

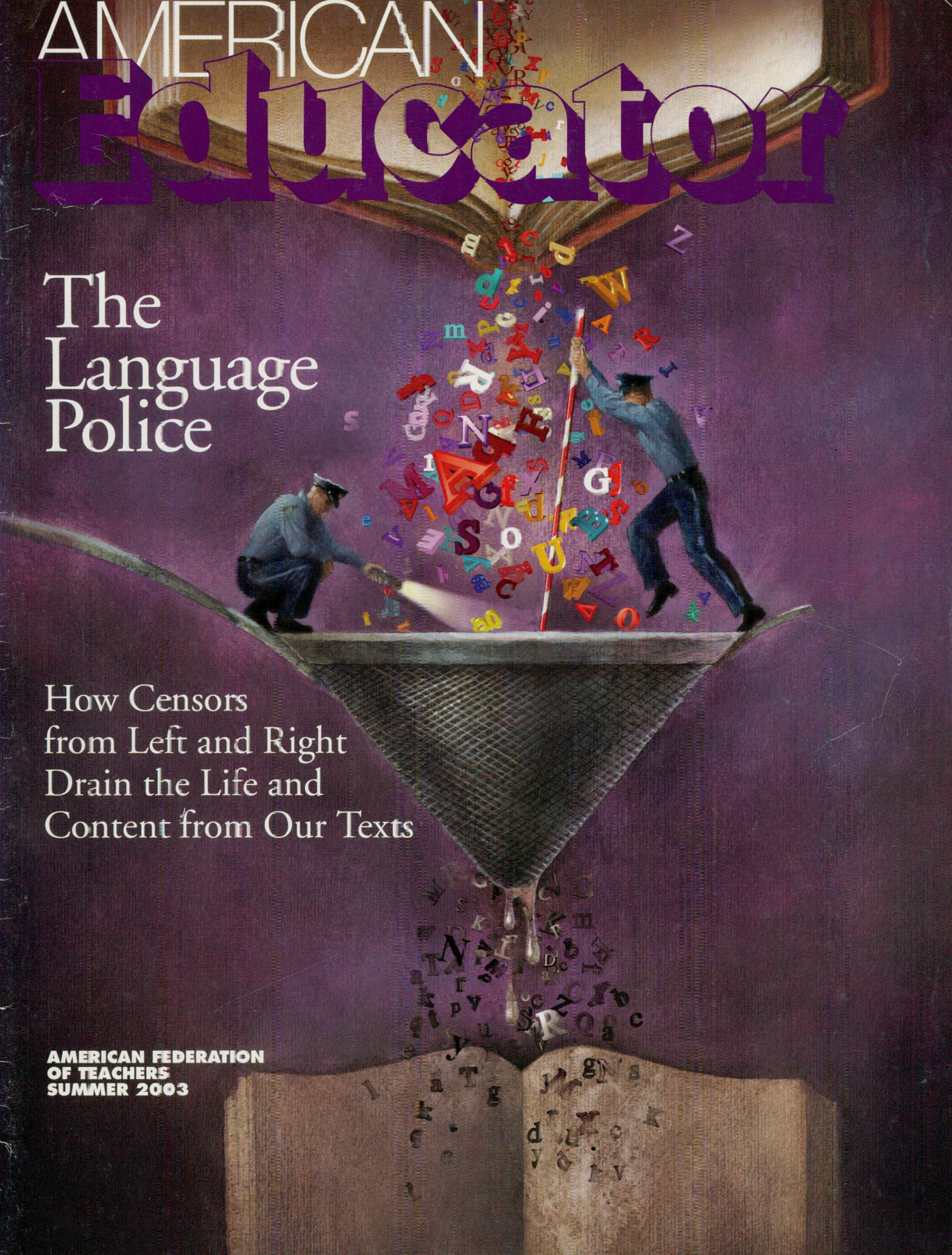
AMERICAN

# Educator

## The Language Police

How Censors  
from Left and Right  
Drain the Life and  
Content from Our Texts

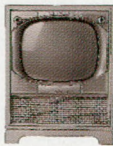
**AMERICAN FEDERATION  
OF TEACHERS  
SUMMER 2003**



THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ART IN OUR SCHOOLS.

NO WONDER PEOPLE THINK  
**CARAVAGGIO**  
IS A GUY ON THE SOPRANOS.

It's hard to believe. Here's a 16th-century Baroque master whose bold naturalistic painting style first created a sensation, then a movement. A guy



If you're looking for Caravaggio, you're very, very cold.

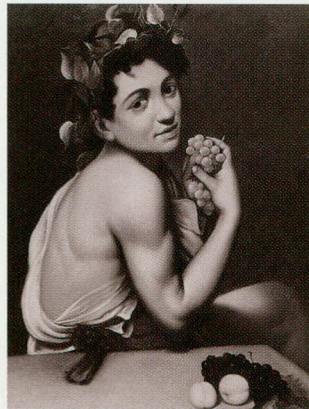
whose life was filled with the turbulence and excess of more than a dozen Mario Puzo novels.

This guy who, while troubled, ultimately found redemption and immortality in his art. But does the average kid on the street even know who Caravaggio is?

Fuhgedaboutit.

Too bad. Especially when you consider how much our children can learn from the conflicted life of a great artist like Michelangelo Caravaggio.

He grew up in less than ideal circumstances. Most of his family died in the plague. Much of his youth was misspent on the mean streets of Rome. And as a

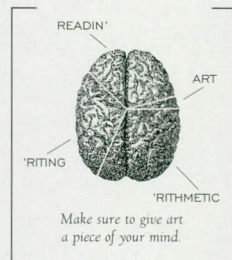


A self-portrait of Caravaggio as Bacchus. Honestly, he wouldn't last 10 minutes on *The Sopranos*.

young artist he struggled for years to make a living. He was angry. Yet the angry contrast between light and darkness in his work is the very reason why it now hangs in countless museums around the world.

If nothing else, it's a case study of the importance of having art as an outlet. Unfortunately, one we're fast removing from our kids' lives.

If the arts are indeed a vital part of your child's education (and studies show you believe they are), then you should demand his or her fair share. To find out how to help, or for more information about the benefits of arts education, please visit us at [AmericansForTheArts.org](http://AmericansForTheArts.org). Because, as Caravaggio would tell you, life without art is torture.



**ART. ASK FOR MORE.**

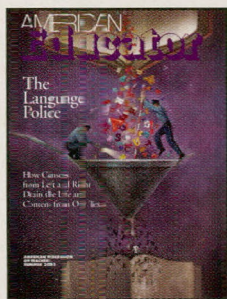


For more information about the importance of arts education, contact [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).



2 **Letters**

3 **Notebook**



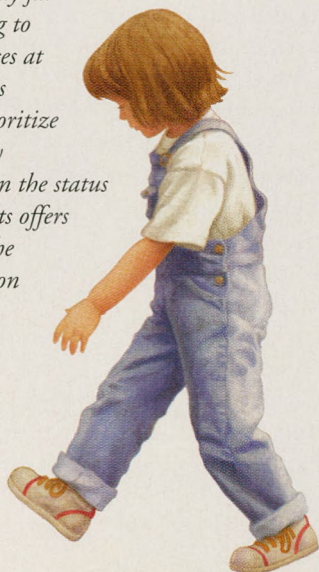
Cover illustrated by Nenad Jaksevic

6 **Thin Gruel**  
How the Language Police Drain the Life and Content from Our Texts  
By Diane Ravitch

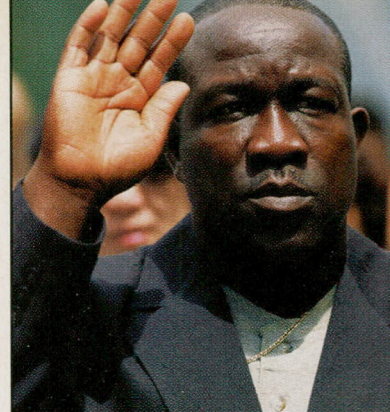
*The Right* wants texts to reflect their idealized world of the past: only two-parent families, mothers at home, no disobedient children. *The Left* wants texts to reflect their idealized world of the future: old people aren't frail, neither race nor gender is an issue, and blindness is not a disability. To please both sides, publishers now censor themselves, using "bias and sensitivity" guidelines that would make you laugh, except for the result: textbooks drained of life and delight, filled only with thin gruel.

20 **At the Starting Line**  
Early Education in the 50 States  
By Darion Griffin and Giselle Lundy-Ponce

*The educational odds are against children who enter kindergarten already far behind. What are states doing to help equalize children's chances at the starting line? Which states provide preschool? Which prioritize enrollment for the most needy children? AFT's new report on the status of states' early education efforts offers answers. Plus, a sidebar on the content that all early education programs should offer.*



28 **Now That I'm Here**  
What Immigrants Think About America



By Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett, and Jean Johnson with Leslie Moyer and Jackie Vine

*Nearly 12 percent of the U.S. population were born elsewhere. Many are our students—or our students' parents. What do they think of America? It's not perfect, and their lives are often hard. But they have a special perspective on the country's freedom and opportunities.*

37 **Ask the Cognitive Scientist**  
Students Remember...  
What They Think About  
By Daniel T. Willingham

*You are what you eat. What you see is what you get... Based on decades of research on learning and memory, Willingham offers another simple truth: What you think about is what you remember. The implications for teaching and assignments are substantial.*



42 **Thinking About September 11**  
Defining Terrorism and Terrorists  
By Jean Bethke Elshtain

*The second anniversary is arriving. How to remember it? What to teach? There are many good answers. But they all start with getting the facts right, says this distinguished scholar—in particular, that the perpetrators were terrorists, not martyrs, not freedom fighters.*

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# LETTERS



## Overcoming the Fourth-Grade Plunge

I have just finished reading the Spring 2003 issue of *American Educator*, and I have to tell you how wonderful it is. These articles deal with such important facets of teaching reading and are written in a clear, concise fashion. I teach reading courses at the college level and the articles I read in your journal are topics I teach in my developmental reading courses. Thank you for the *American Educator*. I look forward to reading each edition.

DR. MARY M. FOYE

*Feinstein School of Education and  
Human Development  
Rhode Island College  
Providence, R.I.*

I applaud *American Educator* for addressing the conundrum of "The Fourth-Grade Plunge" (Spring 2003). It was a true eye-opener! Speaking for myself as an educator, I am reluctant to read stories with advanced-level words and phrases to a world of students whose primary vocabulary instruction comes from a television set.

However, not once did you mention the importance of a school library program. What you described as a solution to the problem is what school library media specialists have been doing for years—exposing children to a wide variety of reading material, both fiction and nonfiction. It is quite often the first place where children are introduced to reference books such as the encyclopedia, dictionary, thesaurus, and almanac.

The school library program is unfortunately viewed as a "special" and not a significant part of the academic core. What a positive difference administra-

tors would see in their schools' academic performance if they viewed the school library program as a starting point of new topic study or as a conduit for widening students' base of knowledge.

JACKIE CAPEWELL

*School Library Media Specialist  
North Bellmore School District  
Long Island, N.Y.*

In the Spring 2003 issue of *American Educator*, E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and Andrew Biemiller cite research by my colleagues and me on the need to develop oral comprehension as a foundation for reading comprehension.

What I find particularly interesting is that the research cited was done to better understand adult reading education, not childhood reading. Almost 30 years ago, to aid in the better understanding of adult literacy issues, colleagues and I wrote *Auding and Reading: A Developmental Model* [auding refers to learning through listening] to provide a summary and synthesis of how the "typical child" (a theoretical abstraction, of course) born into our literate society grows up to become literate in the judgment of other adults. This was done to provide a frame of reference for better understanding how it is that some children, unlike the "typical child," grow up to be less than adequately literate in the judgment of other adults and might benefit from participating in an adult literacy program.

