheless, today we are reluctant to call either past or present public figures heroic. The 20th-century assumption that a hero is supposed to be perfect has made many Americans turn away from the word—and the concept—altogether. The contemporary preference for terms like *role model* and the shift from the recognition of national to local heroes are part of the transformation of the word *hero* that occurred in the second half of the 20th century.

There is something appealing about a society that admires a range of accomplishments, that celebrates as many people as possible. Making the word *hero* more democratic, how-

ever, can be carried to an extreme. It can strip the word of all sense of the extraordinary. It can lead to an ignorance of history, a repudiation of genius, and an extreme egalitarianism disdainful of high culture and unappreciative of excellence.

We need role models and local heroes; but by limiting our heroes to people we know, we restrict our aspirations. Public heroes—or imperfect people of extraordinary achievement, courage, and greatness of soul whose reach is wider than our own—teach us to push beyond ourselves and our neighborhoods in search of models of excellence. They enlarge our imagination, teach us to think big, and expand our sense of the possible.

The Shifting Role of the Hero in American History

In some ages there is “an extravagant worship of great men,” and in others “a disposition to disbelieve in their existence,” wrote British historian James Froude in 1880, in an introduction to an elegant leather-bound, eight-volume anthol-

George Washington

In 1927, Mount Rushmore sculptor Gutzon Borglum had no doubt about whose face he should carve first, but in 2002 George Washington is not an easy sell. Washington was a soldier, an aristocrat, and slaveowner. Students today want to know about Washington's fierce temper and whether or not he grew marijuana at Mount Vernon.

It helps to remind my audiences that Washington was human. His father died when he was eleven; his mother was dour. He didn't attend college or travel to Europe, couldn't marry the woman he loved, and didn't get from Britain the commission he thought he deserved. He watched his half brother, Lawrence, die from tuberculosis and his stepdaughter, Patsy, succumb to epilepsy. His own face was scarred by smallpox, his body at times weakened by malaria and dysentery.

Although he achieved a measure of fame for his military actions in the French and Indian War, until 1775 he seemed ordinary. Then the war came. He did not seek to be commander, and he should have lost. Great Britain was confident and formidable, wealthy and well-equipped—an 18th-century superpower.

Washington failed at first, at Brooklyn Heights and Brandywine. And he suffered—as his men went without pay, Congress squabbled, his army melted away, and defeat seemed increasingly certain. In 1776 he told his brother he would gladly quit.

But he didn't. He dodged and retreated and somehow kept an army in the field and endured the harsh winter at Valley Forge. He took risks, attacked at Trenton and Princeton, and forced himself to appear confident and indomitable before his men, despite fatigue and frustration.

Washington learned to use America's wilderness and to exploit England's arrogance. Patiently, he extracted authority and supplies from a divided Congress. Stoically, he shook off critics. Above all, he endured—until the French sent money and Great Britain grew weary of their losses of men and material. I tell my audiences that Washington is great because he showed extraordinary courage, not just the courage to face bullets but the courage to stick to a cause no matter how great the odds.

When the war was over, Washington gave up his sword and returned to Mount Vernon to tend his estate.

His magnanimity astonished the world. Washington was not brilliant like Hamilton or eloquent like Jefferson. He lacked Franklin's originality and Madison's insight. But our first president had character. Like the Stoics whose words he read, he exercised self-control. He valued honor and reputation above wealth and power; he believed in conscience, kindness, and a caring and watchful God.

In all cultures, the founders of nations are considered preeminent heroes. But Washington is more. He believed the president should be an example to the nation, he injected majesty and humility into the office and became a symbol of incorruptibility. Into American political life, he infused the Roman notion of self-control and the ancient belief that the state comes before the self. By giving up his sword and disbanding his armies, he established at our founding the principle of civilian control. By backing the Constitution and agreeing to serve as president, he made it possible for us to start our history as one nation instead of 13 squabbling states. Thomas Jefferson thought him great and good. So might we.

—P.G.

ogy, *The Hundred Greatest Men*. Attuned to the rhythms of history, Froude recognized that in some ages the predilection is to deny greatness. We live in such an age.

It was not always so.

Until World War I, the ideology of heroism was intact and influential in American culture. It permeated parlors, schools, farms, and factories. It could be found in novels, newspapers, and eulogies; inscribed on statues, tombstones, and public buildings; and in the exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

The ideology of American heroism formalized in the 19th century could be seen in the names parents chose for their children. The Marquis de Lafayette named his son after George Washington, as did the parents of George Washington Carver. After the battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812, thousands of Americans named their sons Andrew, after Andrew Jackson. In 1919, the year Theodore Roosevelt died, Jackie Robinson's parents named their first son Jack Roosevelt Robinson—in remembrance of the president who had invited Booker T. Washington to the White House in 1901, a politically daring thing to do at the time.

Pioneers moving west named their cities Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and Hamilton. Americans also named cities Athens, Rome, and Corinth, as many of the founding fathers had looked to classical models like Cicero and Cato for their heroes. An expanding democratic America produced new heroes, men of modest education but brave and self-reliant. Known as "the Hero," Andrew Jackson was as admired as George Washington, better loved than Thomas Jefferson. Dying at the Alamo in 1836, Davy Crockett became a war hero.

On May 30, 1868, our first official Memorial Day, children all over America picked wildflowers and placed them on the graves of soldiers. In Washington, D.C., people wore mourning scarves and decorated the graves of unknown men who had died at the Battle of Bull Run. Four thousand citizens marched to the National Cemetery in Richmond and marked each of seven thousand graves with a miniature American flag. From Nantucket to San Francisco, in large and small towns, Americans honored their Civil War dead by creating statues and memorials on an unprecedented scale.

Near the end of the century, Bostonians chose architect Charles Follen McKim's plans for their new Boston Public Library, a building that celebrates greatness. Looking up to the granite exterior of the second story, one sees etched in stone the names of over 500 artists, writers, inventors, and scientists of Western civilization. Inside, on the first floor, woven into the vaulted mosaic ceiling, are the names of American cultural heroes like Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. On the top floor are John Singer Sargent's huge painted murals of the ancient hero Sir Lancelot, seeker of the Holy Grail.

Not everyone in the 19th century joined in praise of heroes. Richard Hildreth, a sophisticated New England historian, wearied of celebration and called for the depiction of "living and breathing men...with their faults as well as their virtues." Edgar Allan Poe wrote, "That man is no man who

stands in awe of his fellow man." And even in the 19th century, journalists mocked the exploits of Buffalo Bill, satirized the decisions of Abraham Lincoln, and questioned the reputed heroics of General George Custer. The dominant voice of the century, however, was affirmative and confident, even if sometimes sentimental.

Of course the 19th-century idealists knew their heroes were not perfect. Even so, they believed that heroes instruct us in greatness, that heroes remind us of our better selves, and that heroes strengthen the ordinary citizen trying to live decently.

Recognizing Heroines

In patriarchal 19th-century America, women were free to marry, teach school, and work in factories. They were expected to have large families and often died young, due to the complications of childbirth. Those born privileged could patronize the fine arts and play uplifting music. If unusually daring, they crusaded. But they were not considered leaders or given center stage. Women could not be warriors, explorers, orators, or politicians—the normal routes to heroism in the 19th century.

Noah Webster and William McGuffey featured women as wives and mothers. When Mason Locke Weems looked for subjects for his best-selling juvenile biographies at the beginning of the 19th century, he did not think of women. New Yorkers at the dedication of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans in 1901 watched as 29 plaques were unveiled, but not one celebrated a woman.

Unable to vote or hold office, generally excluded from the ministry, law, and medicine, and discouraged from speaking in public, women in 19th-century America—many of them motivated by their religious faith—channeled their heroic impulses into altruism and reform. Between the American Revolution and the Spanish-American War, America became a better nation, a more humanitarian nation, in part through the efforts of women of extraordinary achievement, courage, and greatness of soul, who tried to improve prisons, abolish slavery, and forge equality for women. Although not fully recognized in their time, these women not only reflected the ideology of heroism in 19th-century America but helped shape it.

Influenced by Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, one of her heroes, Dorothea Dix wrote a book of uplifting poetry as a young teacher. In 1841, Dix was asked to teach a Sunday school class in a cold East Cambridge jail in Massachusetts, where she found mentally ill inmates "bound with chains, lacerated with ropes, scourged with rods." Dix reported her findings to the Massachusetts legislature and initiated a movement to reform treatment of the mentally ill and build new hospitals for them. She raised money from private donors in Massachusetts, then took her cause on the road, traveling ten thousand miles through other states in three years and going abroad in 1854 to meet with Pope Pius II and Queen Victoria. Dix volunteered during the Civil War and became the Union's Superintendent of Female Nurses. Accustomed to having her way, she alienated the Union medical establishment while managing to raise money and secure supplies. After the war, she continued to

America became a better nation through the efforts of women of extraordinary achievement, courage, and greatness of soul, who tried to improve prisons, abolish slavery, and forge equality for women.



visit hospitals and prisons. By the end of Dix's 40-year crusade, the number of mental hospitals in America in 1881 had grown from 13 to 123.

Before the Civil War, Harriet Tubman, who was called the Moses of her people, made 19 trips south to rescue nearly 300 slaves, wearing different disguises and carrying a pistol. So effective was she that Maryland planters offered \$40,000 for her capture. She addressed abolitionist rallies, supported the radical John Brown, and condemned Abraham Lincoln for his initial refusal to free slaves. During the war, she served as spy, scout, and nurse and witnessed the attack on Fort Wagner, where Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's 54th African-American Regiment fell. While well-known in abolitionist circles, Tubman was never given the recognition in her lifetime that Frederick Douglass eventually received in his, and for many years the government denied her a pension for her service in the Civil War. In a letter in 1868, Douglass wrote to Tubman: "I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day—you the night.... The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witness to your devotion to freedom and of your heroism."

As the 19th century progressed, women who became reformers and humanitarians received increasing respect and some recognition. Abraham Lincoln credited Harriet Beecher Stowe with starting the Civil War because so many Americans read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After calling Clarissa (Clara) Barton the Angel of the Battlefield, the

chief Union Army surgeon at the Battle of Antietam wrote that Barton was more of a hero than General McClellan, the commander of the Army of the Potomac. By the end of the century, suffragist Susan B. Anthony, once vilified, had traveled all over America giving interviews to hundreds of newspaper reporters.

At the start of the 20th century, Jane Addams's efforts on behalf of immigrants gained her the accolade of heroine. Up until World War I, however, no woman commanded the adulation given Robert E. Lee or Abraham Lincoln. No woman in 19th-century America had the status of Joan of Arc in 15th-century France or of Queen Elizabeth in 16th-century England. In 19th-century America, heroism and greatness were linked to public life, physical bravery, war, and gender. Not until the feminist movement of the late 20th century would American women be given full access to public life and fair representation in our history books. Not until then would altruists and reformers compete with soldiers and political leaders for the title of hero.

The Warrior Hero

Throughout most of America's history, our heroes were warriors. We have extolled the preacher, the statesman, the capitalist, and the humanitarian, but until recently we reserved our highest status and most respected medals for soldiers. To generals who win went the greatest glory. Outnumbered and short of rifles, Andrew Jackson defeated the British professional soldiers at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, losing only a dozen men while the English casualties numbered over two thousand. After Admiral George Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898, New Yorkers built him a triumphal arch at Washington Square and Americans named their babies, racehorses, and yachts after him. Following World War II, General George Marshall—chief of staff during the Allied victory and architect of the financial plan to resuscitate Western Europe—became the most admired man in America. Generals George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, and Dwight Eisenhower all became president.

In America, foot soldiers as well as generals are heroes. After World War I, we built the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. In Arlington National Cemetery, the tomb was intended to honor the nation's soldiers who had been denied glory and rendered anonymous.

For its living hero, Americans turned to a Tennessee farmer, Alvin York, who found himself behind the German lines on a foggy morning in 1918 when his patrol came under heavy machine-gun fire and half his men were shot. York alone—armed with only a rifle—attacked, killing over 20 Germans and capturing 132. York became an American hero because he had protected his men and had shot skillfully, but he garnered even further admiration when, in the spring of 1919, the *Saturday Evening Post* revealed that York, a pacifist, had gone to war reluctantly.

Reluctant Warriors

America typically has made heroes out of soldiers who do not like war. The colonists praised George Washington when he defeated the British but were relieved when he gave

up his sword at the end of the Revolutionary War. The founding fathers, fearful of a military dictatorship, wrote into the Constitution that only Congress—not the military—could declare war and that the president—a civilian—would be the commander in chief. Unlike the ancient Romans, we do not glorify war. We have, for the most part, always been reluctant warriors.

In 1899, Roosevelt wrote *Rough Riders*, a description of his military career in the Spanish-American War. In it, he described Princeton polo players and Arizona cowboys becoming brothers through battle: their training in Florida for the attack on Cuba, the heat of combat, and the bravery of wounded soldiers who fall without complaint and refuse to retreat to field hospitals. In *Rough Riders*, there are no reluctant warriors. Roosevelt put into words an ethos atypical in American history and antithetical to the views espoused by such esteemed Americans as William James and Andrew Carnegie, an ethos that temporarily captured the imagination

of many Americans before World War I. With the memory of the Civil War growing dim at the turn of the century, *Rough Riders* provided the nation with new warrior heroes.

In June of 1914 the Great War began. In the cities of Europe, citizens cheered and young men flocked to recruiting stations. Everyone believed the war would be short and glorious. But the impersonal, seemingly senseless, and catastrophic losses of trench warfare shattered the beliefs that man is rational and inherently good and that progress is inevitable, influencing a whole generation of European and American intellectuals.

Before he died in France at age twenty-five in 1918, Wilfred Owen wrote antiwar poems like *Dulce et Decorum Est*, describing the horror of a gas attack and mocking the Roman notion that it is sweet and decorous to die for your country. In Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederick Henry, a medic on the Italian front, concludes that he was "embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice

Eugenia Ginzburg

It is 1935. Eugenia Ginzburg is a teacher, writer, mother, and Communist, proud and idealistic, a believer in truth and justice. It is a bad year to be proud and idealistic, a bad year to be a believer in truth and justice. The Great Purge has begun.

Joseph Stalin is determined to rid Russia of the proud and independent.

Over the next four years Stalin will murder political rivals, decimate the Communist party, execute generals, purge his own secret police, and send to prison camps poets, artists, historians, priests, peasants, and countless citizens who happen to live next door to a jealous neighbor or to have the wrong friend.

Because her professor is a Trotskyite and she refuses to denounce him, Ginzburg becomes suspect and loses her teaching position and party card. She repeatedly returns to Moscow to protest. In 1937 she is called to party headquarters, turned over to the secret police, accused of belonging to a terrorist organization, and thrown into the Russian prison system—the gulag. During her 18 years in the gulag, her husband will disappear and her youngest son will die of starvation in Leningrad.

Ginzburg goes from Kazan's Black Lake prison to Yaroslavl. To ward off

despair, she taps out messages to other prisoners through thick stone walls, talks out loud, and thinks of everything she has ever read. Insisting that solitary confinement can make one "kinder, more intelligent and perceptive," she struggles for serenity. Finally out of solitary confinement, she is transported by boxcar from Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean and ferried to the Elgen labor camp in eastern Siberia. There she endures night blindness, a diet of putrid fish, scurvy, frostbite, lice, malaria, attacks by criminals, threats of rape. Ginzburg is tempted to suicide, fears for her sanity, and collapses from dysentery.

How does Ginzburg survive? Through friendship. As she is being transferred out of Black Lake prison, a man taps through the wall, "I wish you courage and pride." When she can't stop thinking about her dead son and collapses in despair, her cellmate strokes her head and recites passages from the book of Job.

She survives through poetry. In a cold punishment cell, as rats scuttle past her, she recites Blok, Nekrasov, and Pasternak and writes poems, "Silence" and "The Punishment Cell." In a crowded boxcar in the middle of Siberia, she recites poetry by the hour to divert her fellow prisoners who are

dying from thirst. The guards hear her and are furious because they think someone has smuggled books into the boxcar. They stop the train and search for books, then demand proof of Ginzburg's amazing memory, insisting that she recite *Eugene Onegin* and promising to give the women water if she can perform. For three hours Ginzburg recites Pushkin.

Refusing to denounce other party members, Ginzburg survives by having a clear conscience. She survives by refusing to think about her children, by escaping physical torture, by luck. Ginzburg also survives through insatiable curiosity: "My intense curiosity about life in all its manifestations—even in its debasement, cruelty, and madness—sometimes made me forget my troubles." And she survives through defiant optimism. In a tragic world, she convinces herself that suffering offers insight. She almost succumbs to despair but always pulls back. She possesses an unusual gift of appreciation—whether of a park glimpsed through a prison window, a sunset, or prison camp children. Her misfortunes brought forth nobility. Ginzburg had a vision of greatness—the Russian literary giants—that sustained her in crisis.

—P.G.

They fought Japan and Germany without sentimentality and returned home gratefully, chastened by the blitz, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and civilian deaths unprecedented in human history.



and the expression in vain.” After the horrors of the war, Sigmund Freud would write, “The world will never be again a happy place.” To many, the war vindicated the antiwar crusades of James and Carnegie. In *Rough Riders*, Roosevelt had spoken for an age that had not seen over 300,000 men die in the battle of Verdun.

In 1931, Jane Addams, once a pariah for her opposition to the war, was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize for her lifelong crusade for peace. The 1933 movie *Heroes for Sale* portrays a World War I veteran, down on his luck and unappreciated by his country, who goes to a pawnshop to sell his Congressional Medal of Honor. The owner of the pawnshop shows him a case full of similar medals and turns him away. World War I was a watershed in the decline of the soldier hero in American history.

The evils of fascism ended the pacifism of the 1930s, re-suscitated the warrior hero, and made icons of generals like Douglas MacArthur and George S. Patton, Jr. But the greatest generation dispensed with the ardor of Theodore Roosevelt and entered World War II reluctantly, only after the attack on Pearl Harbor, when they volunteered in great numbers. They fought Japan and Germany without senti-

mentality and returned home gratefully, chastened by the blitz, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and civilian deaths unprecedented in human history.

The Legacy of Vietnam

Since World War II, a constellation of factors—primary among them the Vietnam War—has given rise to a skepticism about warrior heroes that persists even today, especially among many young Americans. Following the carnage of the two world wars came the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. Korea ended in a draw, Vietnam in defeat. Vietnam was our longest war, our first televised war, and our most bitterly contested war.