*Auding and Reading* offered guidance for adult reading instruction that pre-saged the present guidance in *American Educator* for K-12 education. For in-

(Continued on page 46)

# NOTEBOOK



## Attrition, Not Recruitment, Is Root of Teacher Shortage

The teacher shortage has been national news for years. Until recently, says the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), the conventional wisdom held that the shortage was largely due to increased enrollments, smaller class sizes, or a wave of retirements. The natural focus for a solution was on how better to recruit new, well-qualified, teachers. But, says NCTAF's new report, the bigger cause is that teachers—especially new teachers—choose to leave the profession. After just three years, about one-third of new teachers leave; after just five years, nearly half leave.

Why? Teachers leave the classroom before retirement for a variety of reasons, including family or personal reasons and to pursue other jobs. But dissatisfaction is a big reason—and one that can be addressed by policy.

According to a study by Richard Ingersoll (which is discussed in NCTAF's report), fully 25 percent of all teachers (including those in private schools) and 19 percent of teachers in urban, high-poverty, public schools report that they left teaching because of job dissatisfaction. The table below shows the five most frequently given reasons for leaving among teachers from all schools and teachers from urban, high-poverty, public schools. Clearly, lack of student motivation and discipline, poor salary, and inadequate administrative support are critical issues.

### Percentages of Teachers Reporting Various Reasons for Leaving Due to Dissatisfaction (Top Five Reasons)

<b>All schools</b>	
Poor salary	45
Lack of student motivation	38
Inadequate administrative support	30
Student discipline problems	30
Inadequate time to prepare	23
<b>Urban, high-poverty, public schools</b>	
Lack of student motivation	50
Poor salary	46
Student discipline problems	27
Unsafe environment	26
Poor opportunity for professional advancement	24

NCTAF's report, titled "No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children," is available online at [www.nctaf.org/dream/dream.html](http://www.nctaf.org/dream/dream.html). Ingersoll's study, titled "Teacher Turnover and Teacher Shortages: An Organizational Analysis," is in the Fall 2001 issue of the *American Educational Research Journal*.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BARKIN

## Revamping Teacher Prep or Professional Development for Elementary Teachers? Try this.

For more than a decade, the American Federation of Teachers has been a strong supporter of academic standards. But as the standards movement progressed from an idea at the state level to a reality in the classroom, everyone noticed some serious wrinkles in implementation. One common concern voiced by teachers, especially elementary grades teachers who are generalists, is that they often feel unprepared to teach some of the content set forth in their state's rigorous new standards. One reason for this is that teacher-training programs have typically provided an inadequate foundation in the academic content areas.

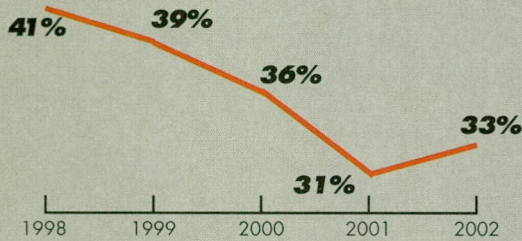
To help address this problem, the Core Knowledge Foundation developed 18 courses for future K-6 teachers. The project is called "What Elementary Teachers Need to Know," and the full syllabus for each course is available for free. Just go to [www.coreknowledge.org](http://www.coreknowledge.org) and click on "Resources." The 18 courses cover biology, earth science, physics, chemistry, math, U.S. history, world history, geography, art history, music, composition and grammar, British and world literature, American literature, children's literature, and teaching reading. While these courses were mainly developed as a basis for colleges to revamp their teacher preparation programs, teachers, schools, and districts are welcome to use the materials for professional development.

# High Standards, More Accountability, High Marks from the Public

Drawing on more than 25 of its surveys conducted over the past 10 years, Public Agenda recently released "Where We Are Now: Twelve Things You Need to Know About Public Opinion and Public Schools." While the polls indicate many concerns—particularly about the lack of student discipline and parental involvement—they also document decreases in social promotion, increases in summer school attendance, and improved attitudes towards public schools. Public Agenda ties these improvements directly to the standards movement and the strong support it enjoys among educators and the public. Indeed, just one to two percent of teachers, professors, parents, and employers favor halting the standards movement and returning things to the way they were.

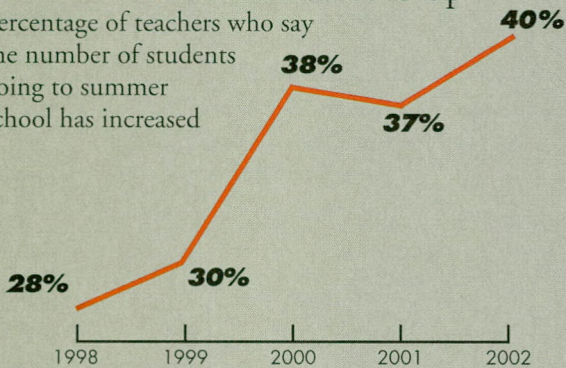
## Social Promotion Is Declining

Percentage of teachers who say schools automatically promote students who have reached a maximum age



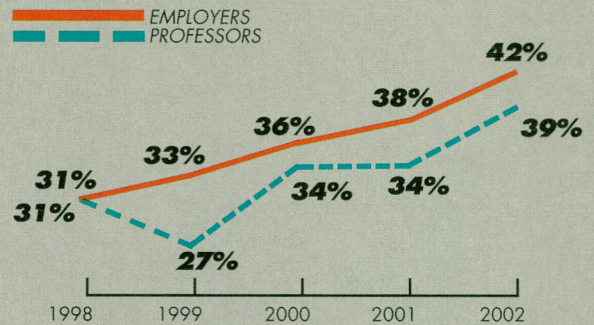
## Summer School Attendance Is Up

Percentage of teachers who say the number of students going to summer school has increased

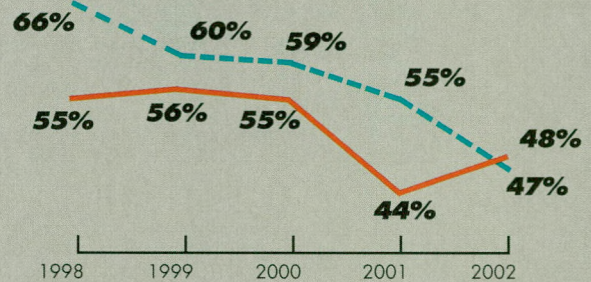


## Better Marks from Employers and Professors

Local public schools are doing an excellent or good job

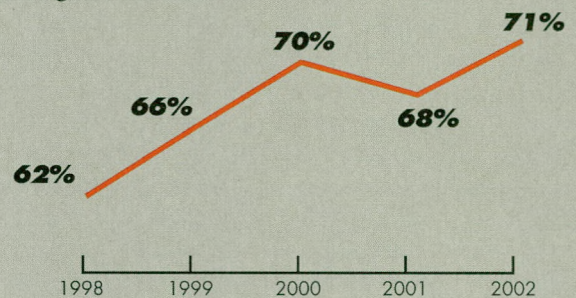


Local schools expect too little from students



## And Better Grades from Parents

Percentage of parents who say their child's public school gets a grade of A or B



ILLUSTRATED BY BRU ASSOCIATES

## Business Group Educates the Press on No Child Left Behind

As we go to press, states, acting under the guidance of the new No Child Left Behind Act, are compiling lists of schools “in need of improvement.” These are schools in which average student achievement scores—or the average scores of particular subgroups, like limited-English speakers or African Americans—have not made what NCLB defines as “adequate yearly progress” for two or more consecutive years.

One purpose of the law is to assure that persistent lack of student progress—whether across a school or within certain subgroups—can’t just be ignored, neglected, or swept under the rug by the public, whether they be taxpayers, school people, or parents.

But unfortunately, the peculiarities of how the law determines “adequate yearly progress” means that many schools that are making substantial progress won’t get credit for that progress. Instead, as the leaflet shown here notes, many schools that are making substantial progress with all students—and other schools in which most, but not all, students are achieving well—could be identified as “in need of improvement.”

The opportunity for the media to misunderstand the meaning of the “needs improvement”

designation is massive. It’s easy to imagine that if many schools end up on the list—and they will, given the way the law is written—that the press or policymakers could use the list as one more occasion to deride schools—even as they are making clear progress.

To help avoid that, The Business Roundtable, an association of leading corporate CEOs involved in school reform work, is distributing this leaflet to journalists, editors, and policymakers. Educators will want to be sure that journalists and policymakers in their own jurisdictions understand the “distinction” as well. For copies, visit [www.brtable.org/pdf/904.pdf](http://www.brtable.org/pdf/904.pdf).

### Please don't call a school a “failure” if it isn't.

The adequate yearly progress (AYP) provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act are complex – to say the least.

AYP measures how much improvement a school is making toward meeting state academic standards for all student subgroups. Some schools meet or exceed their AYP targets. Some schools fall far short. And some come close.

Of course, some schools *are* failures. They're the ones that persistently fail to make any sort of progress at all, year after year. But most schools don't fall into that category, and don't deserve to be painted with the same brush.

So what words would we suggest for describing schools that don't make AYP?

The state said P.S. 101 is a failing school.

The problem is that people sometimes lump together all the schools that don't make AYP – the ones that miss it by a lot and the ones that miss it by a little – and call all of them “failures.”

That's just unfair, and doesn't give the public a truly accurate picture about what's going on in our schools. Worst of all, mislabeling a school a “failure” can demoralize students, teachers, parents, and the community. None of us wants that.

Think of it this way: If two people go on a diet and set out to lose 10 pounds, is it fair to say they've both “failed” if one lost 9-1/2 pounds while the other didn't lose an ounce?

The federal government suggests “in need of improvement” to describe schools that do not make AYP for two years. Many states are developing their own language to differentiate among schools that show different levels of progress toward making AYP.

We realize that reporters sometimes use the word “failing” to describe schools because education officials themselves use it. The fact is that we all need to be as accurate as we can.

We know you're a stickler for accuracy. And we know you want to be fair to kids and teachers. So if a school is a failure, call it a failure. But please don't call a school a failure if it isn't.

## The distinction is important.



[www.brtable.org](http://www.brtable.org)

The Business Roundtable is an association of chief executive officers of leading corporations committed to advocating public policies that foster vigorous economic growth and a dynamic global economy.

# Thin Gruel

## *How the Language Police Drain the Life and Content from Our Texts*

By Diane Ravitch

**T**he word  *censorship*  refers to the deliberate removal of language, ideas, and books from the classroom or library because they are deemed offensive or controversial. The definition gets fuzzier, however, when making a distinction between censorship and selection. Selection is not censorship. Teachers have a responsibility to choose readings for their students based on their professional judgment of what students are likely to understand and what they need to learn. (It is also important to remember that people have a First Amendment right to complain about textbooks and library books they don't like.)

Censorship occurs when school officials or publishers (acting in anticipation of the legal requirements of certain states) delete words, ideas, and topics from textbooks and tests for no reason other than their fear of controversy. Censorship may take place before publication, as it does when publishers utilize guidelines that mandate the exclusion of certain language and topics, and it may happen after publication, as when parents and community members pressure school officials to remove certain books from school libraries

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*Diane Ravitch is research professor of education at New York University and nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. During President George H.W. Bush's administration, she was assistant secretary for educational research and improvement in the U.S. Department of Education; President Bill Clinton appointed her to the National Assessment Governing Board. Ravitch's reputation as a leading education historian was solidified with Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform, one of several books she has written on education. This article is excerpted with permission from The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn, Random House: New York, 2003, by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House.*

or classrooms. Some people believe that censorship occurs only when government officials impose it, but publishers censor their products in order to secure government contracts. So the result is the same.

Censors on the political right aim to restore an idealized vision of the past, an Arcadia of happy family life, in which the family was intact, comprising a father, a mother, two or more children, and went to church every Sunday. Father was in charge, and Mother took care of the children. Father worked; Mother shopped and prepared the meals. Everyone sat around the dinner table at night. It was a happy, untroubled setting into which social problems seldom intruded. Pressure groups on the right believe that what children read in school should present this vision of the past to children and that showing it might make it so. They believe strongly in the power of the word, and they believe that children will model their behavior on whatever they read. If they read stories about disobedient children, they will be disobedient; if they read stories that conflict with their parents' religious values, they might abandon their religion. Critics on the right urge that whatever children read should model appropriate moral behavior.

Censors from the political left believe in an idealized vision of the future, a utopia in which egalitarianism prevails in all social relations. In this vision, there is no dominant group, no dominant father, no dominant race, and no dominant gender. In this world, youth is not an advantage, and disability is not a disadvantage. There is no hierarchy of better or worse; all nations and all cultures are of equal accomplishment and value. All individuals and groups share equally in the roles, rewards, and activities of society. In this world to be, everyone has high self-esteem, eats healthy foods, exercises, and enjoys being different. Pressure groups on the left feel as strongly about the power of the word as those on the





right. They expect that children will be shaped by what they read and will model their behavior on what they read. They want children to read only descriptions of the world as they think it should be in order to help bring this new world into being.

For censors on both the right and the left, reading is a means of role modeling and behavior modification. Neither wants children and adolescents to encounter books, textbooks, or videos that challenge their vision of what was or what might be, or that depict a reality contrary to that vision.

## I. Censorship from the Right

In the 1980s, after a century of attacks on textbooks—animated by a search for anti-confederate or pro-communist sentiment, or any acknowledgement of evolution—right-wing censors launched an impassioned crusade against immoral books and textbooks and shifted their focus to religious and moral issues. Groups such as the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, the Reverend Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, the Reverend Pat Robertson's National Legal Foundation, and Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America, along with Mel and Norma Gabler's Educational Research Analysts in Texas, pressured local school districts and state boards of education to remove books that they considered objectionable.

The New Right attacked textbooks for teaching secular humanism, which they defined as a New Age religion that ignored biblical teachings and shunned moral absolutes. If it was right to exclude the Christian religion from the public schools, they argued, then secular humanism should be excluded too. If it was acceptable to teach secular humanism, they said, then Christian teaching should have equal time. The textbooks, said the critics, failed to distinguish between right and wrong, and thus taught the "situation ethics" of "secular humanism." They disapproved of portrayals of abortion, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, homosexuality, suicide, drug use, foul language, or other behavior that conflicted with their religious values. The right-wing critics also opposed stories that showed dissension within the family; such stories, they believed, would teach children to be disobedient and would damage families. They also insisted that textbooks must be patriotic and teach a positive view of the nation and its history.

The teaching of evolution was extensively litigated in the 1980s. The scientific community weighed in strongly on the side of evolution as the only scientifically grounded theory for teaching about biological origins. Fundamentalist Christians, however, insisted that public schools should give equal time to teaching the biblical version of creation. Several southern legislatures passed laws requiring "balanced treatment" of evolution and creationism, but such laws were consistently found to be unconstitutional by federal courts that held that evolution is science, and creationism is religion. In 1987, the United States Supreme Court ruled 7-2 against Louisiana's "balanced treatment" law. Yet fundamentalist insistence on "creation science" or "intelligent design" continued unabated. When states debated the adoption of science textbooks or science standards, critics demanded that com-

peting theories should get equal time. In 2000, Republican primary voters in Kansas defeated two state school board members who had voted to remove evolution from the state's science standards.

The religious right mounted numerous challenges to textbooks in the 1980s. The most important was the case of *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* in Tennessee. In 1983, fundamentalist Christian parents in Hawkins County objected to the elementary school textbooks that were required reading in their schools. The readers were published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston (now owned by Harcourt). The parents complained that the textbooks promoted secular humanism, satanism, witchcraft, fantasy, magic, the occult, disobedience, dishonesty, feminism, evolution, telepathy, one-world government, and New Age religion. They also asserted that some of the stories in the readers belittled the government, the military, free enterprise, and Christianity. At first, the parents wanted the textbooks removed from the local public schools. Eventually, however, they sought only that their own children be allowed to read alternate books that did not demean their religious views.

The parents received legal support from the Concerned Women for America. The school board was backed by the liberal People for the American Way. The battle turned into an epic left-right political showdown: One side claimed that the case was about censorship, and the other side argued that it was about freedom of religion.

For five years the case garnered national headlines as it wound its way up and down the federal court system. In 1987, the parents lost in federal appeals court, and in 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court decided not to review the appellate court decision. The judges decided that "mere exposure" to ideas different from those of the parents' religious faith did not violate the First Amendment's guarantee of free exercise of religion.

Defenders of the Holt Basic Readers celebrated their legal victory, but it was a hollow one. In *Battleground*, a comprehensive account of the case, author Stephen Bates noted that the Holt readers were "once the most popular reading series in the nation," but were brought to "the verge of extinction" by the controversy associated with the court case.<sup>1</sup> If publishers learned a lesson from the saga of the Holt reading series, it was the importance of avoiding controversy by censoring themselves in advance and including nothing that might attract bad publicity or litigation. The 1986 revision of the series, designed to replace the 1983 edition that was on trial in Tennessee, omitted some of the passages that fundamentalist parents objected to. The Holt readers won the legal battle but were commercially ruined. This was not a price that any textbook publisher would willingly pay.

A third major area for litigation in the 1980s involved efforts to ban books, both those that were assigned in class and those that were available in the school library. The first major test came not in the South, but in the Island Trees Union Free School District in New York. There, the local board directed school officials to remove 10 books from their libraries because of their profanity and explicit sexual content, including Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*,

# Banned Words, Images, and Topics

## *A Glossary that Runs from the Offensive to the Trivial*

Diane Ravitch collected more than 20 sets of guidelines produced by state departments of education, textbook publishers, test developers, educational research organizations, and other interest groups. The guidelines ban words, usages, and written and pictorial images from various educational materials. Much of the glossary aims to purify the past and present to the point that both are almost unrecognizable. The forbidden material includes the truly offensive—such as using the term “dummy” to describe a person who is mute or depicting people of color as universally athletic—some legitimate cautions, such as using “hordes” to describe immigrants, and the thoroughly trivial and even the baffling. What follows is a small sample of Ravitch’s “Glossary of Banned Words” and “Stereotyped Images To Avoid.”

—EDITORS

### A Glossary of Banned Words

**Dialect** (banned as ethnocentric, use sparingly, replace with *language*) [SF-AW]

**Differently abled** (banned as offensive, replace with *person who has a disability*) [SF-AW]

**Dirty old man** (banned as sexist and ageist) [NYC]

**Disabled, the** (banned as offensive, replace with *people with a disability*) [SF-AW, HAR<sub>1</sub>]

**Dissenter** (ethnocentric, use with caution) [ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Distaff side, the** (banned as sexist) [ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Dogma** (banned as ethnocentric, replace with *doctrine, belief*) [SF-AW]

**Doorman** (banned as sexist, replace with *door attendant*) [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Down’s syndrome** (banned as offensive, replace with *Down syndrome*) [ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Draftsman** (banned as sexist, replace with *drafter*) [NES]

**Drunk, drunken, drunkenness** (banned as offensive when referring to Native Americans) [SF-AW, HM<sub>2</sub>]

**Duffer** (banned as demeaning to older men) [SF-AW]

**Dummy** (banned as offensive, replace with *people who are speech impaired*) [SF-AW]

**Dwarf** (banned as offensive, replace with *person of short stature*) [SF-AW, HAR<sub>1</sub>]

\* \* \*

**Heretic** (use with caution when comparing religions) [ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Heroine** (banned as sexist, replace with *hero*) [SF-AW, HAR<sub>2</sub>, NES]

**Hispanic American** (use with caution as some groups object to the term’s suggestion of a shared European cultural heritage, replace

with specific nationality) [NES]

**Homosexual** (banned, replace with *person, child*) [AEP]

**Hordes** (banned as reference to immigrant groups) [CT]

**Horseman, horsewoman** (banned as sexist, replace with *equestrian*) [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Horsemanship** (banned as sexist, replace with *riding skill*) [NES]

**Hottentot** (banned as a relic of colonialism, replace with *Khoi-khoi*) [NYC]

**Houseman, housemaid** (banned as sexist, replace with *servant, housekeeper*) [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Housewife** (banned as sexist, replace with *homemaker, head of the household*) [SF-AW, HAR<sub>1</sub>, HAR<sub>2</sub>, NES, ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Hussy** (banned as sexist) [SF-AW]

**Huts** (banned as ethnocentric, replace with *small houses*) [SF-AW]

\* \* \*

**Pollyanna** (banned as sexist, replace with *optimist*) [AIR]

**Polo** (banned as elitist) [ETS<sub>1</sub>, ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Pop** (banned as regional bias when referring to soft drink, replace with *Coke, Pepsi* [however, note that brand names are banned by California social content review guidelines]) [AIR]

**Postman** (banned as sexist, replace with *mail carrier*) [MMH, HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Postmaster, postmistress** (banned as sexist, replace with *post office director*) [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Pressman** (banned as sexist, replace with *press operator*) [NES]

**Primitive** (banned as ethnocentric when referring to racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural groups) [SF-AW, HM<sub>1</sub>, NES, NYC, AIR, ACT, ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Primitive man** (banned as sexist, replace with *primitive peoples*) [HAR<sub>1</sub>, HAR<sub>2</sub>, NES]

**Profoundly deaf** (banned as offensive, replace with *person with loss of hearing*) [HAR<sub>1</sub>]

**Provider, the** (banned as synonym for husband) [HM<sub>1</sub>]

\* \* \*

**Sect** (banned as ethnocentric when referring to a religious group, unless it separated from an established religion) [SF-AW, ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Senile** (banned as demeaning to older persons) [SF-AW, HM<sub>1</sub>]

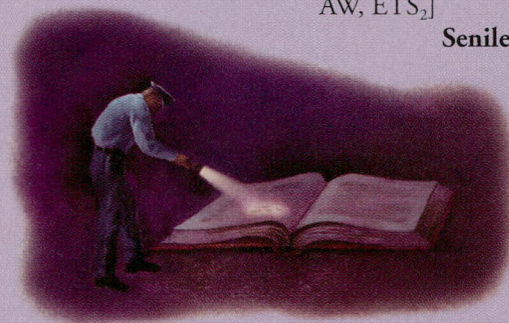
**Senility** (banned as demeaning, replace with *dementia*) [APA]

**Senior citizen** (banned as demeaning to older persons) [SF-AW]

**Serviceman** (banned as sexist, replace with *member of the armed services, gas station attendant*) [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Showman** (banned as sexist, replace

*(Continued on page 11)*



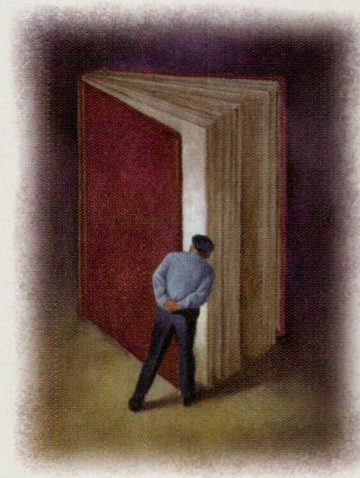
Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*. The courts traditionally deferred to school officials when it came to curriculum and other policy-making, but in this instance the students who objected to the school officials' decision won by a narrow one-vote margin. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the students had a "right to receive information." The decision was far from conclusive, however, as the justices wrote seven opinions, none of which had majority support.