In an unprecedented way, American writers and filmmakers have removed romance and glamour from war. *Saving Private Ryan*, which won Best Director and other Academy Awards in 1998, is in part a tribute to the soldiers who fought on the beaches of Normandy and liberated villages in France, but the first 20 minutes of combat footage is so graphic that students have told me it turned them into pacifists.

After Vietnam, American history textbooks gave less space to military heroes and more to reformers and humanitarians. In literature classes, students learned about war through antiwar novels, like Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*, and Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. As the curriculum in American schools became profoundly antiwar, it also became antimilitary, making it difficult for students to honor the men who fought and died for America and hard for them to think about volunteering for the armed forces.

The status of the American warrior has never been high in times of peace. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retreat of communism, the American military lost its enemy of 40 years and started to downsize. Salaries lost pace with inflation, recruits became harder to find. As world trade expanded and democracy spread, nationalism seemed less important and globetrotting capitalists became more powerful than generals. But the September 2001 terrorist attack on America provided a new, if shadowy, enemy; and a nation that once felt secure at the end of the Cold War turned with fear and gratitude to the warrior heroes whom, until recently, it had taken for granted.

Talking to Students Today About Heroes

As I travel around the country making the case for heroism, I urge students to look for heroes but not to succumb to hero worship, to cast their nets wide, to look beyond the athletic field, the movie screen, and the recording studio, and to let some sort of grandeur be a factor in their selection. The trick, I suggest, is to be amused by popular culture but not seduced, to know the difference between heroes and charlatans, to pick worthy heroes. If they have trouble believing in heroes, I ask them to find heroic qualities in different people and to celebrate heroic moments.

I offer examples of heroic qualities. Heroes set the bar high. In the 1950s we were told that no one could ever run a

(Continued on page 46)

Attracting Well-Qualified Teachers to Struggling Schools

By Cynthia D. Prince

The belief that schools are going to educate every child is so widely accepted now that it is easy to forget that schools were not always expected to bring every child to high standards of performance. Until fairly recently it was permissible practice to reserve the most qualified teachers for those schools serving high-achieving, affluent, college-bound students who were believed to hold the greatest promise of success.

But holding school systems accountable for improving the performance of *all* schools and *all* students might well require that resources—both human and financial—be allocated according to greatest need. This notion presents a challenge to public education. Can school superintendents and union representatives work together to design fair, effective strategies to ensure that the students with the greatest needs are assigned especially well-qualified teachers?

This article analyzes the enormous complexity of this issue, including the impact of teacher quality on student achievement, the evidence that teachers regularly migrate out of low-performing schools, and the potential solution that lies in offering incentives to well-qualified teachers who commit to work in struggling schools.

* * *

Ample evidence confirms that our poorest children face the greatest educational challenges. Students who attend schools with concentrated poverty have vastly unequal opportunities to develop literacy and other academic skills.¹ High-poverty schools suffer from fewer resources, greater teacher and administrator shortages, fewer applications for vacancies, higher absenteeism among teachers and staff, and

higher rates of teacher and administrator turnover. Problems related to working conditions and the organization of the schools are compounded by social problems related to poverty in the larger community: hunger, homelessness, crime, substance abuse, chronic health problems, parental unemployment, and low levels of parental education, literacy, and job skills. These problems, in turn, contribute to higher rates of student absenteeism and mobility, higher dropout rates, and lower levels of academic achievement.

For example, the likelihood is greater that children will have difficulty learning to read if they are poor, non-white, or non-native speakers of English.² In 2000, only 16 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders and only 12 percent of blacks scored at or above proficient levels of achievement in reading, compared to 40 percent of whites.³ Similar disparities occurred between poor and non-poor students: only 14 percent of low-income fourth-graders achieved reading proficiency, compared to 41 percent of those who were not poor. At the end of a decade of unprecedented efforts nationwide to improve public schools, roughly six out of every 10 poor and minority students still failed to reach even the basic level in reading achievement.

A seemingly endless list of strategies has been proposed to close this achievement gap: smaller classes, smaller schools, standards-based reform, whole-school reform, lengthening the school day, lengthening the school year, before- and after-school programs, charter schools, and parental involvement. The most drastic strategies include privatization of public school systems, mayoral and state takeovers, and school reconstitution.

However, none of these strategies is likely to work in the absence of highly qualified teachers and strong, supportive principals who can create good working conditions that will attract and retain them. A different kind of strategy to close the achievement gap, and one that has received far too little attention, is to create incentives that spur well-qualified teachers to select and remain in the schools that serve students with the greatest needs. Recently, 11 states have passed legislation to increase teacher pay,⁴ and many states and districts are offering various monetary incentives to lure more

Cynthia D. Prince is issues analysis director at the American Association of School Administrators. This article is based on papers she previously authored for AASA, The Challenge of Attracting Good Teachers and Principals to Struggling Schools (January 2002) and Higher Pay in Hard-to-Staff Schools: The Case for Financial Incentives (June 2002). The complete papers are available online at AASA's Web site (www.aasa.org/issues_and_insights/issues_dept/index.htm).



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teachers to their ranks and keep the ones they already have—all reasonable steps at a time when there is a shortage of qualified teachers. But relatively few incentives are expressly designed to attract and retain teachers in the struggling schools where they are needed the most.⁵

Depressing Disparities

The effects of teacher quality on student achievement are well-documented. Although researchers disagree on the best measure of teacher quality (e.g., experience, test scores, advanced degrees, state certification, etc.), remarkably consistent patterns suggest that teachers are not equitably distributed across schools by any of these measures. The more impoverished and racially isolated the school, the greater the likelihood that students in the school will be taught by inexperienced teachers, uncertified teachers, and out-of-field teachers, as shown in the following examples:

■ **Experience:** Darling-Hammond (1995) observes that studies of teacher efficacy consistently show that experienced teachers are more effective than beginners at resolving a number of instructional and managerial problems, such as maintaining discipline, motivating students, and adapting instruction for students with diverse learning needs.⁶

Yet novice teachers with three years of classroom experience or less are twice as likely to be assigned to high-minority, high-poverty schools.⁷ In four of the five largest school districts in Maryland, for example, schools with the highest average percentage of novice teachers (46 percent) were compared to schools with the lowest average percentage of novice teachers (11 percent).⁸ Schools with the largest proportions of novice teachers had more than twice as many minority students, almost three times as many poor students, and less than half as many students achieving at satisfactory levels on state achievement tests.

■ **Preparation, knowledge, and skills:** Research by Guyton and Farokhi (1987) indicates that teachers' subject-matter knowledge and knowledge about teaching and learning are strongly associated with ratings of teacher effectiveness in the classroom.⁹ Yet poor and minority students are disproportionately found in classrooms of teachers with weak preparation and training.

In a study of teacher migration in New York State public schools between 1993 and 1998, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002), found that teachers who changed districts were half as likely to have failed either the general knowledge portion of the National Teachers Examination or the New York State Liberal Arts and Science certification exam and 35 percent more likely to hold bachelor's degrees from highly or most competitive colleges. Schools that had weak teachers as measured by one attribute were more likely to have weak teachers on other measures, and lower-performing students were more likely to be in schools with these less-qualified teachers.¹⁰

Ingersoll (2002) found that 34 percent of the classes offered in high-poverty schools and 29 percent offered in predominantly minority schools in 2000 were taught by teachers with less than a college minor in the subject they were assigned to teach.¹¹ In contrast, only 19 to 21 percent of the

classes offered in schools with low percentages of poor and minority students were taught by out-of-field teachers.

In California, more than 40,000 classroom teachers were teaching on emergency permits or waivers in school year 1999-2000. Most were concentrated in urban school districts with the highest proportions of the state's poor and minority students. Low-achieving schools were nearly five times as likely as high-achieving schools to employ these teachers; high-minority schools were nearly seven times as likely as low-minority schools to employ them.¹²

■ **Turnover:** High rates of teacher migration are disruptive and can adversely affect morale, community relationships, and school performance. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, teachers in schools with minority enrollments of 50 percent or more migrate at twice the rate of teachers in schools with few minority students.¹³

In Philadelphia, for example, one-third of the jobs held by teachers in the public schools turned over between 1996 and 1999.¹⁴ Teachers who moved didn't necessarily leave Philadelphia; migration to other schools within the district accounted for nearly half of all job changes. But when teachers did move, they tended to move to "more desirable" schools within the city (those with higher test scores, lower poverty rates, and fewer minority students).

Similar patterns were documented by Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) in their three-year study of teacher mobility in Texas.¹⁵ On average, teachers who switched districts moved to districts where student achievement was 3 percentile points higher and the proportions of black, Hispanic, and poor students were lower, by 2.5 percent, 5 percent, and 6.6 percent, respectively. Even when teachers switched schools within urban districts, they tended to seek out schools with higher student achievement, fewer black and Hispanic students, and fewer students eligible for subsidized lunches. According to the researchers, "these patterns are consistent with the frequently hypothesized placement of new teachers in the most difficult teaching situations within urban districts coupled with an ability to change locations as they move up the experience ranks."¹⁶ The only teachers who broke with this pattern were black teachers, who were more likely to move to schools with higher enrollments of black students than their originating schools.

Importantly, Hanushek et al. note that the data do not indicate whether the characteristics of the students themselves directly affected teachers' decisions to migrate, or served as proxies for other factors such as less attractive working conditions in the schools or travel time to work. Either way, the effect was the same: Experienced teachers tended to shift to schools serving fewer poor, minority, and low-achieving students.

These patterns strongly suggest that without intervention, schools that serve students most in need of experienced, well-prepared teachers will continue to face recurring staff vacancies. To fill these vacancies, school districts will continue to assign inexperienced teachers who lack the seniority to request transfers, or they will resort to filling vacancies with uncertified teachers who hold

emergency permits or waivers, interns, long-term substitutes, or teachers who do not hold degrees in the subjects they are assigned to teach.

Large numbers of experienced teachers will not choose to teach in these schools under current circumstances. Indeed, 69 percent of teachers in North Carolina, 53 percent of administrators, and 57 percent of teacher assistants polled in March 2000 said that if given the opportunity, they would not volunteer to work in a low-performing school.¹⁷

One Source of the Disparities: Equal Pay for Unequal Work

Given the current compensation structure—in which all teachers in a district are working their way up the same ladder—why would a teacher choose to work in a low-performing school? It is a clear example of equal pay for *unequal* work if one set of teachers enjoys schools in safe neighborhoods, prepared students, well-qualified colleagues, and adequate materials in the classroom while another set of teachers faces quite the opposite. To keep well-qualified teachers in low-performing schools for more than a couple of years, this imbalance must be addressed. Incentives—monetary and non-monetary—are necessary because these schools continue to be the most difficult to staff, and “the difficulty of these jobs is rarely reflected in the salaries offered to teachers who fill them.”¹⁸

The problem with the traditional single-salary schedule, economists contend, is that if all teachers in a district are compensated at the same level without regard to differences in amenities or the difficulty of the task, they will naturally tend to gravitate to jobs with less stress, fewer demands, and more desirable working conditions. In other areas of the economy, wages adjust to compensate for differences that make some jobs relatively more attractive than others. If wages are not allowed to adjust, high-poverty, low-performing schools will have much greater difficulty competing for experienced, qualified teachers. Economist Michael Podgursky argues that the

single-salary schedule yields perverse, unintended consequences. Rather than allowing wages to adjust to compensate for differing working conditions, teachers must adjust instead. Special education teachers “burn out” and leave the profession, or transfer over to assignments outside of special education. Troubled schools in urban districts end up with the least experienced teachers as more experienced teachers use their seniority to transfer to favored schools. Teachers move but pay doesn’t.

If schools differ in terms of nonpecuniary conditions (e.g., safety, student rowdiness), then equalizing teacher pay will disqualify teacher quality. On the other hand, if districts wish to equalize quality they will need to disqualify pay.¹⁹

Today, both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association favor offering locally developed financial incentives to qualified teachers who choose to work in hard-to-staff schools. The AFT first endorsed this position in the mid-1980s. It reaffirmed this position in February 2001, by adopting a resolution on professional compensation for teachers that asserted “increased compensation is necessary to attract teachers to difficult assignments and shortage areas if we are to have qualified teachers in every classroom.”²⁰

In fact, higher pay in low-performing or hard-to-staff schools has wide appeal among teachers. In an April 2000 Public Agenda survey of teachers with five years of experience or less, the overwhelming majority (84 percent) favored paying higher salaries to teachers “who agree to work in difficult schools with hard-to-educate children.”²¹

Monetary Incentives, Along with Improved Conditions, Can Help

Because most incentive programs are fairly new, this strategy is largely untested, and policymakers are proceeding cautiously because they are not sure how effective differentiated-pay systems will be.²² Moreover, some argue, it is not clear whether teachers will respond in predictable ways to monetary incentives because good teachers are drawn to the profession by teaching’s intrinsic rewards—in other words, “the best teachers aren’t in it for the money.”²³

But money does matter, and how it matters becomes quite clear if salary is viewed as just one of many factors that employees weigh when assessing the relative attractiveness of any particular job, such as opportunities for advancement, difficulty of the job, length of commute, and flexibility of working hours. Salary matters less when other characteristics of the workplace are personally or professionally satisfying. When they are not, or if the work itself is significantly more demanding, salary matters more and can be the tipping point that determines whether teachers stay or leave. Adjusting salaries upward can compensate for less appealing aspects of jobs; conversely, improving the relative attractiveness of jobs can compensate for lower salaries.

Evidence that money matters more when the job is more challenging comes from studies of staffing patterns in California and Texas school districts. Nearly half of California teachers surveyed in 2001 named pay scale and benefits as the most, second most, or third most important reason they chose the district where they work. Teachers in high-poverty, high-minority districts named pay and benefits as an important reason more often than others.²⁴ In Texas, Kirby, Naftel, and Berends (1999) found that increases in teacher pay significantly lower teacher attrition, particularly in high-poverty school districts. In high-poverty districts, a \$1,000 increase in beginning teacher salaries would reduce teacher attrition by an estimated 6.2 percent, compared to 1.6 percent in medium-poverty districts, and 1 percent in low-poverty districts.²⁵

Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) conclude that higher salaries could overcome teacher reluctance to work in hard-to-staff schools, but to be effective the increases would have to be substantial. They found that targeted pay raises of 20, 30, or even 50 percent may be needed to offset the disadvantages that some schools face in the teacher labor market.²⁶ The amount of additional compensation required to attract and retain teachers need not be as daunting, of course, if schools can improve the relative attractiveness of these jobs in other ways.

In fact, few teachers will be swayed by financial incentives if they suspect that they are purely compensatory measures to make up for bad working conditions, lack of resources,

and poor leadership, rather than part of a larger plan to make teaching in hard-to-staff schools personally and professionally rewarding.²⁷ As Harvard education professor Richard Murnane points out, "Paying people extra money to do an impossible job doesn't work, and you need to make the jobs doable such that at the end of the day, people feel glad that they're there."²⁸

Clearly, any serious effort to attract well-qualified teachers to the schools that serve students with the greatest needs will require attention to a whole range of factors that make the job more doable, including improving school leadership, reducing class size, and clamping down on student discipline problems. But the fact remains: "Hard-to-staff schools serve children with more special needs and fewer social advantages and teachers are not compensated for gaining the special skills necessary to meet these students' greater needs."²⁹ All indicators suggest that paying teachers more money to take on tougher assignments is an essential part of the solution—and districts cannot afford this without help from states and the federal government.

Mandates Are Not Likely To Solve the Problem

To supply struggling schools with high-quality teachers, some districts may be tempted to simply mandate that teachers transfer. But this is not a feasible option. New York City is a case in point. In August 2000, State Commissioner of Education Richard Mills sued the New York City Board of Education for hiring nearly 600 uncertified teachers to staff the city's 99 lowest-performing schools, in violation of Board of Regents' policies.³⁰ Mills ordered then-Chancellor Harold Levy to replace the uncertified teachers in these schools and to fill new vacancies with certified teachers.

One response developed by Levy was an incentive plan to help fill vacancies by dramatically increasing the starting salaries of experienced private and parochial school teachers who agreed to transfer into the city's lowest-performing schools.³¹ A spokesman for Mills praised the incentive plan, but suggested that Levy transfer teachers from other city schools as well, even if they did not want to go.

Mr. Levy expressed reluctance, noting that "historically the board has lost certified teachers to the suburbs when it has attempted involuntarily to require new teachers to teach in undesirable locations. I view this road as folly."³² Mr. Levy estimated that more than 2,000 certified teachers turned down job offers in 2001 because they did not want to be assigned to one of the city's 99 lowest-performing schools.³³ Because the board of education was under court order to staff these schools with certified teachers first, recruiters actually turned away certified teachers from schools with vacancies because they were not considered failing schools. One exasperated teacher who said that she would never work in a failing school argued

You have to be a combination of a social worker and Mother Teresa to work in those schools. Those kids deserve a decent education, but we as teachers deserve a decent work atmosphere. We deserve to be safe. I worked so hard to get my license, I did all this schooling, and the last thing I heard, America was a country of free choice.³⁴

For tens of thousands of students in hard-to-staff schools, a highly qualified teacher can be a life-altering investment.

Pressure from the New York City teachers' union added to Levy's reluctance. Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, vowed to fight involuntary transfers of experienced teachers in court. She cautioned that "at a time when the city is begging for teachers, you will lose people when you mandate where they work."³⁵ Moreover, she warned that "forcing teachers to transfer to troubled schools would 'outrage' parents and compel the teachers to abandon New York City schools altogether."³⁶

The Incentives Must Be Carefully Designed

One of the strongest advocates for incentives turns out to be New York City's United Federation of Teachers. Though they adamantly oppose any plan to transfer teachers involuntarily to low-performing schools, the union favors monetary incentives to attract teachers to these schools voluntarily. Working together, the union and the district developed a program in 1999 called Extended Time Schools in which certified teachers who chose to transfer into one of 39 low-performing schools received a 15 percent pay raise in exchange for working 40 extra minutes per day and participating in an extra week of training at the beginning of the school year. The incentive prompted about 600 teachers to apply for positions in these schools, which, in turn, contributed to gains in student achievement. (Read more about this initiative in the following article by Julia Koppich.) The success of New York City's initiative inspired Baltimore's superintendent, Carmen Russo, to create a similar program in 2001. Teachers in selected low-performing schools work an extra 55 minutes a day and receive an 11 percent increase in salary.