Many book-banning incidents were never challenged in the courts. In the 1970s and 1980s, school officials in different sections of the country removed certain books from school libraries or from classroom use, including J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, MacKinley Kantor's *Andersonville*, and Gordon Parks's *Learning Tree*. In most cases, parents criticized the books' treatment of profanity, sex, religion, race, or violence.

The battle of the books shifted to Florida in the late 1980s. In Columbia County, a parent (who was a fundamentalist minister) complained to the local school board about a state-approved textbook used in an elective course for high school students. The parent objected to the book because it included Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" and Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. The school board banned the book and its decision was upheld in federal district court and in an appellate court. In Bay County, a parent complained about Robert Cormier's *I Am the Cheese*, a work of adolescent fiction that contains some mild profanity and not especially explicit sexual scenes. The school superintendent suppressed not only that book, but required teachers to write a rationale for every book they intended to assign unless it was on the state-approved list. The superintendent then proscribed a long list of literary classics that he deemed controversial, including several of Shakespeare's plays, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*, and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Parents, teachers, and students sued the local school board and the superintendent to prevent the book-banning, and a federal district judge ruled that it was acceptable to remove books because of vulgar language but not because of disagreement with the ideas in them. The litigation soon became moot, however, when the superintendent retired, and all of the books were restored in that particular district.

During the 1980s and 1990s, and after, there were numerous challenges to books by parents and organized groups. Many were directed against adolescent fiction, as authors of this genre became increasingly explicit about sexuality and more likely to utilize language and imagery that some adults considered inappropriate for children. The 30 "most frequently attacked" books from 1965 to the early 1980s included some that offended adults from different ends of the political spectrum. Some were assigned in class; others were in the school library. The list included such books as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, and *Go*

At the beginning of the new millennium, the most challenged books were of the Harry Potter series, assailed because of their references to the occult, satanism, violence, and religion, as well as Potter's dysfunctional family.



*Ask Alice* by anonymous.

By 2000, the American Library Association's list of the "most attacked" books had changed considerably. Most of the classics had fallen away. At the beginning of the new millennium, the most challenged books were of the Harry Potter series, assailed because of their references to the occult, satanism, violence, and religion, as well as Potter's dysfunctional family. Most of the other works that drew fire were written specifically for adolescents. Some of these books were taught in classes; others were available in libraries.<sup>2</sup>

The most heated controversy over textbooks in the early 1990s involved a K-6 reading series called Impressions, which was published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. The Impressions series consisted of grade-by-grade anthologies with a cumulative total of more than 800 reading selections from authors such as C.S. Lewis, Lewis Carroll, the Brothers Grimm, Rudyard Kipling, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Laura Ingalls Wilder. Its purpose was to replace the old-fashioned "Dick and Jane"-style reader with literary anthologies of high interest for children.

The texts may have been altogether too interesting because they captured the avid attention of conservative family groups across the country. Before they became infamous among right-wing groups, the books were purchased by more than 1,500 elementary schools in 34 states. A small proportion of the series' literary selections, some of them drawn from classic fairy tales, described magic, fantasy, goblins, monsters, and witches.

Right-wing Christian groups, including Focus on the Family, Citizens for Excellence in Education, and the Traditional Values Coalition, organized against the Impressions series. The controversy became especially fierce in the early 1990s in California. The state-approved textbooks came under fire in half of California's school districts. Large numbers of parents turned out for school board meetings to demand the removal of the readers they claimed were terrifying their children. One district glued together some pages in the books to satisfy critics. Some districts dropped the series. Critics objected to stories about death, violence, and the supernatural. They charged that the series was promoting a New Age religion of paganism, the occult, and witchcraft. In one district, angry parents initiated a recall campaign against two local school board members who supported the books (the board members narrowly survived the recall vote). In another district, an evangelical Christian family filed a lawsuit charging that the district—by using the Impressions textbooks—violated the Constitution by promoting a religion of “neo-paganism” that relied on magic, trances, a veneration for nature and animal life, and a belief in the supernatural. In 1994, a federal appeals court ruled that the textbook series did not violate the Constitution.

Public ridicule helped to squelch some of the ardor of those who wanted to censor books. Editorial writers across California uniformly opposed efforts to remove the Impressions series from the public schools, providing important encouragement for public officials who were defending the books. The editorial writers read the books and saw that they contained good literature. Most reckoned that children do not live in a hermetically sealed environment. Children, they recognized, see plenty of conflict and violence on television and in real life as well. They confront, sooner or later, the reality of death and loss. Most know the experience of losing a family member, a pet, a friend. Over the generations, fairy tales have served as a vehicle for children to deal with difficult situations and emotions. Even the Bible, the most revered of sacred documents in Western culture, is replete with stories of violence, betrayal, family dissension, and despicable behavior.

One cannot blame parents for wanting to protect their children's innocence from the excesses of popular culture. However, book censorship far exceeds reasonableness; usually, censors seek not just freedom from someone else's views, but the power to impose their views on others. Parents whose religious beliefs cause them to shun fantasy, magic, fairy tales, and ghost stories will have obvious difficulties adjusting to parts of the literature curriculum in public schools today. They would have had equal difficulty adjusting to the literary anthologies in American public schools 100 years ago, which customarily included myths and legends, stories about disobedient children, even tales of magical transformation. It may be impossible for a fundamentalist Christian (or Orthodox Jew or fundamentalist Muslim) to feel comfortable in a public institution that is committed to tolerance and respect among all creeds and promotion of none. This conflict cannot be avoided. Much of what is most imaginative in our culture draws upon

## GLOSSARY

(Continued from page 9)

with *showperson, entertainer, producer*) [MMH, HRW<sub>1</sub>]

**Sickly** (banned as demeaning reference to person with disabilities) [ETS<sub>2</sub>]

**Sightless** (banned as offensive, replace with *people who are blind*) [SF-AW]

**Sioux** (banned as inauthentic, replace with *Lakota, Dakota, or Nakota*) [SF-AW]

**Sissy** (banned as demeaning) [MMH, SF-AW, NES, CT]

**Sissified** (banned as demeaning) [HRW<sub>3</sub>]

**Slave** (replace whenever possible with *enslaved person, worker, or laborer*) [AEP]

**Sneaky** (banned when referring to Asian Americans) [SF-AW]

**Snow ball** (banned for regional bias, replace with *flavored ice*) [AIR]

**Snow cone** (banned for regional bias, replace with *flavored ice*) [AIR]

**Snowman** (banned, replace with *snowperson*) [AEP]

**Sob sister** (banned as sexist, replace with *exploitive journalist*) [NES, AIR]

**Soda** (banned for regional bias, replace with *Coke, Pepsi* [however, note that brand names are banned by California social content review guidelines]) [AIR]

**Songstress** (banned as sexist, replace with *singer*) [HM<sub>1</sub>]

**Sophisticated** (banned when it refers to religious practices or beliefs) [SF-AW]

**Soul food** (banned as regional or ethnic bias) [ETS<sub>1</sub>]

### Foods to Avoid in Textbooks

[HRW<sub>2</sub>, for all of the foods below]

Gravies

Gum

Honey

Jam, jelly, preserves

Ketchup

Juice drinks

Pickles

Pies

Potato chips

Pretzels

Salad dressings, mayonnaise

Salad oil, shortening

Salt

### Stereotyped Images to Avoid in Texts, Illustrations, and Reading Passages in Tests

#### Girls and Women/Boys and Men: Images To Avoid

Girls as peaceful, emotional, warm [SF-AW]

Girls as poor at math, science [SF-AW]

Girls as neat [SF-AW, HRW<sub>3</sub>, MMH]

Girls as shorter, smaller than boys [SF-AW]

Men and boys as strong, brave, silent [AIR, RIV]

Boys as strong, rough, competitive [SF-AW]

(Continued on page 15)

themes that will prove objectionable to fundamentalist parents of every religion. Schools may offer alternative readings to children of fundamentalist parents, but they cannot provide readings of a sectarian nature, nor should the schools censor or ban books at the insistence of any religious or political group.

Even though the religious right has consistently lost court

battles, its criticisms have not been wasted on educational publishers. The Impressions series, for all its literary excellence, was not republished and quietly vanished.

Fear of the pressures that sank the Impressions series has made publishers gun-shy about any stories that might anger fundamentalists. Textbook publishers are understandably wary about doing anything that would unleash hostile

# Excised by the Language Police!

## *Items Deleted from a Doomed Fourth-Grade Reading Test*

**M**ost of the work of the language police goes on behind securely closed doors. In her book, Ravitch relies largely on caches of private documents that became public thanks to court cases.

But as a member of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), charged by President Clinton with developing national tests in reading and math, she was treated to a unique, insider's look at the tests' vetting process. Though Congress never agreed to support the national tests and they were never given, the tests went through a thorough, rather typical, development process, including the review of each potential test item by a "bias and sensitivity review" panel. Though the reviewed questions had previously been approved by numerous educational experts, including members of the NAGB, the panel eliminated many of them on the grounds that they were biased or insensitive. Ravitch was baffled by many of their decisions—and even more by the logic of their thinking. We think you will be too.

—EDITORS

**S**o what did the bias and sensitivity reviewers recommend? The only way to explain their strained interpretations is to give actual examples. I cannot reproduce the stories because some of them may yet appear one day as test passages, but I will paraphrase the story sufficiently so that the reader may judge whether the charge of bias is persuasive. The examples, I believe, will demonstrate that the concept of bias has become detached from its original meaning and has been redefined into assumptions that defy common sense.

### **Women and Patchwork Quilting**

The bias and sensitivity reviewers rejected a passage about patchwork quilting by women on the western frontier in the mid-19th century. The passage explained that mothers in that time taught their daughters to sew, and together they made quilts for the girl's dowry when she married. Quilting was an economic necessity because it saved money, and there were no factory-made quilts available until the end of the 19th century. The passage briefly explained how quilts were assembled and described them as works of art. The information in the passage was historically accurate, but the bias and sensitivity panel (as well as the "content expert panel") objected to the passage because it contained stereotypes of females as "soft" and "submissive." Actually, the passage did nothing of the sort. It was a description of why quilting was important to women on the frontier and how it was done. Nothing in the passage excluded the possibility that mothers and daughters were riding the range, plowing the fields, and herding cattle during the day. The reviewers objected to the portrayal of women as people who stitch and sew and who were concerned about preparing for marriage. Historical accuracy was no defense for this representation of women and girls, which they deemed stereotypical.

### **Class Distinction in the Ancient World**

The bias panel did not like a story about growing up in ancient Egypt. The story contrasted how people's

ways of living varied in accordance with their wealth and status. Some lived in palaces, others were noblemen, others were farmers or city workers. The size and grandeur of one's house, said the story, depended on family wealth. To the naked eye, the story was descriptive, not judgmental. But the bias and sensitivity reviewers preferred to eliminate it, claiming that references to wealth and class distinctions had an "elitist" tone. The fact that these class distinctions were historically accurate was irrelevant to the reviewers. In the world that they wanted children to read about, class distinctions did not exist—not now nor in the past. The desire to rewrite history is one that continually plagues bias reviewers.