Growing numbers of states and districts (and in some

cases, corporations and the federal government) are experimenting with incentives to increase teacher supply.³⁷ However, only two states, California and New York, have developed comprehensive systems of targeted incentives that are focused and powerful enough to increase the supply of teachers for hard-to-staff schools. In California, benefits for teachers who take on the toughest assignments include:

- **Loan forgiveness:** Assumes up to \$19,000 in student loan payments if teacher candidates agree to teach in a subject-shortage area in low-performing schools for at least four years.
- **Housing incentives:** Allows the use of tax credits or mortgage revenue bonds for teachers who commit to serve at least five years in a low-performing school.
- **Additional bonuses for National Board Certified Teachers:** Awards a supplemental \$20,000 bonus to National Board Certified Teachers who serve in low-performing schools for four years, in addition to the one-time \$10,000 bonus for all National Board Certified Teachers.

However, the budget crisis in California has led state policymakers to discontinue some incentives offered previously, such as a fellowship program for teacher candidates who committed to teach in a low-performing school.

To be successful, incentive plans must be carefully designed, but some have led to unintended consequences. In Hartford, for example, the district brought in new teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas at higher steps on the salary schedule.³⁸ But the change angered many longtime district employees when some newly hired teachers were offered higher salaries than experienced veterans teaching in the same hard-to-staff areas. This occurred because incumbent teachers were forced to forego step increases during three salary freezes and, unlike the new hires, did not receive salary credit for student teaching. The Hartford Federation of Teachers estimates that this unusual pay disparity could affect 30 to 40 percent of the city's teachers, and it has filed a grievance. Former union president Edwin Vargas warned of additional costs if veteran Hartford teachers rectify the pay disparity by switching districts: "If Hartford loses teachers to the suburbs, they're going to lose experienced people, and they'll hire inexperienced people at a higher salary.... If they're going to be competitive with the new, they can't mistreat the old."³⁹

Much can also be learned about well-structured incentive plans from the private sector, where pay has long been differentiated according to the difficulty of an assignment or the specialized training required. As Podgursky (2001) notes:

Differential pay by field within professions is pervasive. Cardiologists on average earn much more than general practitioners; corporate lawyers earn more than public-interest lawyers; and intensive-care nurses earn more than school nurses.... Economists see these types of pay differentials as central to the efficient operation of markets. Professional fields that require greater training or draw on relatively specialized skills typically command higher earnings. Alternatively, some tasks involve greater stress and less pleasant working conditions. Other things

being equal, these too will command higher earnings. Even the U.S. military recognizes the principle of compensating differentials with overseas and hazardous duty pay.⁴⁰

Finding the right balance of monetary and non-monetary incentives will, no doubt, be difficult. To ensure that the balance of incentives will work as intended and will appeal to teachers in different areas, it will be important to allow teachers a say in developing local compensation policies.

But if solutions are not developed quickly, poor students will continue to be underserved and critics of public education will continue to press for alternatives, such as privatization and vouchers, to solve the persistent problem of staffing low-performing schools. The Bush Administration, for example, has proposed spending \$3.7 billion over five years on a federal income tax credit to enable parents to withdraw their children from low-performing public schools.⁴¹ Rather than using the money to improve these schools by increasing teacher compensation and improving working conditions so that teachers will not want to leave, the proposal will allow parents to claim up to \$2,500 per year toward the costs of tuition, fees, and transportation so that they can remove their children from public schools identified as failing under new federal guidelines.

It is increasingly clear that school system leaders and teachers' unions must come to terms with what it will take to attract and retain qualified teachers in the most challenging schools. When weighed against the costs of lost educational opportunities, federal sanctions, and the hefty price of teacher attrition, financial incentives to attract and retain teachers in the nation's most challenging classrooms are an option well worth pursuing. For tens of thousands of students in hard-to-staff schools, a highly qualified teacher can be a life-altering investment. The question is not whether we can afford to pay the price. The question is whether we can afford not to. □

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(Continued on page 50)

Using Well-Qualified Teachers Well

*The Right Teachers in the Right Places
with the Right Support
Bring Success to Troubled New York City Schools*

Premium pay is necessary to attract and keep highly qualified teachers in our nation's most troubled schools. But it is not sufficient. As the previous article makes clear, monetary incentives will not induce teachers to take on "undoable" jobs; other changes that make student success possible must be undertaken as well. In New York City, the Extended Time Schools show that when a strategic battle is waged on low achievement, the results can be dramatic and sustained—even in the toughest schools, even with the most academically disinclined students.

—EDITOR

By Julia E. Koppich

Overburdened, inexperienced teachers; students who live in poverty; parents with limited facility in English; inadequate textbooks and supplies. No matter what descriptor is applied—"low-performing schools," "high-priority schools"—the facts are starkly the same. Schools with these characteristics are the nation's most troubled. These are the schools in which academic progress is grindingly slow, when it occurs at all.

But higher achievement is possible. New York City's Extended Time Schools, an initiative designed for struggling elementary and middle schools, has for four years been changing the conventional wisdom about troubled schools, demonstrating that improvement is possible. It's a long story, but largely it comes down to six key ingredients: extra time for students; well-qualified teachers; strong principals; professional development; a required, effective curriculum; and smaller classes—all embedded in a clear system of standards and accountability.

*Julia E. Koppich worked for the San Francisco Federation of Teachers and taught at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education. Now, she is president of Julia Koppich and Associates, which specializes in education policy. Koppich is author of numerous reports and three books, including *United Mind Workers: Unions and Teaching in the Knowledge Society*, co-authored with Charles T. Kerchner and Joseph G. Weeres.*

* * *

New York City public schools, a system of more than a million students, has taken dramatic steps to confront the problems of struggling schools. In 1995, newly appointed school system Chancellor Rudy Crew (chancellor from 1995 to 1999) began looking for a fresh approach to improving the city's worst-performing schools. After months of meetings with key players such as then-Deputy Chancellor for Instruction Judith Rizzo, then-United Federation of Teachers (now-AFT) President Sandra Feldman, and UFT Vice-President David Sherman, Crew decided on a bold move. Breaking away from NYC's tradition of independent community school districts, in 1996 Crew won approval from the Board of Education to establish the "Chancellor's District" for schools in which students' academic performance hovered at the bottom. Although other districts that compose the city's school system are the result of contiguous geography, the tie that binds Chancellor's District schools is

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE GIBERT





the combination of grievously low student-performance levels and an observable lack of internal school or home district capacity to bring about improvement.* Crew and his colleagues knew the road ahead would be a difficult one.

Bringing about improvement in the city's lowest performing schools would not be a matter of a new program here, an educational tweak there, and a swift declaration of victory. No quick fix would do for these overwhelmed schools. There was a deep need to change the basic way of doing business. Crew, his staff, and union officials continued to meet regularly to map out a strategy. Recalling those early meetings, David Sherman says, "We all had a mutual concern...that if you didn't raise the bottom schools up, they would hold the whole school system down."

The initial task of unpacking the problems of the elementary and middle schools in the newly named Chancellor's

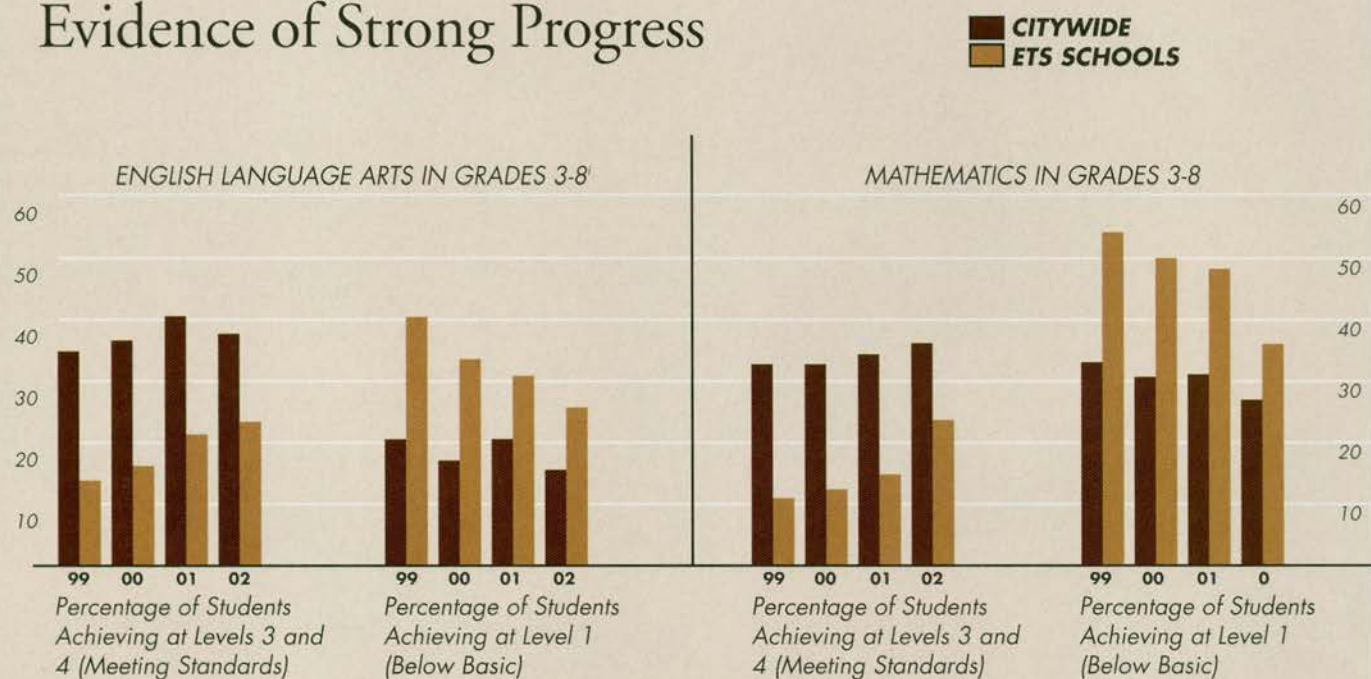
* To further clarify, when the Chancellor's District began, New York City had a unique governance structure in which the overall school district was subdivided into 32 neighborhood or "home" districts, each with substantial governance authority. The Chancellor's District's non-geographic jurisdiction was an exception to this general structure. In the past year, the state legislature changed the governance structure of NYC's public schools; as part of this change, the 32 districts no longer have the exceptional governance authority they once did.

District fell to then-Deputy Chancellor Rizzo. She found that among the difficulties from which these low-performing schools suffered was too expansive an array of specialized curricular programs. Few of the programs seemed to be selected for their strategic academic value. Students were proficient in neither literacy nor mathematics—most could barely read, write, or count—and yet these schools had failed to establish educational priorities. Moreover, like many low-performing schools in other systems, Chancellor's District schools had high rates of teacher turnover and a disproportionate number of both unlicensed and inexperienced teachers.

A cooperative effort of the New York City Department of Education, the Chancellor's office, and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) resulted in a specially designed educational program under which all elementary and middle schools in the Chancellor's District would operate. The program included five components:

- a research-based curriculum focused heavily on literacy and mathematics;
- a staffing model designed to ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom;
- a strong principal for every school;

Evidence of Strong Progress



Scores in the ETS schools are rising faster than those elsewhere.

The student achievement data presented above compare scores from the city as a whole to those from the Extended Time Schools from 1999 to 2002.ⁱⁱ Although the ETS schools still score below the citywide average, they are consistently making greater gains than the city and slowly closing the achievement gap.ⁱⁱⁱ

Grade 6 ELA scores omitted for 1999-2001 at test publisher's recommendation due to anomalies in 2000 scores. Grade 7 ELA omitted for 2002 for similar reason.

ⁱⁱBoard of Education's analysis 1999-2001 and UFT's analysis in 2002. (Comparisons could vary slightly depending upon the board's inclusion or exclusion of some ETS schools outside the Chancellor's District.) Originally published in McAdoo, Maisie (2002). "Test Scores Surge in Extended Time Schools." *New York Teacher, City Edition*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, p. 7.

ⁱⁱⁱWhile these data demonstrate the considerable success of the extended time program, it is important to note that eight ETS schools, the slowest-improving of the group, were closed between 1999 and 2002. Their exclusion from the later data may slightly inflate the achievement increases of ETS schools. But, according to Sandra Kase, the superintendent of the Chancellor's District, all of those eight schools were making progress.



- high quality professional development for teachers and administrators; and
- smaller classes with added dollars for materials and supplies.

Within a couple of years of implementing the new program, schools in the Chancellor's District were beginning to make progress. The union and school system, however, believed improvements could—and should—be made more quickly. Students' test scores were increasing, but many children were still far from meeting state and school system standards. The union and district soon concluded that there were two pressing, unmet needs: more time for professional development and extra learning time for the students. According to David Sherman, "Teachers were dealing with new programs; they needed time to learn. The other major need was to help the lowest performing students. The majority of the kids in these schools scored at level one, the lowest level. We needed additional time to get the kids out of the lowest level."

Enter the Extended Time Schools initiative.

Time To Learn

Starting in 1999, a sixth Chancellor's District component—

an extra 40 minutes per school day to be used for both small group instruction and professional development—was added for schools that current UFT President Randi Weingarten calls, "the most academically challenged." These Extended Time Schools (ETS) represent what Weingarten describes as, "a more refined strategy of the original conception of the Chancellor's District."

Critical to developing the plan and support for these schools was the collaboration between the school system and the union. The school system was making a public statement that dedicating a specific package of human and fiscal resources to the neediest schools could cause those schools to turn around. The union, not content to sit back and simply see how things would play out, took an up-front and central role in shaping the initiatives, concurring with the school system that, with the right complement of supports, schools in the deepest academic doldrums could improve.

The collaborative endeavor has paid off handsomely.

As the student achievement data in the sidebar opposite clearly show, scores in reading and mathematics have increased *every year* since the extended time model was first implemented. What's more, ETS schools are helping all of their children learn more: The percentage of students scoring at the lowest level has decreased and the percentage scoring at



the highest levels has increased. The rates of gain have also been impressive: Though ETS schools still have a considerable way to go, the achievement gap between them and the city as a whole is closing.

Currently, 26 of the 32 elementary and middle schools in the Chancellor's District participate in the Extended Time Program. (In addition, there are 15 extended time schools scattered throughout the rest of New York City, including several that were once in the Chancellor's District.) Three days a week, the extra 40 minutes are devoted to additional student instruction in literacy and mathematics. Two days a week for 40 minutes, or once a week for 80 minutes (the school is allowed to choose), teachers participate in school-based professional development.

Using the Added Time: Instruction

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, kindergartners and first- and second-graders at ETS schools are dismissed at 2:20 P.M., the regular end of the school day. Elementary students beyond grade two remain at school for added instruction from 2:20 P.M. until 3:00 P.M. During this time, teachers work with groups of five to 10 students.¹ Often, teachers also have the help of a paraprofessional. With such small groups to instruct, teachers are able to use this time to give struggling students individualized attention. For the first two years, the exclusive focus of this added instruction was

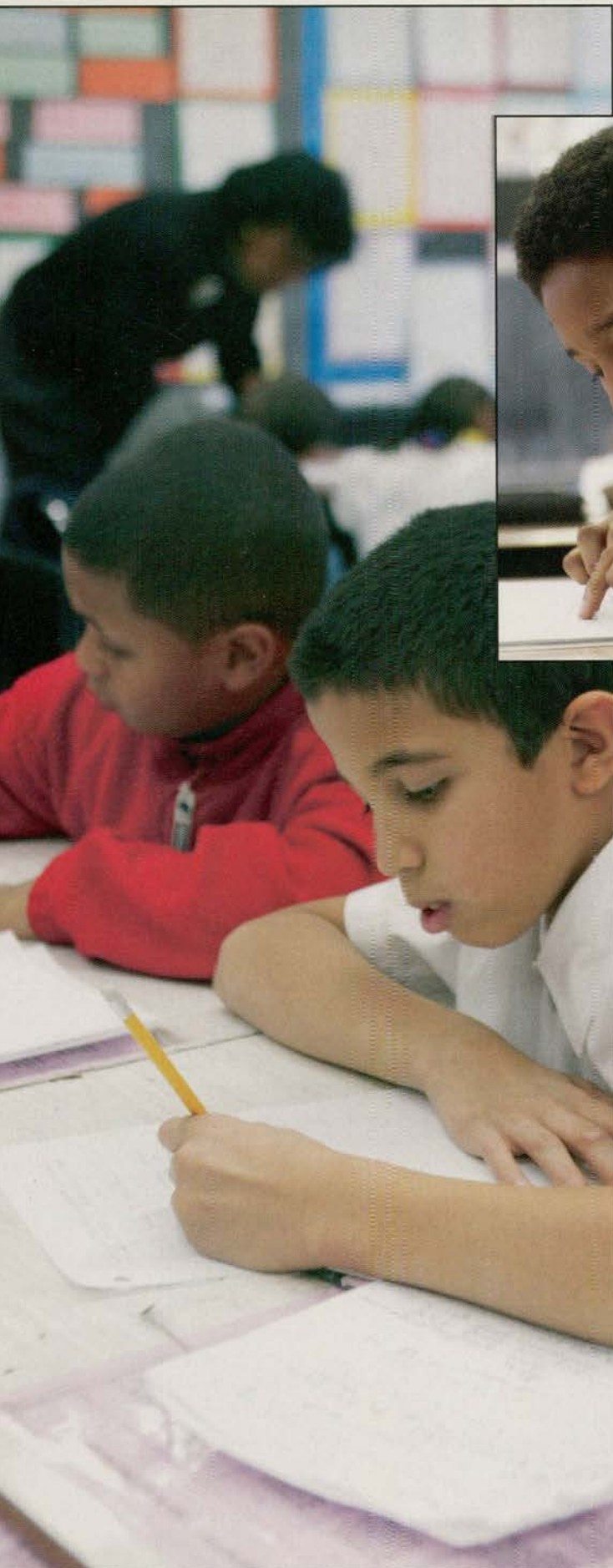
These and all photos depict children from CS 214 and MS 246 enjoying small and individual group instruction during extended time; and teachers in professional development.

literacy. More recently, some schools have begun to use the time to improve students' math skills as well.

For middle-school students, the routine is much the same. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, students arrive at school 40 minutes earlier than the start time for other New York City schools. They spend from 8:00 A.M. until 8:40 A.M. in small group instruction and individual tutoring. Students are divided by proficiency level; they work on skills that their teachers identify as targets of learning for them. As with the elementary schools, the extended time originally focused on literacy; now some schools are concentrating on math, as well, during these extra minutes.

Using the Added Time: Professional Development

In ETS schools, 80 minutes a week are vouchsafed for teacher professional development. There is a commitment to making these minutes as productive as possible—in contrast to conventional professional development, which often has little relationship to what teachers actually do. The professional development program is focused on helping teachers to understand and teach the curriculum and to develop increasingly sophisticated instructional strategies for conveying it. Much of the training is unique to each school, where it is developed by a school professional development team made



up of the principal, a staff person from the UFT Teacher Center (the union's professional development wing), instructional specialists (in reading, mathematics, and special areas such as bilingual education) assigned to the school, and the UFT chapter leader. The team meets weekly to assess teacher needs and plan professional development for the following week. The professional development activities may include small group sessions on a single topic, follow-up coaching with a single teacher, modeling lessons in a classroom, or faculty discussion analyzing student work and school achievement data. (For a fuller account of how professional development is offered in ETS schools, see the sidebar on page 28.)

Staffing Extended Time Schools

Research-based curriculum, added instructional time, and time for professional development are crucial components of the ETS initiative. Another is ensuring that schools

have principals who are up to the challenge and teachers who want to work in these challenging environments, are qualified to do so, and are willing to commit to the instructional program and time requirements.

Leadership is a critical part of all school reform efforts. Without the right principal, even the most dedicated, talented staff cannot turn around a low-performing school. The ETS schools required principals who could withstand the stress of this closely-watched effort and knew how to support and nurture high-quality instruction. As the extended time was being implemented, the district replaced roughly half of the principals in the newly designated ETS schools. In exchange for the added work that came with the extended time, new and remaining principals earn an extra \$10,000 annually.

To compensate ETS teachers for their longer work hours (40 minutes a day plus five days preceding the start of the school year), the school system and the union negotiated a 15 percent pay boost for them.²

With this additional pay as a modest incentive, it was now crucial to staff ETS schools with teachers who had appropriate levels of experience to deal with the educational challenges they would face, a genuine desire to work in low-performing schools, and a commitment to the programs and students in these schools. At the same time, the district and the union agreed to a concerted effort to transfer uncertified teachers out of these schools.³

It was further determined that while any certified teacher at a newly-designated ETS school could continue to teach there, he or she would need to commit to the ETS program: working longer hours (for pay), faithfully implementing the required curricula, and enhancing their skills through professional development. This was a difficult and emotional

time for teachers in the newly designated ETS schools; ultimately a number of them decided to transfer. These teachers for whom ETS was not a good professional fit received priority consideration for other teaching openings in the school system. No one lost a job.

To fill the 702 vacancies created by teachers who left the schools, a joint school/union personnel committee was established at each ETS school. These committees were charged with filling teacher vacancies in their respective schools based on the School-Based Option Staffing and Transfer Plan provision of the contract between the school system and the UFT.⁴

Staffing Based on School Need

This contract provision is designed to give schools significant discretion in selecting their own staffs as a way to “match” teachers with schools’ particular needs.

Under the School-Based Option, each school establishes a personnel committee composed of the principal, teachers (who form the majority of the committee), the UFT chapter leader, and parents. The committee is charged, according to the contract, with establishing criteria for filling teaching vacancies *based on instructional needs*; implementing a process (including interviews) for determining candidates’ fit with the criteria; and selecting faculty to fill vacancies.

Professional Development That Works

We know from research what effective professional development looks like. It centers primarily on subject matter and the standards to which teachers need to teach. It’s practical, based on what teachers need to do in their classrooms. And it’s largely (though not necessarily exclusively) school-based. “Effective” is too rarely what most teachers experience.

Across the United States, professional development is typically delivered in isolated sessions offered after school or on weekends to large, heterogeneous groups of teachers. Inevitably, these sessions offer generic strategies, little time to absorb the ideas behind the strategies, and even less time to understand just what the strategies will look like in the classroom. For too many teachers these sessions are simply a periodic ritual to be endured. For others, those lucky enough to hear about a strategy they would like to try, these sessions are enticing but frustrating. Little or no classroom follow-up or support is provided. No feedback is offered on which aspects of the new strategy are being done well. No suggestions come about what could be done better.

Professional development offered through the extended-time model is specifically designed to be different. First, time for professional development at ETS schools is built into the workday. It is “job-embedded” in the best sense of the term, a natural and essential complement to classroom

teaching. Classroom-based, grade-level, and subject-area professional development is offered in small and large group sessions and is followed up with classroom-based observations, demonstrations, and feedback.

Second, ETS professional development is targeted to what teachers need to know to be more successful in their classrooms—familiarity with the curriculum and a working knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies. To customize the professional development, each school has a professional development team composed of the principal, a staff person from the UFT Teacher Center (the union’s professional development wing), instructional specialists (in reading, mathematics, and special areas such as bilingual education) assigned to the school, and the UFT chapter leader. The team meets weekly to assess teacher needs and plan professional development for the following week. For example, one required curricular program is Success for All (SFA). Teachers first receive small group assistance from an SFA specialist, followed by small group and classroom-based assistance from appropriate members of the school-based professional development team.

In this way, teachers learn the required curriculum and are able to become proficient in a variety of instructional strategies. Kimberly Ambrecht, for example, a second-grade teacher at P.S. 180, believes that a strategy she learned through SFA-related professional development—modeling—has

made her a much more effective teacher. Kimberly explains:

Let’s say I’m doing a reading comprehension lesson, which is the beginning 20 minutes of SFA. I’ll “model” or think aloud for the children to show them that when you read, you ask questions about the pictures—you relate it to your life, etc. If they see me doing that, they pick up the strategy. When I come to an unfamiliar word, I say “Mmm, I don’t know what that means, let me re-read the sentence, or let me decode it, or let me look at the pictures for context clues.” I’m modeling strategies that they need to use while reading.

Third, professional development in ETS schools allows teachers to shape their own professional growth. Through continual conversations with teachers and frequent professional-development team meetings, ETS schools are able to offer ongoing professional development tailored to students’ and teachers’ needs. Roni Messer of the UFT Teacher Center (which maintains a site at each ETS school) describes Teacher Center work with an ETS school this way: “If I do something on Monday in professional development with the fourth-grade teachers, for example, I will live in the fourth grade that week and work with the teachers on implementation. And then when we come back and have our conversations the following Monday, we can go one step deeper and the professional development is more purposeful.”

Professional development at ETS

What's key here is that teacher selection is based primarily on qualifications and fit with the school's mission, not seniority. (Seniority remains a deciding factor if more than one teacher meets the school's qualifications and criteria.) The premise of the School-Based Option is that while using seniority as a primary criterion for assignment derives from justifiable historical antecedents, it also carries with it some limitations.

Unions fought in the last century to establish the principle of seniority as a reaction to systems in which patronage and discrimination were the order of the day. In many school districts, before seniority systems were put into place,

overtly subjective characteristics, such as friendship, family relationship, personal politics, or even mode of dress heavily influenced teacher assignment. In some places this is still the case.

Seniority offers the attractive feature of objectivity. While there may be disputes, legitimate or not, about an individual's personal characteristics or professional attributes, there can be no dispute about date of hire. Thus, seniority eliminates cronyism and personal taste as the factors by which a teacher's qualifications are judged.

Moreover, seniority goes hand-in-hand with the definition of employment as an accrued property right. It is a

schools has ranged from classroom management for newer teachers to topics such as designing a print-rich classroom, author study, poetry study, analyzing student-achievement data to guide instruction, and examining student work. One advantage of this school-based system is that, where conventional professional development offers a limited number of sessions on a particular topic, the school's professional-development team can keep working with teachers until results are evident in the classroom and in students' work.

The added professional-development time also creates space in the school day for teachers to consult with colleagues. The professional-development team at P.S. 180, where Kimberly Ambrecht works, helps teachers find others to work with. Ambrecht recalls, "There was a new teacher in the school who observed me a few weeks ago ... because she was having a hard time with classroom management and I run a tight ship. It's her first year teaching so she observed me for an entire morning; she saw different ways that I get children engaged in learning. Afterwards we had a ... conference and then she went back to her classroom." This kind of informal mentoring happens as a matter of course at ETS schools.

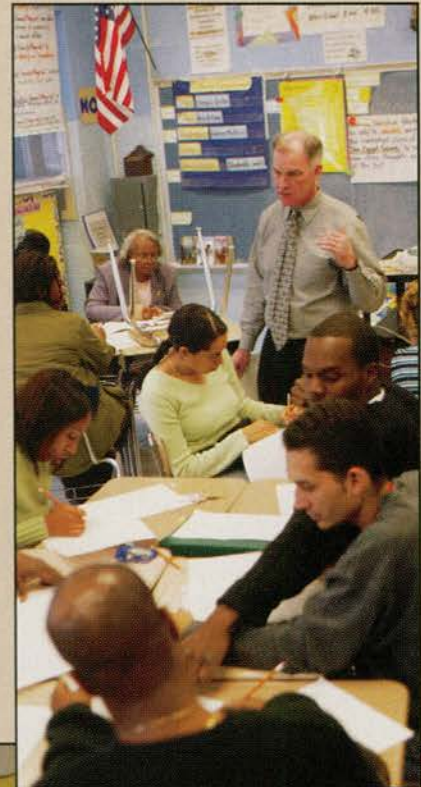
Portia Jones, a teacher at P.S. 96, explains it this way:

Professional development is getting better and better. When I started to teach, I think many teachers (particularly those who had been teaching

many years) had a sense of, "I can close my door, do my job, and I don't have to listen to anybody else. I can do what I do best." When we were mandated to get involved in professional development, there was some resistance. But as teachers opened up, I think many of us realized that there's always something new to learn. Through our professional development we hear each other, we listen to each other, we get new ideas, new approaches, and new strategies. And I think it has helped tremendously.

Finally, the added time for professional development also changes the conversation among teachers. Says Hal Lance, Teacher Center specialist at M.S. 246, "Teacher dialogue is now driven by data and by student work."

—J.K.



widely held societal expectation that increased length of service carries with it benefits that include some measure of employment security, such as the right of due process if dismissal for cause is threatened; a steady stream of income, usually at an increasing rate of pay; and continuing revenue following retirement.

Whatever the advantages, however, using seniority as the primary factor in teacher assignment also creates dilemmas. As noted in Cynthia Prince's article (see page 16), teachers generally prefer to work in less stressful, higher-achieving schools. As teachers gain experience and seniority, and school systems face greater shortages of qualified teachers, the more experienced teachers tend to gravitate to less difficult schools, leaving the schools with the neediest students to less experienced teachers who are learning to teach at the same time as they are confronted with the most challenging teaching environments. Further, when seniority is the primary criterion, it can allow a more senior teacher to "bump" a more junior colleague from a position for which both are qualified. This can result in disruption of instruction with little educational justification. Further, even where bumping is not an issue, using seniority as a key assignment criterion prevents "matching" teachers with schools' instructional needs and programs.

Altering the place of seniority in teacher assignment requires an important balancing act. On the one hand, teachers' individual interests need to be served. Teachers ought to be protected from arbitrary and capricious placement and transfer and should have some reasonable choice about their school assignment in the name of fairness and in the interest of teacher retention. On the other hand, there is a fundamental obligation to consider the interests of the institution. What makes good educational sense for the school and its students?

New York City's School-Based Staffing Option accommodates both institutional and individual need. Seniority as a chief factor in assignment is replaced by a school-based process that allows schools to find teachers who are the best fit with their improvement efforts. As UFT President Weingarten explains:

The reason that the union historically advocated seniority as the main criterion [in teacher assignment] is because it was fair, particularly in a top-down factory model of schooling where teachers were perceived as interchangeable parts.

But once you move to a system where teachers have a voice and where you can derive other criteria that are equally fair, then you should look at those criteria....With School-Based Options, the presumption was that teachers in the school would make the decisions with the principal about the prospective staffing of the school....

It can only work in schools where there's trust between the faculty and principal, where there's a mutual commitment to creating a great school. It is a very professional and mature way of looking at staffing that focuses on the needs of the school and the voice of teachers, and is laced with fundamental fairness. It works for the school system, it works for our members, and it has become a win-win situation. As union president, I get very few complaints about the School-Based Option process.

Over time, the combination of the 15 percent salary increase and school-based staffing has changed the mix of teachers at ETS schools. In the first operational year, 702

teaching positions needed to be filled in ETS schools. Ultimately, 191 of those openings were filled with experienced teachers; the rest were filled with newly licensed teachers. As of the 2001-2002 school year, just above half (52 percent) of elementary- and middle-school teachers in Chancellor's District schools (81 percent of which are ETS schools) had five or more years of experience. In a system in which only about 58 percent of the teachers have five or more years of experience, this is encouraging. The question remains, however, whether ETS's particular mix of extra pay and improved teaching tools and conditions that make it a more doable job has resulted in an adequate number of well-qualified, experienced teachers.

Rounding Out the Picture: The Chancellor's District Program

The ETS additions to the Chancellor's District program—added instructional and professional development time, school-based staffing, and added pay for staff—do not, of course, exist in isolation. Extended Time Schools, like other Chancellor's District schools, make a comprehensive assault on the troubles of low-performing schools with smaller class sizes, more resources, and an intensive literacy- and mathematics-focused curriculum.

Throughout the Chancellor's District, schools are guaranteed smaller classes—20 students per class in grades K-2 and 25 students per class in grades 3-8. These smaller classes are also well supplied through extra dollars for books and materials.

The instructional program in Chancellor's District schools centers on literacy and mathematics. All of the other usual school subjects are taught—social studies, science, art, music—but, these schools devote considerable portions of the school day to reading, writing, and math, underlining that unless students can master literacy and mathematics, they will not be able to master other subjects. The goal is to enable students to meet New York's state and city performance standards.

Building a Foundation in Literacy and Mathematics

The daily schedule at all Chancellor's District elementary schools includes two literacy blocks. The first spans 90 minutes, the second 60 minutes. The intent is that students will become proficient, independent readers by the end of third grade, and will then continue to build their reading and writing prowess as they progress through school.

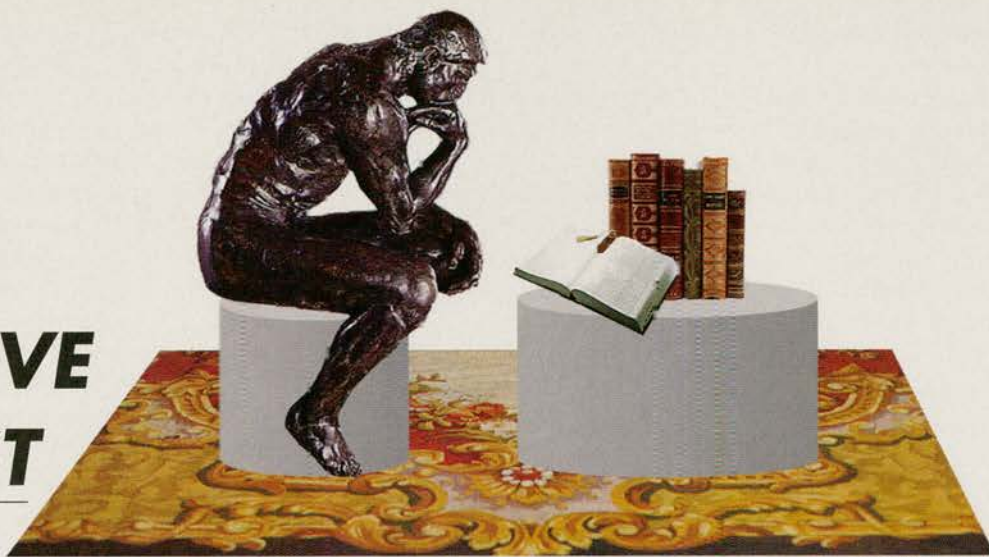
The Chancellor's District adopted Success for All (SFA) for elementary students' first daily literacy block. Developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, SFA offers materials, instructional strategies, and a system for managing literacy-focused time. The second daily literacy block focuses on an approach called "balanced literacy," which employs a diverse array of instructional strategies (such as reading aloud, shared reading and writing, and literature circles) designed to tap students' different strengths and interests.

Middle school students have a daily 90-minute literacy block that uses balanced literacy strategies that work to increase students' ability to think more deeply and write about

(Continued on page 51)

HOW WE LEARN

ASK THE COGNITIVE SCIENTIST



ILLUSTRATED BY GUY SCHUM

Inflexible Knowledge: The First Step to Expertise

How does the mind work—and especially how does it learn? Teachers make assumptions all day long about how students best comprehend, remember, and create. These assumptions—and the teaching decisions that result—are based on a mix of theories learned in teacher education, trial and error, craft knowledge, and gut instinct. Such gut knowledge often serves us well. But is there anything sturdier to rely on?

Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field of researchers from psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, philosophy, computer science, and anthropology that seek to understand the mind. In this regular American Educator column, we will consider findings from this field that are strong and clear enough to merit classroom application.

By Daniel T. Willingham

Question: So often, even if I inventively present new material or emphasize applying the new knowledge in various situations, what I get back from my student seems “rote.” Why is this? What can I do about it?

Answer: Cognitive science has shown us that when new material is first learned, the mind is biased to remember things in concrete forms that are difficult to apply to new situations. This bias seems best overcome by the accumulation of a greater store of related knowledge, facts, and examples. To understand this bias, we need to first distinguish between what I would call genuinely “rote” knowledge and the much more common “inflexible” knowledge. Second, we’ll look at

Daniel T. Willingham is associate professor of cognitive psychology and neuroscience at the University of Virginia and author of Cognition: The Thinking Animal. His research focuses on the role of consciousness in learning.

a number of experiments that strongly suggest the mind tends to remember new concepts in terms that are concrete and superficial, not abstract or deep. Third, we’ll review experiments designed to illuminate the nature of expertise, which can be thought of as consisting of “flexible” knowledge. Fourth, we’ll consider what this means for teaching.

What is Rote Knowledge?

Much of what is commonly taken to be rote knowledge is in fact *not* rote knowledge. Rather, what we often think of as rote is, instead, *inflexible* knowledge, which is a normal product of learning and a common part of the journey toward expertise.

In his book *Anguished English*, Richard Lederer reports that one student provided this definition of “equator”: “A managerie lion running around the Earth through Africa.” How has the student so grossly misunderstood the definition? And how fragmented and disjointed must the remainder of the student’s knowledge of planetary science be if he or she doesn’t notice that this “fact” doesn’t seem to fit into the other material learned?