### **The Even Exchange**

This story came from a children's book by an African-American author. It was about an African-American girl who wanted to learn how to jump rope like the other girls in her neighborhood. She meets a neighbor who is an expert at jumping rope, but who is attending summer school because she is not very good at math. The new girl is good at math so the two agree to teach each other what they do best. The bias reviewers did not like this story at all. They found that it had serious bias problems because it showed an African-American girl who was weak in math and was attending summer school. The fact that this character thought of herself as not very good at math was also deeply offensive and stereotypical, the bias reviewers believed. Even though the author was African American and her book was intended to bolster the self-esteem of

charges and countercharges and cause a public blow-up over their product.

Publishers of educational materials do not want controversy (general publishers, of course, love controversy because it sells books in a competitive marketplace). Even if a publisher wins in court, its books are stigmatized as “controversial.” Even if a textbook is adopted by a district or state over

protests, it will lose in other districts that want to avoid similar battles. It is a far, far better thing to have no protests at all. Publishers know that a full-fledged attack, like the one waged against Impressions, means death to their product. And the best recipe for survival in a marketplace dominated by the political decisions of a handful of state boards is to delete whatever might offend anyone.

black girls, it did not carry any weight with the bias panel. African-American children could be portrayed only in a positive light. Anything that showed weakness suggested negative stereotyping. In this case, one African-American girl was good at math, and the other was not. So far as I could tell, the story showed human variability, not negative racial stereotyping, with each girl displaying different weaknesses and different strengths.

### The Silly Old Lady

The bias panel rejected a passage about a silly old woman who keeps piling more and more gadgets on her bicycle until it is so overloaded that it tumbles over. The language was clever, the illustrations were amusing, and the story was higher in literary quality than the other fourth-grade reading passages proposed for the test. But the bias panel rejected it. They felt that it contained a negative stereotype of an eccentric old woman who constantly changed her mind; apparently women, and especially women of a certain age, must be depicted only in a positive light. Why would it upset or distract fourth-grade children to see an older woman acting eccentrically or changing her mind? The bias panel thought that children would get the wrong idea about older women if they read such a story. They might conclude that all women of a certain age behaved in this way.

### The Blind Mountain Climber

One of the stranger recommendations of the bias and sensitivity panel involved a true story about a heroic young blind man who hiked to the top of Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America. The story described the dangers of hiking up an icy mountain trail, especially for a

blind person. The panel voted 12-11 to eliminate this inspiring story. First, the majority maintained that the story contained “regional bias” because it was about hiking and mountain climbing, which favors students who live in regions where those activities are common. Second, they rejected the passage because it suggested that people who are blind are somehow at a disadvantage compared to people who have normal sight—that they are “worse off” and have a more difficult time facing dangers than those who are not blind.

“Regional bias,” in this instance, means that children should not be expected to read or comprehend stories set in unfamiliar terrain. A story that happened in a desert would be “biased” against children who have never lived in a desert, and a story set in a tropical climate would be biased against those who have never lived in a tropical climate. Consider the impoverishment of imagination that flows from such assumptions: No reading passage on a test may have a specific geographical setting; every event must occur in a generic locale. Under these assumptions, no child should be expected to understand a story set in a locale other than the one that he or she currently lives in or in a locale that has no distinguishing characteristics.

Even more peculiar is the assumption by the panel’s majority that it is demeaning to applaud a blind person for overcoming daunting obstacles, like climbing a steep, icy mountain trail. It is not unreasonable, I believe, to consider blindness to be a handicap for a person facing physical danger. By definition, people who are blind cannot see as much or as well as people who have sight. Is it not more difficult to cope with dangerous situations when one cannot see? Yet, perversely,

the bias and sensitivity panel concluded that this story celebrating a blind athlete’s achievements and his heroism was biased *against* people who are blind. Blindness, apparently, should be treated as just another personal attribute, like the color of one’s hair or one’s height. In the new meaning of bias, it is considered biased to acknowledge that lack of sight is a disability.

### No More Owls

The passage about owls was like a children’s encyclopedia entry. It described how their keen eyesight and hearing enabled them to hunt at night for rodents. When I saw that this passage was rejected, I imagined that it was because of the violence associated with hunting (although that’s how the owl survives). I was wrong. The passage was rejected because a Native-American member of the bias committee said that owls are taboo for the Navajos. Consequently, the entire committee agreed that the passage should be dropped. The test publisher added a notation that the owl is associated with death in some other cultures and should not be mentioned anymore, neither in texts nor in illustrations.

Here is a classic problem presented by today’s bias and sensitivity review process. If any cultural group attributes negative connotations to anything, or considers it taboo or offensive, then that topic will not be referred to, represented, described, or illustrated on tests. But owls exist. They are real birds. They are not creatures of the imagination. Nevertheless, to avoid giving offense, the tests will pretend that owls don’t exist. Owls are to be deleted and never again mentioned to the highly vulnerable and sensitive American schoolchild.

—D.R.

## II. Censorship from the Left

The left-wing groups that have been most active in campaigns to change textbooks are militantly feminist and militantly liberal. These groups hope to bring about an equitable society by purging certain language and images from textbooks.

Lee Burrell, a leader of anticensorship activities for many years in the National Council of Teachers of English, describes in *The Battle of the Books* how feminists and liberals became censors as they sought to “raise consciousness” and to eliminate “offensive” stories and books. Joan DelFattore, in *What Johnny Shouldn't Read*, writes that political correctness, taken to its extreme, “denotes a form of intellectual terrorism in which people who express ideas that are offensive to any group other than white males of European heritage may be punished, *regardless of the accuracy or relevance of what they say*” (italics in the original). The censors from the left and right, she says, compel writers, editors, and public officials to suppress honest questions and to alter facts “solely to shape opinion.” Once a society begins limiting freedom of expression to some points of view, then “all that remains is a trial of strength” to see whose sensibilities will prevail.<sup>3</sup>

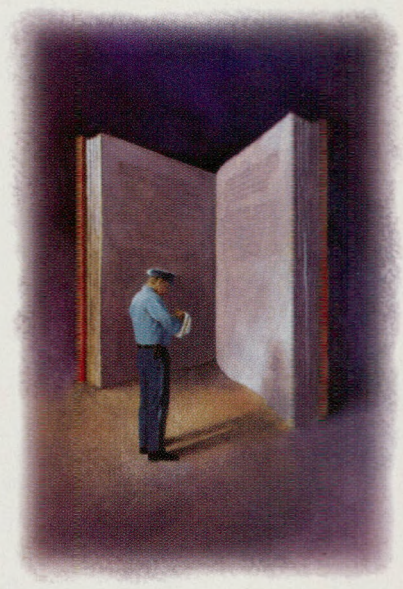
While the censors on the right have concentrated most of their ire on general books, the censors on the left have been most successful in criticizing textbooks. Although left-wing censors have occasionally targeted books too, they have achieved their greatest influence by shaping the bias guidelines of the educational publishing industry. Educational publishers have willingly acquiesced even to the most far-fetched demands for language censorship, so long as the campaign's stated goal is “fairness.” Only a George Orwell could fully appreciate how honorable words like *fairness* and *diversity* have been deployed to impose censorship and uniformity on everyday language.

The organization that led the left-wing censorship campaign was the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC). Founded in 1966 in New York City, CIBC was active over the next quarter-century as the best-known critic of racism and sexism in children's books and textbooks. Directing its critiques not as much to the general public as to the publishing industry and educators, CIBC issued publications and conducted seminars for librarians and teachers to raise their consciousness about racism and sexism.

CIBC ceased its organizational life in 1990; its most enduring legacy proved to be its guidelines, which explained how to identify racism, sexism, and ageism, as well as a variety of other -isms. They were the original template for the detailed bias guidelines that are now pervasive in the education publishing industry and that ban specific words, phrases, roles, activities, and images in textbooks and on tests. The CIBC guidelines are still cited; they circulate on many Web sites, and they continue to serve as training materials for bias and sensitivity reviewers.<sup>4</sup>

CIBC's initial goal was to encourage publishers to include more realistic stories and more accurate historical treatments about blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and women. It awarded annual prizes for the best new children's books by

Each was evaluated against a checklist that measured whether it was racist, sexist, elitist, materialist, ageist, conformist, escapist, or individualist.



minority writers. However, soon after it was founded in the mid-1960s, the nation's political and cultural climate changed dramatically. In the wake of riots and civil disorders in major American cities, including New York, the racial integration movement was swept away by movements for racial separatism and black power. CIBC was caught up in the radicalism of the times. Its goals shifted from inclusion to racial assertiveness, from the pursuit of racial harmony to angry rhetoric about colonialism and the “educational slaughter” of minority children. As its militancy grew, CIBC insisted that only those who were themselves members of a minority group were qualified to write about their own group's experience. It demanded that publishers subsidize minority-owned bookstores, printers, and publishers. It urged teachers and librarians to watch for and exclude those books that violated its bias guidelines.

CIBC's critiques of racial and gender stereotyping undoubtedly raised the consciousness of textbook publishers about the white-only world of their products and prompted necessary revisions. However, in the early 1970s, CIBC demanded elimination of books that it deemed “anti-human,” racist, and sexist.

CIBC attacked numerous literary classics as racist, including Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Dolittle* books, Pamela Travers's *Mary Poppins*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*, Ezra Jack Keats's books (*Snowy Day* and *Whistle for Willie*), Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and William H. Armstrong's *Sounder*.<sup>5</sup> The American publisher of *Dr. Dolittle*, agreeing that the



series contained stereotypical images of Africans, expurgated the books to remove offensive illustrations and text. The original version of the books has now disappeared from library shelves and bookstores.

CIBC attacked fairy tales as sexist, asserting that they promote “stereotypes, distortions, and anti-humanism.” It charged that such traditional tales as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Snow-White,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “The Princess and the Pea,” “Rumpelstiltskin,” and “Hansel and Gretel” were irredeemably sexist because they portrayed females as “princesses or poor girls on their way to becoming princesses, fairy godmothers or good fairies, wicked and evil witches, jealous and spiteful sisters, proud, vain, and hateful stepmothers, or shrewish wives.” The “good” females were depicted as beautiful, the “bad” ones as evil witches. The males were powerful and courageous, while the females were assigned to “traditional” roles as helpers. Typically, the characters in fairy tales rose from poverty to great wealth, CIBC complained, but no one ever asked about the “socioeconomic causes of their condition”; no one ever talked about the need for “collective action” to overcome injustice. In the eyes of CIBC, fairy tales were not only rife with sexist stereotypes, but with materialism, elitism, ethnocentrism, and racism too.<sup>6</sup>

CIBC’s *Human (and Anti-Human) Values in Children’s Books* listed 235 children’s books published in 1975. Each was evaluated against a checklist that measured whether it was racist, sexist, elitist, materialist, ageist, conformist, escapist, or individualist; or whether it was opposed to those values or indifferent to them; whether it “builds a positive image of females/minorities” or “builds a negative image of females/minorities”; whether it “inspires action versus oppression”; and whether it is “culturally authentic.” Only members of a specific group reviewed books about their own group: Blacks reviewed books about blacks, Chicanos reviewed books about Chicanos, and so on. Few of the books reviewed had any lasting significance, and few of them are still in print a quarter-century later. One that is still read is John D. Fitzgerald’s *The Great Brain Does It Again*, which CIBC rated as racist, sexist, materialist, individualist, conformist, and escapist.

The author Nat Hentoff reacted angrily to what he called CIBC’s “righteous vigilanteism.” Although he agreed with the council’s egalitarian goals, he warned that its bias checklists and its demands for political correctness would stifle free expression. He interviewed other writers who complained about the CIBC checklist but were fearful of being identified. CIBC’s efforts to eliminate offensive books and to rate books for their political content, he argued, were creating a climate in which “creative imagination, the writer’s and the child’s, must hide to survive.” Its drive against “individualism,” he said, was antithetical to literature and the literary imagination: “Collectivism is for politics,” he said, not for writers.<sup>7</sup>

In retrospect, CIBC appears to have had minimal impact on general books. Despite having been denounced as racist, *The Cay* and *Sounder* remain commercially successful. Fairy

## GLOSSARY

(Continued from page 11)

Boys as curious, ingenious, able to overcome obstacles [NYC]

Boys as intelligent, logical, mechanical [SF-AW, NYC]

Boys as quiet, easygoing [SF-AW]

### People of Color: Images To Avoid

People of color as universally athletic [AIR]

Minority children or adults as passive recipients, observers of action, or victims in need of rescue by others [MA]

People of color who become successful by accepting discrimination and working hard [NYC]

People of color who abandon their own culture and language to achieve success [NYC]

People of color as exotic, childlike, folkloric [NYC]

People of color as gangsters and criminals [NYC]

People of color living in poor urban areas [AIR, ETS<sub>1</sub>]

People of color being angry [AIR]

People of color as politically liberal [AIR]

People of color belonging to any one religion [AIR]

People of color valued as tokens or valued by whites as professional peers [AIR]

People of color sharing a common culture or preferences [AIR]

People of color sharing common dress [AIR]

### Persons Who Are Older: Images To Avoid

Older people as meddlesome, demanding, childish, unattractive, inactive, victims of ridicule and violence [MMH, NYC]

Older people in nursing homes or with canes, walkers, wheelchairs, orthopedic shoes, or eyeglasses [HRW<sub>1</sub>]

Older people as helpless and dependent on others to take care of them [AIR, NYC, ETS<sub>2</sub>, RIV]

Older people as ill, physically weak, feeble, or dependent [AIR, NYC, ETS<sub>1</sub>]

Older people as funny, absent-minded, fussy, or charming [NES]

Older people who have twinkles in their eyes, need afternoon naps, lose their hearing or sight, suffer aches and pains [NES]

Older people who are retired, are at the end of their careers, have lived the most fruitful years of their lives, or are engaged in a life of leisure activities [NES, NYC]

Older persons who are either sweet and gentle or irritable and pompous [HM<sub>1</sub>]

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(Continued on page 19)

tales continue to enchant children (although they are seldom found in textbooks and are usually bowdlerized). The public was only dimly aware, if at all, of CIBC's lists of stereotypes, its reviews, and its ratings. Publishers kept printing and selling children's books that defied CIBC's strictures.

Where CIBC did make a difference, however, was with publishers of K-12 textbooks. Textbook houses could not risk ignoring CIBC or its labeling system. No publisher could afford to enter a statewide adoption process with a textbook whose contents had been branded racist or sexist or ageist or handicapist or biased against any other group. The publishers' fear of stigma gave CIBC enormous leverage. When publishers began writing their own bias guidelines in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they consulted with CIBC or hired members of its editorial advisory board to counsel them about identifying bias. James Banks, a member of the CIBC advisory board, wrote the bias guidelines for McGraw-Hill; his wife, Cherry A. McGee Banks, was one of the main writers of the Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley guidelines.

CIBC multiplied its effectiveness when it worked in tandem with the National Organization for Women (NOW), which was also founded in 1966. Unlike CIBC, which operated from New York City, NOW had chapters in every state. CIBC and NOW frequently collaborated to fight sexism and to promote language censorship in the publishing industry and in textbooks. Feminist groups, some associated with NOW, others operating independently, testified at state hearings against unacceptable textbooks, pressured state and local school boards to exclude such books, and lobbied publishers to expunge sexist language from their books. Feminists demanded a 50-50 ratio of girls and boys, women and men, in every book. They counted illustrations to see how many female characters were represented. They noted whether girls and women were in passive or active roles as compared to boys and men. They made lists of the occupations represented, insisted that women have equal representation in professional roles, and objected if illustrations showed women as housewives, baking cookies, or sewing. They hectorated publishers, textbook committees, and school boards with their complaints. And they made a difference.

In 1972, a group called Women on Words and Images published a pamphlet titled *Dick and Jane as Victims: Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers* that documented the imbalanced representation of boys and girls in reading textbooks. In the most widely used readers of the mid-1960s, boys were more likely to be lead characters and to play an active role as compared to girls, who were portrayed as dependent, passive, and interested only in shopping and dressing up. At textbook hearings around the country, feminist groups brandished the book and demanded changes. Within a year of the pamphlet's appearance, the authors reported that they had drawn national attention to the problem. Publishers consulted with them for advice about how to revise their materials.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1970s, every major publishing company had adopted guidelines that banned sexist language and stereotypes from their textbooks.

By adopting bias guidelines, the publishers agreed to police their products and perform the censorship demanded by

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By adopting bias guidelines, the publishers agreed to police their products and perform the censorship demanded by the politically correct Left and the religious Right.



the politically correct left and the religious right. Publishers found it easier to exclude anything that offended anybody, be they feminists, religious groups, racial and ethnic groups, the disabled, or the elderly, rather than to get into a public controversy and see their product stigmatized. It was not all that difficult to delete a story or a paragraph or a test item, and most of the time no one noticed anyway.

The publishers reacted differently to pressure groups from the left and right. Companies did not share the Christian fundamentalist values of right-wing groups; they sometimes fought them in court, as Holt did in the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case described earlier. By contrast, editors at the big publishing companies often agreed quietly with the feminists and civil rights groups that attacked their textbooks; by and large, the editors and the left-wing critics came from the same cosmopolitan worlds and held similar political views. The publishers and editors did not mind if anyone thought them unsympathetic to the religious right, but they did not want to be considered racist by their friends, family, and professional peers. Nor did they oppose feminist demands for textbook changes, which had the tacit or open support of their own female editors. In retrospect, this dynamic helps to explain why the major publishing companies swiftly accepted the sweeping linguistic claims of feminist critics and willingly yielded to a code of censorship.

### III. Battered by Left and Right: The Inside Account of One Textbook Battle

Publishing companies zealously protect the confidentiality of their internal discussions. However, in the mid-1980s, when the fundamentalist parents in Hawkins County, Tennessee, sued Holt, Rinehart, and Winston in *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 2,261 pages of correspondence among editors and executives at the company were subpoenaed and entered into the court records. Stephen Bates, in *Battleground*, first reported on the content of these documents, and he made them available to me for this book. These files reveal in clear detail the political warfare waged against Holt's reading series by partisans of both right and left, as well as the private exchanges among editors about how to react to the latest salvo from a left-wing or right-wing group.

The Holt reading series reached the market in 1973, just as the great wave of feminist criticism broke over the publishing industry, and it was in trouble with feminists from the beginning. The Holt Basic Readers (not to be confused with Holt's Impressions series discussed earlier) contained a good deal of excellent literature, but by today's standards, the 1973 edition was undeniably sexist: Women and girls played subordinate roles, while men and boys were frequently shown in active and dominant occupations. The first-grade book declared that dolls and dresses were for girls and that trains and planes were for boys. Stories and illustrations contained more male characters than female characters. All of this material had passed through the hands of female authors, female editors, and female text designers, with no one noticing the disparate treatment of boys and girls. But as feminist criticism intensified, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston issued its guidelines on "the treatment of sex roles and minorities" in 1975, and revised its popular readers in 1977 to expand the representation of females and minorities in the text and art and to eliminate any sexist language.

As soon as the Holt series was published, the complaints began to pour in from conservative parents as well. The Indianapolis school board said that it would not adopt the series unless certain words, phrases, paragraphs, and stories that offended conservative parents were deleted. These parents objected to stories that included the word *hate* or that seemed to condone lying or bad behavior or anger or family disunity; they positively despised a story called "How to Keep the Cousin You Hate from Spending the Whole Weekend at Your House and Maybe Even Longer" because it used the word *hate* and showed two boys sharing the same bed, which might foster "homosexuality."

No sooner had the editors begun changing offensive words, cutting paragraphs, eliminating problematic stories, and pasting in new material in response to conservative complaints than the feminist tide rose up and crashed over them. In 1973, feminists in California attacked every reading textbook considered for statewide adoption, including the Holt Basic Reading series. NOW lodged a formal complaint with the state's curriculum commission, and a group called the Task Force on Sexism urged the California State Board of Education to reject dozens of reading and literature

textbooks because of their sexism. Feminists lined up to testify against the textbooks at public hearings and gathered signatures and testimony from large numbers of sympathetic academics. Letters started arriving at the Holt offices with precise counts of the number of females and males represented in the text and artwork. Holt's California representative cautioned the home office that "the movement is gaining momentum like you have never seen in this state and I am sure that it is going to spread to every other state in the same manner."

Even in Texas, known for its conservatism, the state board of education reacted to complaints from feminists. It ruled in 1973 that textbooks henceforth would have to present both men and women in a variety of roles and activities, including "women in leadership and other positive roles with which they are not traditionally identified." This directive coexisted with the Texas board's existing mandate that textbooks promote citizenship, patriotism, and "respect for recognized authority," while excluding any selections "which contribute to civil disorder, social strife, or flagrant disregard of the law." In the fall of 1974, feminists in Oregon and Arizona joined the protests against reading textbooks, and Holt internally decided to issue a special revised "California edition" for California, Oregon, and Arizona.

As feminists raised the heat on textbook publishers, other critics objected to the depiction of race and ethnicity in literature books. In 1974, a group in California called the Standing Committee to Review Textbooks from a Multicultural Perspective identified racism in such phrases as "the deputy's face darkened," "the afternoon turned black," and "it's going to be a black winter." This committee also complained that the reading textbooks were unacceptably biased toward Judeo-Christian teaching, ignoring other religious traditions.

As they began revising the reading books to meet feminist and multicultural demands, the Holt editors quickly concluded that the next edition would have to contain a precise ratio of at least 50 percent females and a representation of minority groups based on their percentage of the population. The editors began fumbling their way toward a consensus about portraying women and ethnic minorities. They agreed they would show American Indians in business suits, not in traditional "hides and headdress." Girls would be pictured fixing a bicycle tire, not looking for a boy to do it, and a "Caucasian boy or man would be shown unashamedly crying if the situation were appropriate." Girls would be seen working with electricity, studying insects, and solving math problems, while boys would read poetry, chase butterflies, and pay attention to their personal appearance. Older people would not be depicted as living in nursing homes, wearing glasses, or using canes or wheelchairs. Almost overnight, the editors became absorbed in images, stereotypes, males cooking, and females driving tractor trailers.

#### Literary Quality Takes a Back Seat

Even the editors of Holt's high school literature series (Concepts in Literature) joined the effort to expunge older literary works that reflected outmoded views about women and

minorities and to increase the representation of authors from these groups. Literary quality became secondary to representational issues. The female editor in charge of the high school series lamented that many of “the best modern works by and about members of these groups” were unacceptable for textbooks because of their language and “candid subject matter.” Worse, from Holt’s point of view, “attempts to have authors modify such works have rarely met with success.” Recognized authors of “the best modern works” by and about women and minorities refused to permit the bowdlerization (or “adaptation,” as the editors put it) of their writings to meet the publisher’s need for stories that had no offensive language and the right head-count of females and minorities.