All teachers occasionally see this sort of answer, and they are probably fairly confident that they know what has happened. The definition of “equator” has been memorized as rote knowledge. An informal definition of rote knowledge might be “memorizing form in the absence of meaning.” This student didn’t even memorize words: The student took the memorization down to the level of sounds and so “imaginary line” became “managerie lion.”

“Rote knowledge” has become a bogeyman of education, and with good reason. We rightly want students to understand; we seek to train creative problem solvers, not parrots. Insofar as we can prevent students from absorbing knowledge in a rote form, we should do so. I will address what we

know about this problem, and how to avert it, in a future column.

But a more benign cousin to rote knowledge is what I would call “inflexible” knowledge. On the surface it may appear rote, but it’s not. And, it’s absolutely vital to students’ education: Inflexible knowledge seems to be the unavoidable foundation of expertise, including that part of expertise that enables individuals to solve novel problems by applying existing knowledge to new situations—sometimes known popularly as “problem-solving” skills.

The Difference Between Rote and Inflexible Knowledge

Let’s consider another example. In one of my classes, I teach the concept of classical conditioning. A student might memorize this definition: “Classical conditioning occurs when repeated pairing of an unconditioned stimulus (which leads to an unconditioned response) with a conditioned stimulus comes to elicit a conditioned response upon presentation of a conditioned stimulus.” The student with rote knowledge might be able to produce the definition but would not understand it. This student, who learned the form without the meaning, wouldn’t connect this definition to the familiar example: Pavlov’s dog repeatedly hears a bell (conditioned stimulus) before getting food (unconditioned stimulus), whereupon the bell elicits salivation (conditioned response).

Another student might memorize the definition of classical conditioning and how each term (e.g., conditioned stimulus) relates to Pavlov’s experiment (the conditioned stimulus is the bell). The student, therefore, understands the relationship of the terms (the dog salivates when it hears the bell because it expects the food). We would be more prepared to say that this student had learned the meaning of the term “classical conditioning,” and that her knowledge was not rote.

Now suppose you present some new examples to the student:

1. Every time a red light comes on, I put water in the bowl of a thirsty cat. In time, the cat learns to approach the bowl when the light comes on. Is this classical conditioning?
2. Every time a rat pushes a button, it gets fed. In time, it learns to push the button when hungry. Is this classical conditioning?
3. To cure bed-wetting, I put a pad under a child’s mattress attached to an alarm that is rigged to ring when the pad gets wet. In time, the child learns to wake up before the alarm goes off. Is this classical conditioning?

Most likely, she will confidently say that example one is classical conditioning (it is); will hesitantly say that example two is (it is not[†]); and will be stumped by example three (it is^{††}). The student successfully recognizes example one, which is new to her, as classical conditioning. That seems to indicate that her knowledge is not rote. On the other hand, does the failure to recognize example three as classical conditioning mean that the student doesn’t really get it? Has this student acquired mere rote knowledge?

No, the learning is deeper than rote knowledge defines. But at the same time, clearly the student has not completely mastered the concept. The characteristic of concern here is *flexibility*. Knowledge is flexible when it can be accessed out of the context in which it was learned and applied in new contexts. My student understands classical conditioning, and she understands the *meaning*, but this understanding is somehow tied to the surface features of the example learned: dogs, food, and bells. When I switch to bed-wetting, her knowledge is rendered unavailable.

Notice that inflexible knowledge is quite different than rote knowledge. Neither memorizing a definition as a string of words, nor memorizing “managerie lion,” carries any accompanying meaning. In contrast, inflexible knowledge is meaningful, but narrow; it’s narrow in that it is tied to the concept’s surface structure, and the deep structure of the concept is not easily accessed. “Deep structure” refers to a principle that transcends specific examples; “surface structure” refers to the particulars of an example meant to illustrate deep structure. For example, the deep structure of commutativity in addition or multiplication is that order is irrelevant in these operations. One example of surface structure that captures this principle might be $3+4=7$ and $4+3=7$. Another surface structure would be $9+3=12$ and $3+9=12$. One could easily imagine that a student would recognize commutativity when presented with a number of problems in this form, but that student would not recognize, for example, that a cash register embodies commutativity because the order in which purchases are rung up is irrelevant to the total. Such a student has a narrow knowledge of commutativity. His knowledge is inflexible because it is tied to a particular type of surface structure.

I would argue that most of the time when we are concerned that our students have acquired rote knowledge, they have not. They have actually acquired inflexible knowledge.

All right. You may accept my argument that student knowledge is usually not so devoid of meaning as to be properly classified as rote. But isn’t inflexible knowledge almost as bad? One point of education, after all, is to enable students to apply new learning to situations outside of the classroom, not simply to remember the examples learned in school. Mustn’t we fight inflexible knowledge every bit as hard as we would fight rote knowledge?

Inflexible Knowledge is the Normal Foundation for Expertise

Flexible knowledge is of course a desirable goal, but it is not an easily achieved one. When encountering new mate-

[†] Example two, rather, represents operant conditioning, in which the animal learns that an action on the environment (pressing the bar) has consequences (being fed) that change the probability of performing the action in the future. In classical conditioning, the animal learns that two stimuli (e.g., bell and presentation of food) are associated.

^{††} The feeling of a full bladder (conditioned stimulus) becomes associated with the alarm (unconditioned stimulus), which causes waking (unconditioned response). With practice, the full bladder (conditioned stimulus) causes waking (conditioned response).

rial, the human mind appears to be biased towards learning the surface features of problems, not toward grasping the deep structure that is necessary to achieve flexible knowledge.

Here's an example of the inflexibility of newly learned knowledge from an experiment by Mary Gick and Keith Holyoke (1983). Subjects were asked to solve this problem:

Suppose you are a doctor faced with a patient who has a malignant tumor in his stomach. It is impossible to operate on the patient, but unless the tumor is destroyed, the patient will die. There is a kind of ray that can be used to destroy the tumor. If the rays reach the tumor all at once at a sufficiently high intensity, the tumor will be destroyed. Unfortunately at this intensity the healthy tissue that the rays pass through on the way to the tumor will also be destroyed. At lower intensities the rays are harmless to healthy tissue, but they will not affect the tumor either. What type of procedure might be used to destroy the tumor with the rays, and at the same time avoid destroying the healthy tissue?

This problem is quite difficult, and only something like 10 percent solved it in the 15 minutes allotted. At the end of that time, the experimenters told all the stumped subjects the solution. The solution is to use a number of weaker rays coming from different directions, but all focused on the tumor. The weaker rays can pass through the healthy tissue, but they combine at the site of the tumor to destroy it. Next, the experimenter gave subjects this problem:

A dictator ruled a small country from a fortress. The fortress was situated in the middle of the country and many roads radiated outward from it, like spokes on a wheel. A great general vowed to capture the fortress and free the country of the dictator. The general knew that if his entire army could attack the fortress at once, it could be captured. But a spy reported that the dictator had planted mines on each of the roads. The mines were set so that small bodies of men could pass over them safely, since the dictator needed to be able to move troops and workers about; however, any large force would detonate the mines. Not only would this blow up the road, but the dictator would destroy many villages in retaliation. How could the general attack the fortress?

The structure of the second problem and its solution has what seems like an obvious parallel to the first: The solution calls for the dispersal of strength with regathering of strength at the point of attack. And yet only 30 percent of subjects solve the second problem. It's not that subjects can't understand the analogy. By merely presenting the second problem with the instruction that the first problem may help, the solution rate for the second problem rockets to 90 percent. The difficulty students have is not in applying the analogy, but in thinking of using the analogy between the first and second problem. Why is this such a problem?

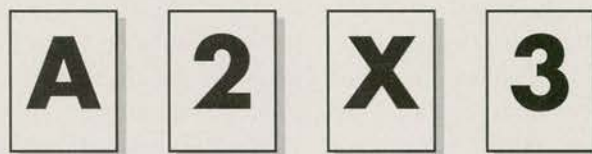
The reason is that people store the first problem in memory in concrete terms. The subjects take the first problem to be about rays and tumors, not dispersal and regathering of strength. The second problem is about armies and fortresses, and hence the rays and tumor problem doesn't come to mind as relevant. Note that the problem here is slightly different than in the classical conditioning problem. In the rays/fortress problems, the subject does not spontaneously think of drawing an analogy between the problems, but can

easily draw the analogy if prompted. In the classical conditioning example, a new problem with different surface features (baby, alarm, waking) can't be mapped to an old problem (dog, bell, salivation) even when the student is prompted to draw the analogy. Thus, to apply old knowledge to new situations, one must both recognize that the analogy is appropriate and successfully map the new problem to the familiar problem. Knowledge is often inflexible because to be widely applicable, it needs to be stored in terms of deep structure, but people tend to store it in terms of surface features.

Can't We Teach Deep Structure Directly?

Inflexible knowledge might be normal, but its usefulness is limited. Can't we circumvent the mind's tendency to store information in terms of surface features and get students to learn the deep structure? As I've outlined the problem, the solution seems rather obvious. The difficulty is that problem solutions are stored in terms of the specifics of the problem (rays and tumor) instead of the deep structure (strength dispersal and regathering). So, to fight inflexible knowledge, it would seem that we should encourage students to think about material in deeper, more abstract terms, which will then generalize to other contexts.

This is a marvelous idea that cognitive scientists have tried to make use of many times. But, the problem with such direct instruction is that the mind much prefers that new ideas be framed in concrete rather than abstract terms. Consider this classic example (Wason, 1968). Each of the four figures below represents a card. There is always a letter on one side of the card and a number on the other side. Your job is to verify whether or not the following rule is true: If there is a vowel on one side of the card, then there must be an even number on the other side. What is the minimum number of cards you must turn over to test the truth of the rule?



The answer is that you must turn over the A card and the 3 card. Most people choose the A card, but most fail to select the 3. You must choose the 3 because if there is a vowel on the other side, then the rule has been violated. Something like 20 percent of college undergraduates get this problem right. The percentage goes up very little even when subjects have just completed a one-semester course in logic that includes learning the logical form *Modus Tollens*, on which this problem is based (Cheng et al., 1986).

Now consider another version. You are an officer at the border of a country. Each of the four cards that follow represents a traveler. One side of the card lists whether the person is entering the country or is in transit (just passing through). The other side of the card shows what vaccinations the person has received. You must make sure that any person who is

(Continued on page 48)

Toying with Lives

The Scandalous Plight of China's Toy Workers

By Robert A. Senser

Weeks before the deadly fire, two workers addressed letters to the factory's "Honorable General Manager" asking for permission to quit. The two, both young women, gave the same reason: their families in rural China wanted them to return home. One of them explained further: "I no longer have the heart to continue working."

An investigator from a labor office in Beijing later found the two letters among the ruins of the fire that on November 19, 1993, destroyed the Zhili Toy Factory in southern China. In a long report, titled "Toyland Inferno: A Journey Through the Ruins," the investigator, Yi Fu, described how flames, smoke, and panic killed 87 workers, unable to escape through the three-story factory's single unlocked exit or its barred windows. From incomplete records, he verified that one of the two women who wanted to resign had lost her life in the tragedy. (The full report is published in "China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy," by Anita Chan, 2001, M.E. Sharpe.)

Most of the 400 workers at the Zhili factory were young women, age 16 to 25. So were the fire victims, the 87 dead and 47 others with permanent burns and other serious injuries. Because they came from rural provinces, they were of-

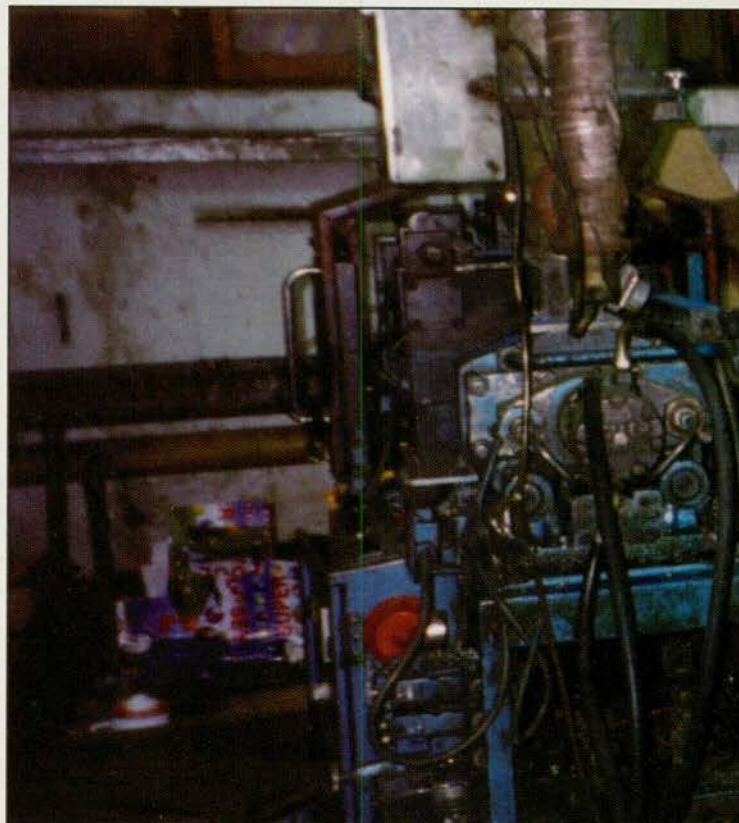
Robert A. Senser is an editor and freelance writer specializing in worker rights issues. He spent 21 years in the Foreign Service as a labor attaché and 10 years with the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, which at the time was the AFL-CIO's branch for supporting the rights of Asian workers. He now runs Human Rights for Workers (www.senser.com), a Web site that focuses on the need to establish workers' rights in every country through governmental or non-governmental channels. The site contains a monthly bulletin, links to many of Senser's articles, and links to other Web sites on labor and trade issues.



HONG KONG TOY COALITION

At left: In 1993, 87 workers were killed in a fire at the Zhili Toy Factory.

At right: In these cramped quarters, Chinese workers assemble dolls for just one to two dollars a day. Below: In this covertly taken photo, the president of the College Institute Educators' Association of British Columbia finds a young boy at work in a toy factory that makes air hockey and soccer player sets.





Voices of Young Toy Workers

"I've been working since I was 15 years old. People said you could earn more in Guangdong, but it's worse here. I've worked in the spraying department for three years. I've always suspected the paints are poisonous. I've been sick ever since I started working in spraying. And they lie about the wages. We never know how they're calculated. There's no pay stub and no way to check. We're given a sheet of paper with a lot of numbers on it to look at for a few seconds and then have to sign it. We get what they give us."

"Every day we work in temperatures that can go over 100 degrees. The molding machines are noisy and hot. The air is filled with a strong chemical smell. I have to repeat the same motions, over and over: open the machine, put in the plastic, press the machine, take out the plastic. A lot of us can't stand the heat, the smell, and the noise—and some of us faint."

"The chemical smell is strong at the workplace and you can see paint dust everywhere. I wanted to throw up every day when I first came. I never stopped having stomachaches and dizziness in the first month."

"We work long overtime hours like dogs. It's after midnight when we get back to the dormitory. And it makes you even more tired when you see the long line at the bathroom. By the time I go to bed, it's already 2 A.M. and at 8 A.M. the next day, I am already at my workplace. It's the same every day. It's very exhausting."

"Only management staff gets [the legally required] maternity leave. Production workers like myself work as usual even if we are pregnant. When you are about to give birth, you have to quit. Management makes sure of that."

"I've been here for more than a year. The highest [monthly] salary I got was rmb 800 (\$96.65). I had to work till 12 midnight or later every day for that. The lowest I got was rmb 200 (\$24.16). That was delivered after the Chinese New Year. We had a bad time this Chinese New Year (end of January). [One factory] delivered lunch coupons to their workers—we in this factory got nothing. We had no money for the New Year. We did not even have money to eat. I knew of workers picking up remains in the canteen. We are still angry about it. How can you treat workers like this?"

The excerpts above are drawn from "Toys of Misery" (see Webnote 1 on page 38).

officially categorized as "migrants," people with fewer privileges than the urban residents and only a temporary, job-connected privilege to live away from their home areas.

In the prosperous special economic zone of Shenzhen, where the Hong Kong-owned Zhili factory was located, 1,800,000 migrants were employed in the foreign-owned factories that produced toys, shoes, garments, and other goods for export, Yi Fu reported at the time. "Not only do they make up 70 percent of Shenzhen's population," he wrote, "they are also the principal creators of the region's prosperity." Their typical reward, he found, was meager: \$1.10 for a 12-hour day, no days off, and long delays in wage payments, plus horrible working conditions. Yi Fu detailed how Shenzhen factories, including Zhili, violated health and safety regulations, and even ignored a city inspection team's warnings of multiple fire hazards issued not long before November 19, 1993.

"The Zhili fire was not fated," Yi Fu wrote. "It was a man-made tragedy." He blamed various parties in China for, among other things, being overly protective of foreign investment, to the exclusion of worker rights. Yet he concluded on a hopeful note: "The tragic events at Zhili should be a catalyst that motivates the government, the employers, and the unions to fulfill their responsibilities to work together to protect the rights of workers."

As we reflect on the recent toy-buying season, it's time to ask: Has this hope been fulfilled?

In China, the toy industry is booming, thanks largely to exports to the United States, the world's largest market for toys. Americans are spending more than \$23 billion a year on products traditionally classified as toys—dolls, doll houses, stuffed animals, little vehicles (powered and non-powered, plastic and metal), crayons, building sets, craft kits, children's furniture, plastic guns, board games, and countless other items—plus \$6.5 billion more on video games. Those statistics are from the Toy Industry Association, the New York City-based trade group representing companies responsible for 85 percent of U.S. toy sales. Formerly called Toy Manufacturers of America, it changed its name only last year, belatedly recognizing that for decades toys labeled "made-in-the-USA" have been mighty few. Most are imported. And more than half of all toys sold here come from the People's Republic of China.

The 1993 Zhili tragedy called worldwide attention to the workers in China who make their country the world's largest manufacturer and exporter of toys. Those men and women—now numbering more than three million, at least 80 percent of them young women—have continued to come under close scrutiny, chiefly by the world media and by a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both in Hong Kong and in Western countries.

Among the most recent NGO and media reports on how China's toy workers are faring, two stand out. One is a *Washington Post* article, published May 13, 2002, titled "Worked Till They Drop" and subtitled "Few Protections for China's New Laborers." The other is "Toys of Misery,"^{w1} (see Webnotes box, page 38) a two-part report issued by the New York-based National Labor Committee in early 2002.



Above. Throughout the fall, toy makers like these work 12 to 13 hours a day to fill orders for the United States and Europe.



NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE

At left: It may look like a jail, but this is actually a dormitory in a Chinese factory. It is common for several workers to be assigned to a small room with bunk beds (for which they must pay rent) and required to pay a monthly fee for food (even though most would rather cook for themselves).

Both rely heavily on off-job interviews with toy workers themselves, rather than on conducted tours of factories and the word of management. Both document the same point: The plight of the working women who make most of the world's toys is scandalous.

The *Washington Post* article centered on a 19-year-old named Li Chunmei, who quit her rural school in the third grade, first to help her family eke out a living on the land, and then to work, like her older sister, in the factories of the Shenzhen special economic zone 700 miles away. Li wound up as a "runner"—she carried the eyes, ears, and other parts of brand-name stuffed animals from one stitching area to another, for 12 cents an hour.

"The bosses were always yelling at her to go faster," one co-worker told the *Washington Post* reporter Philip P. Pan. One night during the pre-Christmas rush season last year, after nearly 16 hours on her feet, Li fell into her bunk exhausted and coughing up blood. She died before she could be taken

to a hospital. Officially, the cause of her death was simply called a non-work-related "illness." But in towns where factories operate day and night to produce for export, her fate is common enough to have its own name: *guolaosi*, short for *death due to overwork*. Li had been working day after day for two months straight without even a Sunday off.

In recounting Li Chunmei's life and death, Pan provided details on labor conditions that he called "the norm" for tens of millions of workers in China's light-assembly industries making toys and other products for the world. Li's brief career in Shenzhen illustrated those conditions:

■ **Management's hold on employees.** Although Li spoke to colleagues about quitting and returning home, she feared losing the two months of back wages that the company, in accordance with a widespread practice, had withheld. Several other toy workers told Pan they were "trapped" in similar circumstances.

■ **Arbitrary fines.** Managers dock a worker's pay for violating company rules, such as for spending more than five minutes in the toilet or for wasting food. Once, after being refused a day off, Li did not complete a night shift in order to rest—she lost three days' pay.

■ **The toy business' contortions.** In tracking Li's brief job history, Pan learned that at the time of her death she was working for a subcontractor who worked for a contractor who worked for a Korean-owned toy manufacturer, Kaiming Industrial Ltd. A Kaiming manager explained this weird production chain as follows: Although Kaiming's main factory has relatively good labor standards for the brand-name products it makes, it farms out the least profitable and most difficult orders to a contractor with lower standards, who, after taking a commission, distributes some of the workload to a subcontractor. So when Pan asked for information about Li, Kaiming and its contractor both said she wasn't their responsibility since she wasn't working for them. The subcontractor, a woman, was nowhere to be found.

The *Washington Post* article did not identify the brand names of the play animals that Li and her co-workers made. But Charles Kernaghan, director of the National Labor Committee, operates on the theory that sunshine is the best cure for sweatshops. Like the committee's previous reports on labor abuses in Bangladesh, El Salvador, Haiti, and elsewhere, "Toys of Misery" identifies dozens of prod-

ucts, manufacturers, retailers, and licensees by name. In its very first sentence, the report challenges you to consider the plight of China's toy workers "when you go into a Wal-Mart or a Toys 'R' Us store to purchase Harry Potter or Disney's Monsters Inc., or Mattel's Barbie, Sesame Street, Hasbro's Star Wars or Pokémon...." Kernaghan follows this with a long litany of miseries endured by those workers.

The 75-page report, covering 19 factories that export toys to the U.S. and Europe, is depressing. It describes the usual abuses that plague workers in China's sweatshops: illegally low wages, illegally long hours, illegal wage deductions, and the *not*-illegal repression of the right to organize free unions. The report's commentary on a single factory—Shuihe, which employs from 3,000 to 4,500 young workers generally in their teens and early twenties—has 11 pages listing how it violates China's local and national legislation. Among the abuses, management imposes "a myriad of rigid, draconian regulations backed up by stiff fines and the threat of firing." Workers lose at least one day's wage for talking during business hours, one week's pay for stepping on the factory lawn, one day's pay for the first time they punch in late to work and more the second time. Besides, like other toy workers across China, many Shuihe workers handle toxic chemical paints, glues, and solvents with their bare hands.

It isn't as though these types of exposés are new. Not at all. And it's not as though various worker and human rights advocates outside mainland China have not campaigned to ameliorate those horrendous conditions. They have. Indeed, their efforts have raised world consciousness about the plight of Chinese workers—probably preventing even greater abuses. But, on the factory floor, the situation for most workers has not improved. On the positive side, however, the initiatives that have been undertaken reveal the channels through which the lives of ordinary people in China, including its voiceless toy workers, can potentially be improved. Let's examine several of these channels.

Corporate Codes of Conduct

In Hong Kong, a network of non-governmental organizations has long been active in raising public consciousness about the problems of working men and women both in Hong Kong itself and in the neighboring provinces of the People's Republic. One such group, the Christian Industrial Committee (CIC),^{w2} founded in 1967, pioneered in exposing the health and safety perils in the toy and other factories owned by Hong Kong and other foreign investors. In a 1987 report on the rising rate of industrial accidents, the Committee wrote: "None of us should stand by with folded hands," and added, "We cannot rely on the government alone for improving industrial safety."

That message took on greater urgency after the Zhili disaster in 1993, followed by the deaths of 11 workers in June 1994, when their illegally constructed dormitory at a Hong Kong-funded toy factory in Shenzhen collapsed. The CIC and a dozen other Hong Kong NGOs sprang into action as a coalition to issue a set of standards, called a Charter on

(Continued on page 44)

Webnotes

Resources from "Toying with Lives" and "Growing Worker Activism"

^{w1} "Toys of Misery" can be found online at www.nlcnet.org.

^{w2} For more information in the Christian Industrial Committee, visit www.cic.org.hk.

^{w3} For the text of the code of business practices of the International Council of Toy Industries, see www.toy.icti.org/mission/bizpracice.htm.

^{w4} "Setting the Standard for Corporate Responsibility," statement issued July 2002, is available at www.toy-tia.org/industry/news/exchange/0207.html.

^{w5} For more information on the complaint filed with the International Labor Organization by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, see www.icftu.org.

^{w6} For more information on the *China Labor Bulletin*, see www.china-labour.org.hk.

^{w7} "Industrial Unrest in China: A Labor Movement in the Making?" by Tim Pringle in the *China Labor Bulletin*, January 31, 2002, is available at www.china-labour.org.hk/iso/article.adp?article_id=1956.

^{w8} "The Third Wave of the China Labor Movement in the Post-Mao Era," by Trini Leung in the *China Labor Bulletin*, June 5, 2002, is available at www.china-labour.org.hk/iso/article.adp?article_id=2397.

^{w9} For more information on the *China Labor Bulletin*, see www.china-labour.org.hk.

Growing Worker Activism Pushes Envelope in China

Worker Protests Spread, Despite Repression and "Official Unions"

By Robert A. Senser

In accordance with Chinese law, China has organizations going under the name of "union," a misnomer that should require it to be enclosed by quotation marks. These "unions" are branches of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the only legal "union" in China. But it's awkward to write ACFTU. So accuracy becomes a victim of convenience. The truth is that the ACFTU, from top to bottom, is a branch of the government and Communist Party. A new labor law clearly reaffirms that the ACFTU's primary role is political—to uphold "the people's democratic dictatorship"—and

that it is a monopoly structure that supplants genuine trade unions.

In a northeastern steel plant, a state-owned enterprise, Zhen Yingbing, who heads the ACFTU's unit there, is also the company's personnel chief. When asked by a reporter who he represents, Zhen replied: "Both the boss and the workers." That is also often the case in foreign-financed plants. The local "union" is chaired by a manager or a Party functionary, or someone who wears both hats, and in any case has security police available to deal with troublemakers. No wonder, then, that many workers call such units "boss unions."

A sharp indictment of this stacked system has come from an unusual source—a former professor at the ACFTU's research institute, Chang Kai. "A boss union is worse than no union," he wrote in an academic journal in

China. "A clever employer will use them to control workers. Because the law allows only one union, setting up a boss union [helps preempt any chance] for workers to organize a real one."*

Still, at home and in international contacts, the ACFTU portrays itself as the voice of China's workers. Partly to reinforce the government's foreign policies but also to seek an aura of legitimacy among China's own workers, the ACFTU is quietly but actively developing "fraternal" contacts with foreign trade union leaders and seeking status in world forums. Although, according to surveys conducted by the ACFTU's own research institute, the claim that ACFTU represents workers is rejected by more and more workers, the argument is apparently persuasive in some labor circles outside China. In June 2002, at the annual conference of the UN International Labor Organization**

In Liaoyang, where roughly 80 percent of the workforce is now unemployed, tens of thousands of workers, laid-off workers, and retirees protested in March 2002 demanding unpaid wages, pensions, and jobs.

*"In China, labor unions offer little protection," by Philip P. Pan in the *International Herald Tribune*, October 16, 2002.

**The ILO is a tripartite body of the United Nations, composed of separate worker, government, and industry groups.



in Geneva, members of the ILO's Worker group elected an ACFTU leader as an alternate Worker member of the ILO's governing body. A prominent Asian union leader, Lee Cheuk Yan, general secretary of the 150,000-member Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, immediately condemned the action in Geneva as "a major defeat for workers in China who are struggling to achieve the right to freedom of association."

The stifling of that freedom shows up in ways small and large. Take the seemingly simple rule imposed on workers in the Shihue factory in Dongguan: no talking during work hours. That rule, widely enforced in the toy industry and beyond to maximize production, prohibits all worker communications, everything from small talk and joking to complaints about an abusive supervisor to conversations about taking corrective action of some kind. The rule leaves workers voiceless, bereft of any say at work. It inculcates a discipline of fear that spreads even to the worker dormitories, where conversations are often monitored. Workers who dare to speak up to express support for a union face a variety of reprisals—immediate dismissal, blacklisting, charges of criminal activity, and jail sentences.

According to a complaint filed with the International Labor Organization by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions⁵⁵ in March of 2002, there were then at least 41 trade unionists and worker rights advocates in jail, many of them since 1989 for participating in the pro-democracy movement that shook China that year. Since March, Tianguai Di, 57, a longtime labor activist in Shanxi Province, has been arrested for organizing a National Factory Workers Retirees Association. His own application for permission to form the association became evidence against him on a charge of "overthrowing the state."

Arrests seldom become public information except in cases of large-scale labor unrest, as occurred in 2002 in Liaoyang, in China's industrial Northeast. There, 30,000 workers from some 20 factories joined unemployed workers in mass demonstrations not only to

protest abuses but to demand collective bargaining rights. The government countered with a carrot-and-stick strategy: it met the needs of some workers (for example, by giving them money and promising jobs) while it also mobilized a large police and military force to arrest the protest leaders and to frighten people to end the demonstrations. As of mid-October 2002, according to the *China Labor Bulletin*, four worker representatives had been held for almost seven months without charges and without access to a lawyer.

What to do, faced with government power so willing and able to smash any sign of protest or other activity not officially approved? Giving up is not an alternative. An overall strategy has emerged to try to take advantage of the rights, however limited, spelled out under China's own laws, including its constitution, and to encourage workers to work with others to demand those rights. Under the radar screen of China's elaborate police system but still at great risk, workers in scattered parts of China, and workers' rights activists in Hong Kong,* are educating co-workers on the rights set forth in China's local and national labor laws.

A prominent activist pursuing this strategy is Han Dongfang (see his remarks beginning on page 41) who, during the historic 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, helped establish the first free-trade union in the People's Republic of China—the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation. Han was then arrested and had to endure 22 tortuous months in various prisons, often in solitary confinement, and was released only because of intense international pressures from many sources, including the AFL-CIO.

After a stay in the United States to recover from tuberculosis, which the Chinese government deliberately exposed him to, Han chose to return to Hong Kong to promote worker rights in China. Through frequent broadcasts into China over Radio Free Asia and a Web site and e-newsletter called the *China Labor Bulletin*,⁵⁶ he reports on the realities of workers' lives in China. In the March 1994 *China Labor Bulletin*, Han described the catastrophic

Zhili fire under the headline "Factory Fire: Disasters Can Not Be Avoided in the Absence of Strong Unions." In concert with other groups in Hong Kong, he has continued to document China's labor abuses, including its horrible record on industrial health and safety, but not in isolation. He has kept his eye on basic themes: the need for unions in China, the government's harsh measures to stomp out their emergence, the complete inadequacy of the ACFTU, and the importance of international campaigns to release imprisoned worker-rights activists.

His efforts—and those of like-minded activists in Hong Kong and on the mainland—are aimed at channeling a growing worker unrest in China. Statistics from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security say that "labor disputes" increased by 14 to 24.2 percent in all kinds of enterprises in 2000. But says Tim Pringle,⁵⁷ a labor researcher based in Hong Kong, "it is the steady, less dramatic, increase in collective disputes that require organization, unity, and class consciousness that is more significant." In 1998, he says, "there were 6,767 collective actions (usually strikes or go-slows with a minimum of three people taking part) involving 251,268 people, an increase of 900 percent [since 1992]. In 2000, this figure jumped to 8,247 collective actions involving 259,445 workers." Pringle further notes that while these actions have sometimes brought out the police, "the central authorities have issued orders to local governments not to exacerbate the situation by using force to disperse workers."

*Hong Kong is an important base from which support for mainland Chinese workers is organized. But, the freedom of these Hong Kong activists may be in jeopardy. In 1997, when the British colony of Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, the agreement known as "one country, two systems" was supposed to guarantee democracy in Hong Kong for 50 years. But, late in September 2002, the government of Hong Kong, responding to pressure from Beijing, began the formal process of enacting "anti-subversion" laws designed to ban people and organizations deemed to be a threat to the government of China. People such as Lee Cheuk Yan and Han Dongfang, as well as their organizations (and religious groups like Falun Gong), could be targeted through this law.

Another researcher on Chinese labor issues, Trini Leung,^{WS} describes the wave of worker actions that has been rising in China as “The Third Wave of Independent Labor Organizing” in post-Mao China. Among the actions she discusses is the several-month protest by thousands of oilfield workers in Daqing. (See remarks by Han Dongfang.) She believes that what sets this wave of labor activism apart from previous actions is that in certain cases, including in Daqing, workers “have organized activities centering around their workplaces and residential communities. This crucial factor explains the ability of the protesters to sustain their actions in spite of government crackdowns.”

According to Leung, “The most critical breakthrough made in the 2002 demonstrations is the formation of a prototype independent union body, the Daqing Provisional Union of Retrenched Workers.” Unlike previous efforts, “the Daqing union membership is plant-based and has a clear target membership and constituent base. There have been reports that preparation for this independent union body had been taking place quite some time before the March actions.”

In short, actions are emerging that are not just spontaneous, leaderless, and easily diffused. Rather, these efforts suggest that perhaps the seeds of genuine, independent, fledgling trade unions are beginning to germinate.

Tim Pringle, writing in *China Labor Bulletin*, perhaps captures this fluid moment best:

China’s workers are fighting back. What is so obviously lacking is an independent workers’ organization or trade union that can link up the myriad disputes, negotiate with employers, and put the interests of its members before those of government, employers, or Party. Yet there does appear to be an underlying trend in both official and dissident circles, driven by the labor unrest, which points to change. Like South Africa and Poland, the ruling class knows that sooner or later, if it is to avoid being toppled from power in a violent explosion of pent-up anger, it must allow workers some space to organize. For those of us outside China, our job is to do everything possible to support the strikes and protests and make that space available as soon as possible. □

Creating Political Space To Defend Chinese Workers

Remarks by Han Dongfang



RADIO FREE ASIA

In 1989, Han Dongfang turned himself in to the Chinese government: He was wanted for “counter-revolutionary crimes.” An electrician employed in a railway factory, Han attempted to organize China’s first independent union from a tent he set up in Tiananmen Square during the democracy movement. Two years in prison and a near-fatal bout with tuberculosis (to which he was exposed by the Chinese government) only strengthened his commitment to democracy—and therefore independent unions—in China.

Today, Han is barred from the mainland, but as he works from Hong Kong, his voice travels throughout China. Through a Radio Free Asia talk show that Han created and hosts, Han broadcasts interviews with workers. Many of these conversations document the terrible conditions that Chinese workers must endure, but they also carry news of worker protests. Han also delivers his message through the China Labor Bulletin^{WS} an e-newsletter that documents workers’ attempts to establish independent unions, educates workers on China’s labor laws, and tracks labor disputes.

As workers have heard of each other’s protests through Han’s radio show and bulletin, they’ve gained confidence and protests have become more frequent. Han is now encouraging them to go one step further—to file lawsuits against their employers when those employers violate

workers’ rights. Starting an independent labor union is against the law, but filing a complaint against a factory—particularly a foreign-owned factory—isn’t.

In Han’s words, the Chinese government is “sitting on a fire.” As he and other worker activists continue to inspire protests and lawsuits, they send Party officials a message that jailing protest organizers and ignoring the workers’ plight will only make the fire grow stronger. Han believes that instead of fueling the fire, the Party will find it useful to settle lawsuits and respond to gross violations of workers’ interests. In this fluid situation, these activists find new space in which Chinese workers can defend themselves.

During a recent visit to the United States, Han spoke to the Congressional Democracy Caucus, AFT’s Human Rights Conference, and the Albert Shanker Institute’s Board of Directors. The excerpts that follow are drawn from his remarks to these groups and from an interview with American Educator.

—EDITORS

On Foreign Investment

It’s very clear that foreign investment means job opportunities for Chinese workers. So I have no doubt that China needs more investment. But the question is, what kind of job opportunities will these investments create? Will the conditions be appropriate just for

slaves—or for human beings? China is becoming the world's largest factory. It's the world's largest sweatshop. Girls and boys are working seven days a week, 14-15 hours a day. Very often their wages are just five cents (\$0.05) per hour. Foreign investment is important to us, but the Chinese government is trying to base it on sacrificing workers' interests and lives.

On Corporate Codes of Conduct

There are organizations throughout the world that have pressed companies to adopt codes of conduct in which they commit their companies to providing reasonable working conditions. I've seen how this works. The company writes a responsibility code. It hires someone. They are called independent monitors. But no, they're not independent at all. They're hired by the company. The monitors can't publish a report on their own. Each monitor must negotiate with the company about the report he makes.