During 1975, as the textbooks were being revised, the Holt editors worked with a numerical quota system, imposed by their own internal guidelines. These guidelines directed them to “familiarize yourself with the latest U.S. population figures so that our materials reflect current statistics.... Counting and chart-keeping should not be regarded as a useless editorial exercise. Careful tallies and analysis of how people are represented will reduce the need for costly reprint corrections and may prevent the loss of an adoption.”

**T**rying to comply with these directives, the editors began searching, almost frantically, for new stories to increase the representation of females and minorities. In the internal exchange of memos, Bernard J. Weiss, the editor of the elementary reading series, frequently admitted that a proposed story lacked literary quality but at least it had the right gender and ethnic representation. He said about one story: “I like the ethnic aspect. I like the use of a girl as the lead. I don’t like the story. The urban setting is a plus.” Another story was added that the editors agreed was “not great literature,” but “We gain two points—a female leading character and characters with Spanish-American names.” Weiss observed of another selection: “I agree that this story has very little literary merit.... However, it does help us to achieve some ethnic balance in a very *unbalanced* book.” Stories were freely rewritten to change a character’s job or role or ethnicity, even gender. The editors changed the gender of the main character in Judy Blume’s story “Freddie in the Middle,” which became “Maggie in the Middle,” with the author’s consent (in the same story, Mrs. Jay became Mrs. Chang, to increase ethnic representation). In another story, a grandmother was added to increase the count of elderly persons in the book. Some stories were added to the revised edition even though Weiss thought they were of poor quality, in order to boost the number of female characters. After extensive revisions, an editor reported numerical success for one volume in the series: “The in-house count shows 146 female and 146 male characters, or a ratio of 1:1. Animal characters were not included in this count.”

Despite Holt’s valiant efforts to balance its characters by gender and ethnicity, the 1977 revised edition came under fire from feminists and multiculturalists anyway. Seattle’s Ethnic Bias Review Committee found the new edition “unacceptable” because “while blacks are emphasized, it is a nar-

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Occasionally Holt editors reminded themselves that the purpose of the reading series was to teach children to read, but notes show that discussion of literary quality, pedagogical effectiveness, and interest level steadily diminished.



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row representation of those in athletics and music,” and besides, one of the books contained intolerable ethnic stereotypes: a black waiter and an Asian cook. A textbook adoption committee in New Mexico was not satisfied with Holt’s statistics showing the proportion of characters by gender and minority status; it demanded to know the ethnic balance of both characters and authors. (Holt promptly responded with a list identifying their authors as Black, Puerto Rican, Oriental, American Indian, Hispanic, Jewish, Dutch, Polish, Greek, German, Italian, Scandinavian, Japanese, French, or Indian, as well as a breakdown of all main characters by gender and race.)

In 1980, the education task force of Texas NOW battered the Holt readers yet again at state textbook hearings. Holt’s editors thought they had achieved a perfect 1:1 balance of male and female characters, but the Texas feminists said that when they added in animals, males actually outnumbered females by 2:1. A feminist critic pointed out, “Children of this age are influenced by a story about Mr. Rabbit just as much as they are by a story about Mr. Jones.” Reeling from the latest criticism, the Holt editors invited a feminist critic from

Texas, members of the California committee that evaluated textbooks for sexism and racism, and the director of CIBC to review the company's bias guidelines.

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Editors at Holt learned to look at every potential story through a political lens: What might anger the religious right? What might anger feminists and representatives of racial minorities? Does the story have a strong female character or a positive portrayal of an ethnic minority? Every entry, every chapter, every volume was measured against a detailed checklist to ensure that there was the right proportion of males, females, and minorities; even workbooks, drill sheets, and spelling exercises were carefully scrutinized because California officials would reject the entire series if there was a gender imbalance in any part of it. At the same time that Holt editors were balancing these political demands, they were also simplifying the vocabulary of their readers, in response to complaints that they were too hard.

Occasionally Holt editors reminded themselves that the purpose of the reading series was to teach children to read, but their internal notes show that discussion of literary quality, pedagogical effectiveness, and interest level steadily diminished.

Ultimately, however, it proved impossible to please everyone. Holt did a better job of reaching out to left-wing pressure groups than to those on the right. The supervising editor of reading books at Holt described right-wingers as the kind of "censors" that one finds in "totalitarian societies," but characterized left-wing critics as "positive pressure groups" with whom the editors were prepared to collaborate. The more that Holt pleased "positive pressure groups" by increasing their feminist and multicultural content, the more the books offended conservatives. As noted earlier, in the mid-1980s, Christians in Tennessee sued their children's school district to stop them from mandating the Holt readers. Eventually the school district won, but afterward, the publishing company let the Holt Basic Reading series go out of print. There were no more revisions. The Holt textbooks were destroyed by the censors of left and right. The textbooks became victims in a political ping-pong game that doomed them.

By the end of the 1980s, every publisher had complied with the demands of the critics, both from left and right. Publishers had established bias guidelines with which they could impose self-censorship and head off the outside censors, as well as satisfy state adoption reviews. Achieving demographic balance and excluding sensitive topics had become more important to their success than teaching children to read or to appreciate good literature. Stories written before 1970 had to be carefully screened for compliance with the bias guidelines; those written after 1970 were unlikely to be in compliance unless written for a textbook publisher. So long as books and stories continue to be strained through a sieve of political correctness, fashioned by partisans of both left and right, all that is left for students to read will be thin gruel. □

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# At the Starting Line

## *Early Childhood Education Programs in the 50 States*

By Darion Griffin and Giselle Lundy-Ponce

**H**igh-quality early childhood education programs provide young children with experiences that promote healthy cognitive and social development and the basis for thriving in school. Families with economic resources often purchase such education for their children—usually in the form of high-quality preschool or daycare programs.

But for many families, including many middle-class families, the high-quality preschool or daycare they desire is unaffordable or unavailable without state subsidy or state efforts to assure quality. For low-income children, such education is typically only available through Head Start (which serves an estimated 50 to 60 percent of the nation's poor 3- and 4-year-olds) or through state-funded programs that subsidize the otherwise high cost of quality early education.

The AFT completed a 50-state study that reports on key elements of state policies designed to ensure that all children, and especially those most at risk, have full access to high-quality early education. In examining the policies of state programs, we limited our analysis to early childhood programs that (1) had school-readiness or early childhood education as a goal; (2) were provided statewide; (3) were supported with state funds; and (4) served 3- and/or 4-year-olds. For the purposes of this benchmark AFT report, we included states that provide supplementary funds to Head

Start because this program fits the above criteria, but we did not include any preschool programs that do not receive state funds.

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Over the past 20 years, states have made strides in terms of their attention to and provision of early childhood education. Two decades ago, only about 10 states provided early childhood education programs; today, 46 states and the District of Columbia provide funds for some type of preschool program for children under age 5.

Nonetheless, the lack of quality early childhood education programs in the United States is evident in the significant percentage of children starting kindergarten without the necessary skills to do well in school. Too many of these children lack critical preliminary skills such as knowledge of letters and numbers, how to hold a book, or how to interact positively with their peers and teachers. When unaddressed early on, these deficiencies contribute to the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students—a gap that has narrowed over time, but that still remains too wide. Without opportunities to learn these skills at an early age, students from any background can fall behind later in life. Too many students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds have limited access to structured early childhood programs and, therefore, have an even greater risk of falling behind.

Over the past 40 years, a significant number of studies have demonstrated the important role the early years play in brain development, finding that high-quality early childhood education increases the likelihood that all children—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds—will become successful students and citizens. The Perry Preschool Study—one of the most comprehensive and prominent longitudinal studies of the effects of early child-

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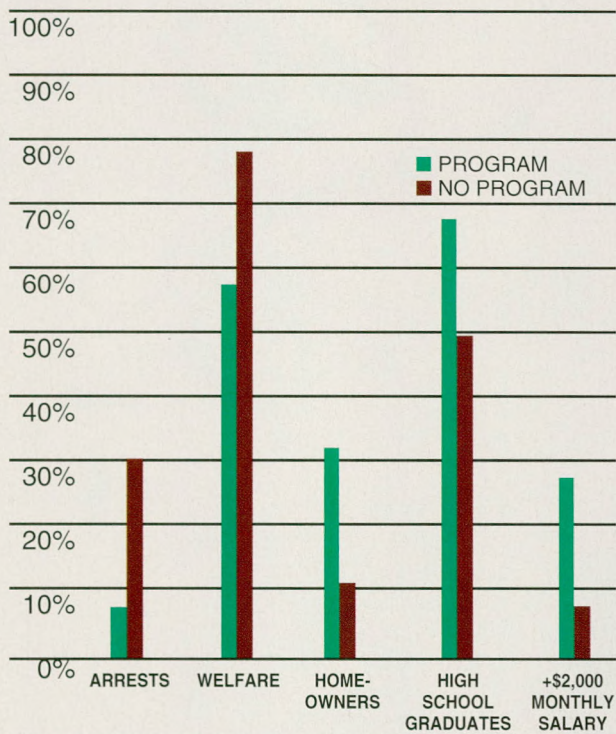
*Darion Griffin is associate director of the educational issues department of the American Federation of Teachers, where Giselle Lundy-Ponce is associate policy analyst. This article is excerpted from At the Starting Line: Early Childhood Education Programs in the 50 states (available at [www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/EarlyChildhoodreport.pdf](http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/EarlyChildhoodreport.pdf)) and Early Childhood Education: Building a Strong Foundation for the Future (available at [www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/pb15earlychild.pdf](http://www.aft.org/edissues/downloads/pb15earlychild.pdf)).*



hood education—quantified the positive impact of high-quality early childhood educational experiences on disadvantaged children's success. Program participants, who were tracked from age 3 or 4 to their late 20s, experienced increases in cognitive skills, academic achievement, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and gainful employment when compared to disadvantaged peers without access to early childhood education (see Figure 1). Moreover, this study estimated a \$7 public saving for each dollar invested in high-quality preschool programs by minimizing costs incurred by remedial and special education, school dropouts, social disengagement, and future unemployment. Subsequent studies found similar results.<sup>1</sup>

High-quality programs provide children with stimulating learning opportunities as well as secure and caring relationships with qualified educators and caregivers. The programs also prepare children for school by enhancing language skills and developing a better sense of group work and play with other children. When compared to their peers who have not had high-quality early childhood education, children who have gone through these programs are more likely to develop secure relationships with adults, trust figures of authority, follow directions, and effectively communicate their needs. Young children are capable learners, and having these types of educational experiences during their preschool years helps them learn at a faster rate, become more capable readers and students, and develop socially and emotionally.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 1**  
**Comparison of Benefits**  
**from Early Childhood Education,**  
**Perry Preschool Study Participants, Age 27**



SOURCE: Barnett, W.S. (1996).

States' growing commitment to early childhood education is made evident by the increasing number of states that fund early childhood education programs. State spending has grown from approximately \$700 million in the early 1990s to nearly \$2 billion in 2000.<sup>3</sup> The number of children served by state-funded early childhood education programs has also increased. Ten years ago, 290,000 children participated in state programs; today, that number has more than doubled.<sup>4</sup> However, more work lies ahead in terms of getting all children ready for school, achieving universal accessibility of early childhood programs, and raising the quality of all programs.