The monitors fly to China once a year, stay for three days in a nice hotel, and spend three hours in the factory interviewing people (while being monitored by the factory managers). They return to the company and issue a report saying that in this factory the workers' rights are respected. What gave them the authority to make that judgment? The workers didn't!

This has become popular PR for the companies, but it's not good for the trade union movement in China or around the world. These people think they have found a "third way" to protect workers' rights. They think it's their job to look after the workers. "You don't need a union anymore," they think. But behind this idea is the belief that workers' rights can be protected without freedom of association. That's a fundamental violation of workers' rights.

It's a question of whether we're talking about workers' rights as "human rights" or as "animal rights." If you are talking about "animal rights," that means the company only has to take care of the workers, give them better conditions, give them one less hour of work, not one more. Better treatment

is, of course, better. But it shouldn't be misunderstood as "human rights." Chinese workers are human beings—just like American workers. What they need is a union, not someone who just flies in and treats them like hopeless, helpless people who are reliant on powerful people from other countries for just treatment.

On Growing Labor Activism

China is committed to a market economy. In a market economy, there is on the one hand, a free market with foreign investment and, on the other, independent unions. That creates a balance. But the Chinese Communist Party wants only the market, not the unions. It won't work. Chinese workers are being destroyed by the market that comes without the protection provided by unions. People won't keep taking it. Protests are growing.

There was a farmers' action recently in Yizhou, a city in the southwestern Guangxi Province. The mayor of the city, Deng Qing, is also the general manager of the biggest enterprise in the city—the sugar factory. The mayor used his political power to push the price of sugarcane very low. The farmers couldn't even survive. Twenty-five thousand sugarcane farmers marched on the city government building. They broke things, threw the computer out of the window. They said, "You said you were the people's government, but you are not. You are corrupt."

When things like this happen, the government has to respond. Either in the traditional way with the army or armed police, or they have to find another way out. My hopefulness is based on the idea that they will want to find another way out.

Chinese oilworkers are also beginning to react to oppression and unfair treatment with demonstrations. For example, this March, tens of thousands of oilfield workers in the northeast from Daqing, the nation's biggest oilfield, went to the street and protested for three months. It was triggered when 84,000 workers were laid off with very limited compensation. The workers were pushed to sign agreements saying that they had left the company on their own. They felt cheated. But the top managers received big bonuses.

Every day, these workers would go to the square in front of the company building. Many people were arrested. One by one, the leaders disappeared. After three months, when there were no leaders left, the protest slowly, slowly disappeared.

We told about these events on Radio Free Asia and through the *China Labor Bulletin* e-newsletter. This ability to communicate makes a huge difference. Three months after the northeast workers acted, oilfield workers in Chongqing—three thousand miles away in the southwest—stood up demanding the same things. But they learned from the northeast workers. They didn't limit themselves to a protest that would just lead to jailings. At the same time that they went into the street, they started collecting donations from the workers to support a lawsuit against the company. They argued in court that the company had laid them off in an illegal way.

There were also protests last spring in Liaoyang. Thirty thousand workers from more than 20 state-owned enterprises demanded their unpaid wages and complained about corruption among managers and officials. During the protests many of the leaders were arrested.

But in all, the signal is good, not bad. The protest leaders in Liaoyang have been in prison for over six months. But their families are not afraid; their fellow workers are not afraid. Even the lawyer who is working to defend them is not afraid.

On Lawsuits

People wonder how the law, which has long been used against Chinese workers, can now be an effective tool for them. China is a complicated place and we have to be creative and use all avenues as they open up.

Take, for example, the effect of decentralization, which has brought more power to local governments. Local government leaders now head up big enterprises. As we saw, the mayor can be the general manager of the sugar factory. The deputy mayor can be the private venture director. These people are not only politically powerful, as they have always been, they are now more economically powerful than ever before.



But with all this power, they go too far. They're provoking people. It's not just the farmers. It's the oilworkers, mineworkers.

The government will find that it needs to find a peaceful way to resolve problems, to slowly release the pressure. That creates an opening for us. You can't know which part of the government might want to help the workers a little, which part will want to relieve the pressure a little, which will want to show that their part of the government is not corrupt.

It's why I say on my radio show: "Use the law." China has laws on paper that govern certain working conditions, but the laws are not enforced. Nobody can guarantee which individual case the workers can win, but if more people knock on the door, there is more chance that workers will win. Workers in factories making goods for foreign companies have the best chances. They can say, "Look, this American company is taking advantage of Chinese workers and breaking Chinese laws."

On China's Official Union

The official union, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), has always tried to do what the Chinese Communist Party would want, without even waiting for the Party's order. According to Chinese law, there can only be one legitimate union. So ACFTU sets up unions in factories to make sure no independent workers get out on

their own.

When western unions treat ACFTU as a legitimate union, they send a terribly wrong message to Chinese workers. It hurts the Chinese independent trade union movement. Now there's a big wave of Chinese workers who, after 20 years of being exploited, are standing up, rising up, going to the streets, protesting, and starting to fight back. At exactly this moment, Chinese workers need support. We need a solidarity message from unions around the world. This is especially true of the AFL-CIO, which is the biggest and most influential trade union in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Recently, a small group of representatives from several American unions visited with AFCTU leaders. The *People's Daily* and *Worker's Daily* newspapers [the official Chinese newspapers] used and manipulated this visit to make Chinese workers believe that there's no hope from the international trade union movement. It's really, really discouraging.*

On Seeing the Future

I would say that China today is a big time bomb. A lot depends on this current government. Are they clever enough, intelligent enough to allow the pressure to slowly be released or not? We can do little to confront huge government power, like the army. So what we are trying to do is air problems and find openings that will allow ordinary

"Strongly demanding the release of our people" reads the banner held by these protesters in Liaoyang in March 2002. A few days into the protest, several of the leaders were arrested.

people to join together to get the support of the law. Winning these kinds of battles, seeing the results of working together—this is the beginning of real worker groups in China.

Of course what I'm proposing is just one piece of a solution that leads to a better China. We are not looking for a complete solution to resolve all of China's problems at once. That's impossible. I am a labor activist. I'm trying make the voice of labor heard. Others are trying to build a voice for business, for intellectuals, for other groups.

Anyone who thinks that there's just one solution for China shouldn't work in China. There's a lot to do. But if you look up in whatever area you're in, you see the future. There is a great field for us to fight in, and the workers are rising up and the farmers are rising up, and the conflicts are there. □

*The visit of these American unionists was repudiated by the AFL-CIO. In a letter to Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*, AFL-CIO International Affairs Director Barbara Shailor said that "the visit did not in any way represent" AFL-CIO policy and that Chinese workers' interest in unions of their own choosing "is not tolerated by ACFTU."

TOYING WITH LIVES

(Continued from page 38)

the Safe Production of Toys, and to agitate for those standards to protect the lives and limbs of toy workers.

In 1995, the Coalition issued a new report, based on interviews with workers in nine factories, on how widely toy companies violated the Charter. It asked the Hong Kong Toy Industry Council, which represented many major investors in China, to embrace the Charter, and got a flat refusal. "Somebody is out of their minds," an industry spokesman said. The Coalition then launched an international campaign, with activists in 10 countries. They warned of a boycott against those who failed to adopt the Charter and improve their contractors' labor abuses.

Reacting to the campaign, the International Council of Toy Industries, an association of 20 national toy associations, adopted a code of labor practices in 1995 and has re-

vised it at least twice since then. In 1997, Mattel, the world's largest toy corporation, adopted its own corporate code covering 18 Mattel-owned plants and some 300 contractor-operated factories in China and elsewhere. The announcement came a month before Christmas and a year after a Dateline NBC TV report that girls as young as 13 were making clothes for Mattel's Barbie doll in Indonesia. Corporate codes on labor practices began to proliferate in the toy industry and beyond. According to a survey of the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, they now number at least 240.

Significantly, of all the core worker rights promulgated by the UN's International Labor Organization, the one that is the most commonly violated is the right to organize. Most corporate codes either ignore it or fail to implement it, except perhaps in the corporation's home country. Many conveniently qualify that right by making it subject to "local law." The code of business practices of the International Council of Toy Industries, for example, stipulates that "all workers are entitled to freely exercise their rights of employee representation as provided by local law."^{W3} That's quite a loophole, given the fact that so much global production these days comes from China, where the government outlaws the right to unionize and the police are brutal in suppressing it.

The Toy Industry Association has taken additional steps, which may have only PR as their inspiration. The association president, Tom Conley, in July 2002, announced two initiatives by his association: developing "a special working relationship with the Chinese government's workplace safety agencies" and setting up an independent unit in Hong Kong to audit compliance with the industry's code of conduct and to offer training in compliance with the code.^{W4}

Are these corporate responsibility codes only public relations gimmicks, or are they potentially useful instruments for advancing worker rights? Both, concluded four Hong Kong NGOs in 1999, five years after proposing a code of conduct for the toy industry. In *Change*, the newsletter of the Christian Industrial Committee, they analyzed what they called "the dual nature of the codes":

- On the one hand, the codes involve a "great deal of moral posturing and superficial public relations stunts," without improving working conditions on the production line.
- At the same time, the codes provide the "leverage through which we can pressure companies to improve their working situation and *hopefully* create conditions that facilitate the right to organize and the right to collective bargaining" (italics in the original).

So far, this leverage has fallen far short of its potential. Above all, it has not given workers the leverage they need to organize unions of their own (see special section, "Growing Worker Activism," page 39).

Consumer Pressure

Once considered a useful tool, consumer boycotts are now recognized as largely unrealistic. Made-in-China goods swamp stores in the United States. Alternative choices, say of a doll made in South Korea, are exceedingly rare. And so are

What You Can Do

How can you help? Right now, there's no organized international consumer campaign aimed at improving working conditions and allowing unions in China, but consider these ideas:

1. Photocopy this article and take it with you the next time you visit Wal-Mart, Toys "R" Us, or any other toy retailer. Give it to the manager and tell him orally, and also in a letter—

- that you are concerned about the plight of the millions of women and men who make our toys under sweatshop conditions; and
- that Wal-Mart, Toys "R" Us, and other retailers should live up to the promises that their national business group, the Toy Industry Association, made in the code of fair labor practices—and allow Chinese workers to form independent unions.

2. Write a letter covering the same points to Tom Conley, president of the Toy Industry Association, 1115 Broadway, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. You might remind him of his July statement on "Setting the Standard for Social Responsibility," which you can read at www.toy-tia.org/industry/news/exchange/0207.html.

3. Check anti-sweatshop Web sites, such as that of the National Labor Committee (at www.nlcnet.org) in the United States and the Christian Industrial Committee (www.hkcic.org.hk) in Hong Kong, for reports on pressing problems and how you can help.

4. Become better informed on how U.S. integration into the global economy brings us vast benefits as consumers but also opens up opportunities for us to make sure that working men and women gain rights now denied. See especially the Web site of the AFL-CIO at www.aflcio.org/globaleconomy/.

—R.S.

The Struggle for Democracy in China: Resources for Teachers

This new resource guide from the AFT's International Affairs department offers everything teachers

need to develop a unit on the ongoing struggle for democracy in China.

Issues addressed include human and worker rights, child labor, education, the environment, corruption, and ethnic minorities. To order, send a \$5 check or money order, payable to AFT, to: The China Project, International Affairs Department, American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC

20001. For more information, e-mail iad@aft.org.



for the property rights of individuals and corporations engaged in cross-border trade and investment. A major omission in those agreements is any kind of similar protection for the rights of the many millions of its workers employed in making toys and other products.

The AFL-CIO and many other organizations in the U.S. and abroad have long pressed for a worker rights dimension to balance the rules in trade and investment agreements such as those administered by the Geneva-based World Trade Organization. But the WTO has steadfastly refused even to discuss proposals to establish a study group that would discuss the idea.

The reason, according to widespread misinformation, is that developing countries are very strongly opposed. Actually, the strongest opposition comes from the governments of some developing countries. In many of these countries, the unions agree that the WTO's protections are unbalanced and should be broadened to cover the interests of the vulnerable working women and men in the global economy. That idea has such merit that the struggle to adopt it is sure to continue. A built-in obstacle, however, is that the WTO is run by government ministers of trade or finance—officials who, at the international level, are unlikely to deviate from their role at home, which definitely is not to serve as an advocate of worker rights.

The AFL-CIO has used every possible opening domestically to demand that the President and the Congress make U.S. and global trade with China conditional on progress in the human rights of China's people, including its working men and women. All to no avail, either in Democratic or Republican administrations. China's economy keeps growing, its workers keep paying the price, and U.S. trade with China continues, unmoved by the misery it's subsidizing.

What will China's greater integration into the global economy through accession to the WTO mean for China's workers? Australian National University's Anita Chan, author of "China's Workers Under Assault" and other writings based on extensive field research in China, expects that the free trade rules of the expanded WTO will intensify competition among developing countries to lower wages and working conditions. "In the migrant worker areas in south China, along the Coast," she says, "I don't see the conditions getting better, only worse."

The above three strategies—codes of conduct, consumer action, and demands for trade reform—pursued with complementary initiatives, help to keep the pressure on, and help to prevent greater abuses. But thus far they have failed to produce substantial forward movement. Significant progress depends on more pressure for change from within China itself. Pressure from outside is necessary, but it does not suffice, particularly without the presence in China of organizations of workers, by workers, and for workers. What could change this is the growing unrest among Chinese workers—and early signs that the unrest could slowly germinate an organized worker presence in China. □

the parents and grandparents who will deny little Jane or Johnny a popular game or doll just because it comes from in China.

Consumers will not carry the full burden of wiping out sweatshops, and they cannot. Yet they are not powerless. They can and do exert pressure on the firms whose products they buy—for instance, by asking companies for copies of their codes of conduct, by complaining to store managers about a lack of choice among the countries where goods are made, by writing letters of concern to the White House, Congress, and the media, and by joining demonstrations against violations of the human rights of workers in China. The consumer strategy advocated by Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee is to concentrate pressure on giant retailers like Wal-Mart and Toys "R" Us, and big manufacturers like Mattel and Hasbro, asking them to insist that overseas toy manufacturers obey the law and allow trade unions.

International Trade Reforms

International and U.S.-China trade agreements have fueled two engines of China's economic growth—globalized trade and investment. A major and little known component of those agreements is their network of enforceable protections

HEROISM

(Continued from page 15)

four-minute mile. Yet Roger Bannister trained in secret, ran up and down the hills of Wales, and proved the world wrong. Heroes take risks. In June of 1940, Charles de Gaulle saw France vanquished by Adolf Hitler. His colleagues prudently surrendered; de Gaulle refused. Like Winston Churchill, he fought when there seemed no hope. Heroes are altruistic. Albert Schweitzer could have comfortably remained an organist and scholar. Instead, in his thirties, he remade himself into a missionary doctor. Heroes act on their deepest convictions. Eleanor Roosevelt and Florence Nightingale were born privileged and told to stay home. Yet they defied convention and became tough-minded humanitarians.

In mounting my defense of the hero, I stress that great men and women have shaped America as much as social forces and that ideals have been as influential in our history as economic self-interest.

While I describe signs of the times, my message is not that we are declining and decadent, like Rome in the fifth century C.E. I am patriotic and ardently believe in democracy and capitalism. We so love to criticize that we forget what we do well.

My message is not to turn back the clock and embrace the heroes of the 19th century—heroes who tended to be white, male, and privileged. Nor do I advocate the 1950s, when John Wayne sat tall in his saddle, Mickey Mantle sped around the bases, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson smiled on television, and we did not debate whether Columbus was an explorer or a killer. The 1950s tolerated a fair amount of hypocrisy and injustice in the middle of affluence. I believe in information, choices, and honesty. The heart of my message to students is that they learn to detect greatness in the midst of all their choices and information.

At a private school in New York City, I put my definition of *hero* on the blackboard: a person of extraordinary achievement, courage, and greatness of soul. “How can you argue that Lincoln was great-souled?” asks a student. “Abraham Lincoln was a racist.” “Why was Lincoln a hero rather than just an ordinary politician?”

Suffering from melancholy, Lincoln forced himself out of gloom with humor and hard work. When the Mexican War started, he protested, fully knowing it was political suicide. And when the majority of Americans were willing to extend slavery into the western territories, he denounced the plan as evil. With consummate political skill, Lincoln maneuvered the South into firing the first shot in the Civil War and kept a divided cabinet and fragmented Union from splitting apart. Aware that a president in a democracy cannot be too far ahead of the voters who put him in office, he insisted that the primary purpose of the war must be the preservation of the Union. He listened to abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and Ralph Waldo Emerson and—I believe—sympathized with them. When the moment was right, he made the war against the southern rebellion into a war for human freedom, working behind the scenes to assure the passage of

For hundreds of years, schools automatically offered young people heroes. How else to combat the ambiguities and temptations of adult life? Where else to find the good to be imitated and the evil to be avoided?

an amendment that would free the slaves.

“Do you know,” I always ask students, “that Lincoln commuted the death sentences of hundreds of deserters and Native Americans sentenced to be hanged by a Minnesota court? Have you read the Second Inaugural Address or his letter to Mrs. Bixby, who lost two of her sons in battle?” I try to explain that in their eagerness to find reality and expose hypocrisy, they have exchanged the myth of Lincoln the Saint for the myth of Lincoln the Racist.

Students rarely mention soldiers as heroes. When selecting public heroes, students tend to pick humanitarians. Interestingly enough, they rarely mention scientists or mathematicians. I have corresponded with a teacher in Philadelphia who has built his curriculum around scientist heroes. He believes great scientists should be as venerated as baseball players. Without radar and code breakers, he reminded me, America could have lost to Hitler.

I have found that many students are inclined to moral and aesthetic relativism. They do not want to be thought judgmental. As one teacher put it, many think one action is as good as another. “Who is to say Mozart is any better than Marilyn Manson?” “How can you say Shakespeare is better than Danielle Steel? Everything is interpretation.” Several students have referred to my condemnation of Adolf Hitler as “just an opinion.”

In a school in San Francisco, students were studying behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner, prompting a long discussion about heroes and altruism. Skinner stresses that we are powerfully molded by our environment and thus have little free will, that we are conditioned like rats and pigeons. But only with the belief that human beings have free will and the capacity for generous impulses does heroism become possible.

At an all girls' school in Connecticut, a student asked me whether I had read Albert Camus's *The Fall*. Camus, she volunteered, believes that all people are selfish. She had been wondering as she listened to the list of great deeds in my talk whether at bottom all heroes weren't just selfish. Undoubtedly, their motives are mixed and human beings are very complicated, but, I asked, could selfishness have driven Harriet Tubman into Maryland to rescue slaves she did not know?

Students will often name a hero and link that person to one trait they admire. "Dennis Rodman is my hero. He brought himself up from nothing." "Can't Marilyn Manson be considered a hero because he defied society, like Tom Paine and Martin Luther King, Jr.?"

These one-dimensional definitions surface frequently. I ask these students to consider a more complex definition. What else does a man who has brought himself up from nothing do with his life? Of course athletes can be heroes, but shouldn't they have something more than extraordinary skill to qualify? Is defying society *always* the right thing to do?

The founding fathers, the 19th-century reformers, and the civil rights protesters were all rebels in their time. Should we challenge our heroes? Of course. A healthy skepticism is necessary for a healthy society. Irreverence among the young is inevitable and in some ways desirable. But, I argue, irreverence, skepticism, and mockery permeate our scholarship and culture to such a degree that it is difficult for young people to have public heroes.

Teachers often ask me what schools can do to encourage a belief in heroism. For hundreds of years, a goal of American education was to teach about heroes and exemplary lives. Schools automatically offered young people heroes. How else to combat the ambiguities and temptations of adult life? Where else to find the good to be imitated and the evil to be avoided? And so young people read Plutarch's *Lives* and were saturated with the pious maxims of their McGuffey's "Readers" and inculcated with the triumphs of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln.

This tradition has ended, and in its place we now offer lives that are seriously flawed, juvenile novels that emphasize "reality," and a history that is uncertain and blemished. In an information-rich world, we need to guide our young people to a more realistic definition of *hero* and bring balance to the way past heroes are evaluated.

To counteract radical revisionist history, a moderate triumphalism would highlight America's humanitarianism, our genius at invention and production, and our fundamental and ever-increasing commitment to equality. A moderate triumphalism would admit the mistakes America had made but insist that America learns from its mistakes and takes corrective action. From Wounded Knee, we learned. From the Homestead strike and the Triangle Shirt Waist fire, we learned. From the Treaty of Versailles and Vietnam. A moderate triumphalism would honor heroes like Chief Joseph, the brilliant strategist and magnanimous leader of the Nez Perce; would look into all corners of America's population for heroes; and would expand the pantheon beyond explorers, soldiers, and generals. But it would not automatically denigrate heroes of the past because they were privileged or powerful, because they fought and explored, or because they did not surmount every prejudice of their era.

Why Heroes?

Heroes make our lives more interesting. With heroes, we confront crisis and experience terror. We discover new lands and help the sick. We write memorable poems and compose

I cannot imagine a world without heroes, a world without genius and nobility, without exalted enterprise, high purpose, and transcendent courage, without risk and suffering. It would be gray and flat and dull.

stirring symphonies. With heroes, we experience the extraordinary and expand our notion of what it means to be human. With heroes, we escape the mundane.

We hear Winston Churchill defy Adolph Hitler and Franklin Roosevelt denounce Japan in 1941. We voyage with Captain Cook to Tahiti; with Florence Nightingale, we sail to the Crimea. We watch Mother Teresa comfort the dying. We are in prison with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Like Sir Isaac Newton, we explain the universe.

Heroes are fascinating and puzzling. What made Abraham Lincoln rise from poverty and obscurity to become a successful lawyer? In love with life and books and conversation, what made Sir Thomas More defy Henry VIII and die for the Catholic Church? Why did the villagers of Le Chambon risk their lives and hide Jews from the Germans? Heroes make us interested in the mystery of bravery and goodness.

Heroes instruct us in greatness. When Nelson Mandela leaves his South African cell without rancor and invites his guards to his inauguration, we are instructed in magnanimity. When Mother Teresa leaves her comfortable convent school and moves to Calcutta, we learn about compassion. Hearing that James Stockdale spent eight years in a North Vietnamese prison and is not broken, we understand bravery.

Heroes encourage us to search for our better selves. Shrewdly, George Orwell wrote, "There is one part of you that wants to be a hero or a saint, but another part of you is a little fat man who sees very clearly the advantages of staying alive with a whole skin." When in 1936 he fought fascism in Spain, Orwell repudiated smallness and safety.

Heroes triumph but often fail. Before the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant was an alcoholic, William Sherman chronically depressed. It took years for Pierre and Marie Curie to separate radium from pitchblende; months before Ann Sullivan could communicate with Helen Keller.

John F. Kennedy was moved by the courage of John Quincy Adams. For guidance, Martin Luther King, Jr. looked to Gandhi; Gandhi looked to Tolstoy; Tolstoy read Thoreau. In all serious endeavors, we depend on exemplary lives and link ourselves to loftiness. We are fortified by examples of resolution and high achievement and bravery.

But heroes are not perfect. "The one cruel fact about

heroes," comments La Rochefoucauld, "is that they are made of flesh and blood." We should search for greatness but not be surprised by flaws.

Aware of flaws, we can still admire. Clara Barton may have been arrogant, but she single-handedly founded the Red Cross. Admittedly ethnocentric, Albert Schweitzer cured thousands of sick Africans. Sir Thomas More sacrificed his life for the Catholic Church but authorized the burning of Protestants.

* * *

"Times of terror are times of heroism," said Emerson. America's new war reminded us of one kind of heroism, the brave deed, and of one kind of hero, the rescuer. My hope is that it will also encourage us to become more interested in past and present public heroes and that it will revive the qualities of admiration, gratitude, and awe too long absent from our culture. In a 1929 essay, "The Aims of Education," philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote, "Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness." What can we do to renew *and* sustain America's vision of greatness?

We can make the case for all kinds of heroes, to show how they have transformed America and how they can lift and improve our lives. We can honor our soldiers in peace as well as in war. We can look in new ways at old heroes and into the obscure corners of history for new ones.

We can look back and learn from an age when the ideology of heroism was influential and imitation of the admirable was the norm. Immersed in the present, we need to pay more attention to our past. At the same time, we need to realize that a more mature society requires a more subtle and complex presentation of heroism—one that includes a recognition of weaknesses and reversals along with an appreciation of virtues and triumphs. And we need to recognize that an egalitarian multicultural society requires that the pantheon of heroes be expanded.

We can challenge the times and be combative. In a bureaucratic age, celebrate individual achievement; in an egalitarian age, praise genius; when everyone is a victim, stress personal responsibility. In addition to popular culture, high culture. In a celebrity age, caution young people about worshipping fame and beauty; in a society mesmerized by athletes, recall the moral language of sport.

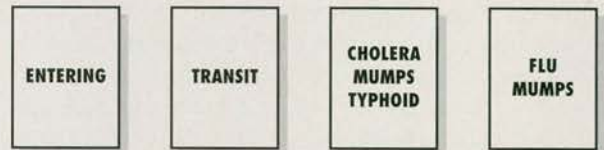
We can teach our children and grandchildren that character is as important as intellect, that idealism is superior to cynicism, that wisdom is more important than information. We can teach them to be realistic *and* affirming, to see life not only as it is but also as it ought to be. Heroes are a response to a deep and powerful impulse, the need to emulate and idealize. "The search after the great," said Emerson, "is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood."

I cannot imagine a world without heroes, a world without genius and nobility, without exalted enterprise, high purpose, and transcendent courage, without risk and suffering. It would be gray and flat and dull. Who would show us the way or set the mark? Who would inspire us and console us? Who would energize us and keep us from the darkness?

COGNITIVE SCIENTIST

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entering the country is vaccinated against cholera (Cheng & Holyoak, 1985).



About which travelers do you need more information? You need to check the "entering" person (to ensure that he has the cholera vaccination), and you need to check the "flu mumps" person (to ensure that he is in transit).

This question has exactly the same formal structure (*Modus Tollens*) as the previous problem, but people are much more likely to get it right. Why? Because this problem has a concrete structure that makes sense—it doesn't use letters and numbers—and the rule about disease and entry is sensible, not arbitrary. The idea that the human mind prefers to consider novel concepts in concrete ways should ring true to every teacher. When presented with a new abstract idea or formula, students clamor for examples.

So How Does Inflexible Knowledge Become Flexible?

You can probably think of many instances where your own knowledge seems quite flexible. For example, if you know how to find the area of a rectangle, that knowledge is probably generalizable; you can apply it to any rectangle, and the formula is not tied to the specific examples in which you learned it. You think of using the formula in novel situations, such as determining the total square footage of a hallway, kitchen, and dining room. Why is this knowledge flexible?

Knowledge tends to be inflexible *when it is first learned*. As you continue to work with the knowledge, you gain expertise; the knowledge is no longer organized around surface forms, but rather is organized around deep structure. That principle was nicely captured in an experiment by Michelene Chi et al. (1981). She gave expert physicists and novices a set of physics problems and asked that they put them into categories of their own devising. The novices categorized the problems based on the surface features of the problems—that is, they formed one category for problems involving inclined planes, another for problems involving springs, and so on. The experts, however, created categories based on physical principles: one category for conservation of energy, another for Newton's first law of motion, and so on. Similar experiments, using knowledge of dinosaurs, have likewise shown that experts' memories are organized differently than novices', whether the experts are children or adults.

Inflexible Knowledge in Perspective

The examples above should put this problem of inflexibility in context. Understanding the deep structure of a large domain defines expertise, and that is an important goal of education. But if students fall short of this, it certainly doesn't

mean that they have acquired mere rote knowledge and are little better than parrots. There is a broad middle-ground of understanding between rote knowledge and expertise. It is this middle-ground that most students will initially reach and they will reach it in ever larger domains of knowledge (from knowing how to use area formulas fluently to mastering increasingly difficult aspects of geometry). These increasingly large stores of facts and examples are an important stepping stone to mastery. For example, your knowledge of calculating the area of rectangles may have once been relatively inflexible; you knew a limited number of situations in which the formula was applicable, and your understanding of why the formula worked was not all that clear. But with increasing experience, you were able to apply this knowledge more flexibly and you better understood what lay behind it. Similarly, it is probably expecting too much to think that students should immediately grasp the deep structure beneath what we teach them. As students work with the knowledge we teach, their store of knowledge will become larger and increasingly flexible, although not immediately.

What Does This Suggest for Teachers?

1. Use examples: The fact that students seem to get stuck on examples does not mean that teachers should refrain from providing examples. Certainly, examples help students understand the abstract concepts and some researchers (e.g., Gick & Holyoak, 1983; Gentner et al., 1993) believe that by providing multiple examples, one encourages students to compare the examples and to thereby consider what they have in common; what they have in common, of course, is the deep structure we would like students to learn. Thus, it is probably helpful to tell them not just about Pavlov's dog, but about a number of wide-ranging examples.

2. Make a distinction between rote and inflexible knowledge: This might be the most important point. Rote knowledge is meaningless. But inflexible knowledge is a natural consequence of learning. We should neither despair when it appears, nor take drastic measures to eliminate it when its elimination could cause collateral damage to our students (i.e., diminished factual knowledge).

3. Appreciate the importance of students' growing knowledge, even if it's inflexible: Don't be reluctant to build students' factual knowledge base. Some facts end up in memory without any meaning, and other facts have meanings that are quite inflexible, but that doesn't mean that teachers should minimize the teaching of facts in the curriculum. "Fact" is not synonymous with rote knowledge or with inflexible knowledge. Knowing more facts makes many cognitive functions (e.g., comprehension, problem solving) operate more efficiently. If we minimize the learning of facts out of fear that they will be absorbed as rote knowledge, we are truly throwing the baby out with the bath water.

4. Remember that inflexible knowledge is a natural step on the way to the deeper knowledge that we want our students to have: Frustration that students' knowledge is inflexible is a bit like frustration that a child can add but can't do long division. It's not that this child knows nothing;

rather, he doesn't know everything we want him to know yet. But the knowledge he does have is the natural step on the road to deeper knowledge. What turns the inflexible knowledge of a beginning student into the flexible knowledge of an expert seems to be a lot more knowledge, more examples, and more practice. □

Readers can pose specific questions to "Ask the Cognitive Scientist," American Educator, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001 or to amered@aft.org.

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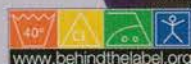
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ATTRACTING TEACHERS

(Continued from page 21)

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EXTENDED TIME

(Continued from page 30)

what they are reading in a more focused way. In-depth discussions of fiction and non-fiction trade books, as well as other reading materials students select themselves, serve as the core materials. Middle-school students in Chancellor's District schools also have a scheduled skills-building period twice a week to enhance their ability to comprehend and enjoy more sophisticated literature, including complex texts from content area subjects.

Mathematics instruction in Chancellor's District schools centers on a required curriculum tied to New York state and city performance standards. In addition to the mathematics block, students have designated skill-building math periods—30 minutes three days a week for elementary students, one period twice a week for middle school—to help them extend their content knowledge and their understanding of core mathematical concepts.

To be sure, structured curricula have their critics. Educators and researchers who find fault with these programs rail against their rigid schedules and scripted approach to teaching. However, both the teachers and principals interviewed for this article are positive, even enthusiastic, about the Chancellor's District curriculum. At P.S. 180, Kimberly Ambrecht attributes much of her students' success to the 90-minute SFA block and its emphasis on decoding and reading comprehension skills. "The biggest change over the past four years is that most of the kids are now reading on grade level. And that's a huge change from when I first started. The kids are starting to really be successful."

Less experienced teachers say the literacy and mathematics programs help them to gain a better handle on instructional strategies and techniques as they build their own instructional repertoire. More experienced teachers acknowledge that the literacy programs in particular are quite structured, but say there is room for teachers to be creative. "We can change the literature [with the approval of the SFA facilitator] as long as we maintain the pacing and techniques," says Yvette Vasquez, UFT chapter leader at P.S. 212. The creative challenge for the teachers is that, "It's up to the teacher to keep it fresh and fun."

Similarly, Ambrecht notes that she's been given the autonomy to make sure she is meeting her students' needs. In the second literacy block, Ambrecht says, "the kids are supposed to write twice a week, but in my class the kids write every day; they are phenomenal writers. I think writing equals success: If you can write it, you can read it."

Most importantly, both principals and teachers praise the literacy and mathematics curricula for contributing to students' academic progress. Says David Harris, principal at M.S. (middle school) 246, "Our reading and math scores have gone up every year [since we've been part of the Chancellor's District]. And every year we've met our performance targets."

Lessons Learned

New York City's Extended Time Schools represent one school system's serious effort to break the academic logjam

and turn around struggling schools. The formula is not magic, but the combination of elements seems key.

ETS schools embody a package of reforms; there is no attempt to impose a simple solution on a complex problem. Rather, ETS combines multiple strategies to form a coherent improvement package. To begin with, ETS schools are anchored in the Chancellor's District, which was created for the sole purpose of helping struggling schools succeed. Within the Chancellor's District, the issue of principal leadership has been taken seriously; at the launch of the Chancellor's District, all but one of the principals were replaced, and at the launch of ETS, nearly half of the principals were replaced.

Further, ETS schools are focused with a laser-like intensity on improving demonstrable student achievement, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics, and the Chancellor's District has selected curriculum with that goal in mind. The point is not that the specific curricular programs used by the Chancellor's District are the only ones that might produce results. What is important is that these curricula were selected because they have a sound research base and track record.

Qualified teachers are central to the Extended Time Schools. In many districts across the country, individuals with little background in or preparation for teaching form the bulwark of teaching staffs in low-performing schools. The ETS schools rejected this approach. In addition to being assured of licensed teachers, school-based staffing enables schools to hire those professionals who can best meet the educational needs of the schools' students.

Targeted professional development contributes to enhancing the knowledge and skills that teachers need to be effective. In Chancellor's District schools in general and in ETS schools in particular, professional development is structured with a keen eye to education's bottom line: helping students to learn more and better.

Finally, in those schools that operate on the extended-time schedule, more time is not simply provided for the sake of having more time. Time is purposefully targeted and distributed.

The Chancellor's District program, as thoughtfully constructed as it is, nonetheless points up dilemmas that continue to plague low-performing schools. It is hard to attract experienced teachers to these schools that have reputations as difficult places to teach. Altering those reputations, and transforming these schools into desired teaching assignments, may require yet additional investments and incentives.

Further, it is unclear how long ETS schools will maintain their extra support. Three, four, even five years of support may or may not be adequate to sustain the improvement momentum. It is reasonable to assume that much (not all) of ETS schools' increased achievement is due to the added resource support that is part of ETS, such as higher salaries, added time, smaller classes, and professional development tied to an effective curriculum.

The natural temptation of a school system is to serve as many schools as possible by removing the extra resources

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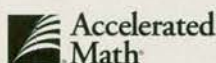
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from a given set of schools as soon as they start to succeed. But the fear is that removing the supports will result in schools losing the progress they have made. Says the UFT's Weingarten, "If we just rest on our laurels and say [the problems are] solved, we'll go backwards." So far, no ETS schools have lost their special programs.

Going forward, it will be important to examine the schools that are able to sustain progress and determine what factors are central to their continued success. Likewise, if ETS resources are pulled back from current schools, it will be essential to identify schools that find themselves in danger of academic backsliding before progress is lost.

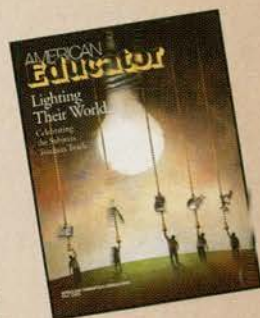
For other districts contemplating comprehensive programs aimed at low-performing schools, New York City's Chancellor's District offers an important learning laboratory. The lesson to be taken is that it is possible, through hard work, collaborative relationships, and strategic investments, to place struggling schools on an upward trajectory. □

Endnotes

- ¹ This is the typical ETS program. There can be some school-by-school variation. For example, some teachers interviewed for this article indicated that their pre-K through second-grade students also stay for the extended time period.
- ² In 2002, a new contract was negotiated. All schools now have a longer day and all teachers received corresponding raises; consequently, the pay differential between ETS and non-ETS teachers is now 9 percent.
- ³ Over the past few years, almost all uncertified teachers have been replaced with teachers licensed through traditional programs as well as those who earn licensure through New York State's alternative certification routes.
- ⁴ Some ETS schools already had these committees and were already filling vacancies based on this contract provision. The School-Based Staffing Option is available to all NYC schools and is adopted when 55 percent of a chapter (which consists of all UFT members in a school) so votes. Currently, nearly one-third of NYC schools hire staff through a personnel committee established under the School-Based Staffing Option.

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