Kindergarten teachers report that many children still come to school unprepared, and research has shown that being unprepared jeopardizes children's chances to learn and succeed in school.<sup>5</sup> In addition, more than 50 percent of U.S. children have one or more risk factors for school failure,<sup>6</sup> including too little exposure to stimulating language, reading, storytelling, and other literacy-building activities upon which later success in schooling is built. Children with these risk factors often have trouble following directions, working independently or in groups, communicating, and establishing secure relationships with adults. They also have lower academic achievement: The math and reading scores of new kindergartners from the lowest socioeconomic status (SES) quintile are 60 percent and 56 percent lower, respectively, than the scores of kindergartners from the highest SES quintile.<sup>7</sup> As Table 1 highlights, beginning kindergarten students from the lowest socioeconomic status group are already behind their more affluent peers.

Children who have limited English proficiency, who are poor, who are disabled, and whose parents have low literacy skills are the most likely to be unprepared for school, have reading difficulties in the early grades, and be at risk of falling behind in all subject areas down the road. Even when kindergarten teachers do an excellent job helping low-income children who are behind close the learning gap in basic skills, the more-advantaged youngsters continue to have an edge, especially in higher-order skills, reading, and mathematics knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

**TABLE 1**  
**Percentage of first-time kindergartners (by mother's education) who demonstrate proficiency in specific school readiness skills**

Readiness skill	Children whose mothers have less than a high school diploma	Children whose mothers have a bachelor's degree or higher
Letter recognition	38	86
Beginning sounds	9	50
Numbers and shapes	84	99
Relative size	32	79

SOURCE: NCES, 2000b.



## Judging State Policies

Using the findings and implications of early childhood research, the AFT developed a set of initial criteria by which to judge the policies of states' early childhood education programs. We focused these criteria around two dimensions—access and quality—and highlighted the most basic features of universally accessible, high-quality early childhood programs as identified by the research.<sup>9</sup> For each criterion, we then developed a set of indicators around which quality and accessibility rest.

### A. Access Indicators

A universally accessible, early childhood education program should include:

- Access to preschool programs for 3- and/or 4-year-olds;
- Enrollment priority for preschool children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Access to kindergarten.

### Access to Preschool Programs

Research has shown that high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds help children become prepared for formal schooling.<sup>10</sup> Research also indicates that these children are the largest segment of children under age 5 who are in multiple-setting, nonparental care for most of the day.<sup>11</sup> Increased accessibility to high-quality early childhood education programs for 3- and 4-year-olds would have a great and direct impact on school readiness, minimize the disruptions that can result from placing children in multiple nonparental care settings, and meet the needs of working families.

When the AFT judged state early childhood programs on this dimension, we looked at: (1) how many 3- and 4-year-olds are served by the state's program(s), and (2) whether 3-year-olds (as well as 4-year-olds) are eligible to participate in state program(s).

### Enrollment Priority for Disadvantaged Children

An inclusive, noncompulsory, high-quality system of early childhood education should ensure universal access and be publicly funded. Absent universal access, children from disadvantaged backgrounds must be given enrollment priority in early childhood education programs and provided quality services at no cost to their families.

When we judged each state's early childhood programs on this dimension, we looked at enrollment priorities for: (1) low-income children, and (2) children with other risk factors, including living with a single parent, having parents with less than a high school education or who are unemployed, being exposed to alcohol and drug abuse, lacking health insurance, having limited English proficiency, having physical or learning disabilities, or living with parents with low literacy skills.

### Access to Kindergarten

Recent studies conducted by the Montgomery County School District in Maryland and the Philadelphia School District provide new evidence that children in full-day kindergarten make greater gains in early language and literacy and have more sophisticated cognitive skills than chil-

dren enrolled in only half-day programs.<sup>12</sup> Getting all children ready to begin the first grade—particularly children from low-income backgrounds—is facilitated by extending kindergarten to a full school day.

When we judged state early childhood education programs on this dimension, we looked to see if the state: (1) funded half-day kindergarten; (2) funded full-day kindergarten; and (3) required enrollment in either full- or half-day kindergarten.

## B. Quality Indicators

A state's efforts at quality assurance in early childhood education should include a focus on the following elements:

- Staff qualifications;
- Salaries;
- Adult/child ratios;
- Program accreditation and school readiness standards.

### Staff Qualifications

The staff of a state-funded early childhood education program usually includes teachers and early childhood workers. The teacher is the lead educator put in charge of a classroom; early childhood workers assist the teacher and can also be referred to as assistant teachers, teacher aides, child or daycare workers, paraprofessionals, and associate preschool teachers.

Poor or limited preservice training and/or professional development compromise the quality of early childhood education programs. Research repeatedly has found that high-quality programs showing positive outcomes in children's learning and cognitive development have staff with postsecondary training.<sup>13</sup>

When we judged each state's early childhood programs on this dimension, we looked at whether the state required: (1) lead early childhood teachers to have a bachelor's degree in all settings, and (2) early childhood workers to have a child development associate's degree, an associate of arts degree, or the equivalent in all settings.

### Salaries

Programs should compensate teachers and other staff in early childhood programs comparably to teachers in K-12 settings. Substandard pay compromises the quality of early childhood programs.<sup>14</sup>

When the AFT judged each state's early childhood programs on this dimension, we asked about the average annual salaries of: (1) kindergarten teachers in the state; (2) early childhood teachers in state-funded programs; and (3) early childhood workers in state-funded programs.

### Adult/Child Ratios

Small group size and low adult/child ratios enable children to interact comfortably with their peers and get more individualized attention from their teachers to help them develop language and problem-solving skills. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and other early childhood experts recommend a ratio of no more than ten 3- and 4-year olds for every one adult.

*(Continued on page 26)*

TABLE 2

Enrollment Priorities for Preschool Children with Disadvantaged Backgrounds<sup>1</sup>

State	Low-income children have enrollment priority	Children with other risk factors have enrollment priority	Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds served by state program(s)	Percentage of children ages 0-5 served by Head Start
Alabama			2 <sup>2</sup>	6
Alaska	✓		<sup>3</sup>	5 <sup>4</sup>
Arizona	✓		2	3
Arkansas	✓	✓	11	10
California	✓	✓	15	4
Colorado		✓	9	3
Connecticut	✓		7	4 <sup>4</sup>
Delaware	✓		8 <sup>2</sup>	4
District of Columbia			60	15 <sup>4</sup>
Florida	✓	✓	7	4
Georgia			53	4
Hawaii	✓	✓	3	4 <sup>4</sup>
Idaho	✓		<sup>3</sup>	3
Illinois	✓	✓	15	5
Indiana	✓		<sup>3</sup>	4 <sup>4</sup>
Iowa	✓ <sup>5</sup>	✓ <sup>6</sup>	9 <sup>7</sup>	4
Kansas	✓	✓	10	4
Kentucky	✓	✓	15	6
Louisiana		✓	5 <sup>2</sup>	7
Maine			9	6 <sup>4</sup>
Maryland	✓	✓	15	3
Massachusetts	✓	✓	14	3 <sup>4</sup>
Michigan	✓	✓	19 <sup>2</sup>	5
Minnesota	✓	✓	29	4 <sup>4</sup>
Mississippi			0	13
Missouri	✓	✓	4	5
Montana			0	5
Nebraska	✓	✓	1	4
Nevada	✓	✓	3	2
New Hampshire	✓		<sup>3</sup>	2
New Jersey	✓ <sup>8</sup>		17	3 <sup>4</sup>
New Mexico			3	7 <sup>4</sup>
New York	✓ <sup>9</sup>		14	4
North Carolina	✓ <sup>10</sup>	✓ <sup>11</sup>	1 <sup>12</sup>	4
North Dakota	✓		<sup>3</sup>	6
Ohio	✓		3	8 <sup>4</sup>
Oklahoma			55	6 <sup>4</sup>
Oregon	✓	✓	4	4
Pennsylvania			2 <sup>2</sup>	4
Rhode Island	✓	✓	1	6 <sup>4</sup>
South Carolina	✓	✓	15	5
South Dakota			0	6
Tennessee	✓		2	4
Texas	✓	✓	23	4
Utah			0	3
Vermont	✓	✓	8	5
Virginia	✓	✓	6 <sup>2</sup>	3
Washington	✓	✓	4	3
West Virginia	<sup>13</sup>	<sup>13</sup>	17	7
Wisconsin			20	5 <sup>4</sup>
Wyoming	✓	✓ <sup>14</sup>	17	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>		

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002); U.S. Census Bureau (2000).

## Footnotes for Table 2

- <sup>1</sup> Responses do not apply to Head Start unless Head Start is the only program provided at the state level. Head Start enrollment priority is based on low income; however, 10 percent of the Head Start slots must be reserved for children with disabilities.
- <sup>2</sup> State program only covers 4-year-olds.
- <sup>3</sup> State only contributes to Head Start.
- <sup>4</sup> This figure includes additional children covered by the state's Head Start supplementary funds.
- <sup>5</sup> In Iowa, low-income children have enrollment priority in the Shared Visions program. The other two state-funded programs use local and special eligibility guidelines.
- <sup>6</sup> In Iowa, children with other risk factors have enrollment priority in the Shared Visions program. The other two state-funded programs use local and special education eligibility guidelines.
- <sup>7</sup> This figure does not include the Iowa Community Empowerment Initiative. The total number of children served under this program is not available.
- <sup>8</sup> In New Jersey, children in all low-income districts have enrollment priority, regardless of individual family income.
- <sup>9</sup> In New York, low-income children have enrollment priority only in the Experimental Prekindergarten program.
- <sup>10</sup> In North Carolina, low-income children have enrollment priority only in the More at Four program.
- <sup>11</sup> In North Carolina, children with other risk factors have enrollment priority only in the More at Four program.
- <sup>12</sup> The number of children served in North Carolina only includes those in the More at Four program. Data for an exact number of children served by the larger Smart Start initiative are imprecise, since the initiative covers a wide range of services, including prekindergarten, child care subsidies, and health screenings; and children with multiple services may be counted more than once. During 2000-01, the state estimates of children served by Smart Start ranged from 8,000 to 100,000.
- <sup>13</sup> In West Virginia, enrollment priority for low-income children and children with other risk factors is decided locally.
- <sup>14</sup> In Wyoming, children with other risk factors have enrollment priority only in the Developmental Preschool program.

## Footnotes for Table 3

- <sup>1</sup> Responses do not apply to Head Start unless Head Start is the only program provided at the state level.
- <sup>2</sup> Not applicable because state's main program is Head Start, and implementation of standards is required by the federal government, not by the state.
- <sup>3</sup> Arkansas requires its programs to meet other accreditation standards, but NAEYC accreditation is accepted.
- <sup>4</sup> Connecticut requires NAEYC accreditation only for the School Readiness program.
- <sup>5</sup> Delaware has not yet developed its own school readiness standards for children, but requires providers of the Early Childhood Assistance program to implement the federal Head Start Performance Standards for general program guidance.
- <sup>6</sup> Iowa requires NAEYC accreditation only for the Shared Visions Preschool program.
- <sup>7</sup> Standards are under development.
- <sup>8</sup> In Minnesota, programs may use standards developed by the school district.
- <sup>9</sup> Nebraska has not yet developed its own school readiness standards for children, but requires providers of the Early Childhood programs to implement NAEYC standards for general program guidance.
- <sup>10</sup> In North Carolina, only the More at Four program has state school readiness standards.
- <sup>11</sup> Virginia's standards will be required beginning in the fall of 2003.

## TABLE 3

### Program Accreditation and Standards<sup>1</sup>

State	State requires NAEYC accreditation	State has school readiness standards for ECE programs	State requires programs to use school readiness standards
Alabama		✓	✓
Alaska		✓	<sup>2</sup>
Arizona	✓	✓	
Arkansas	✓ <sup>3</sup>	✓	✓
California		✓	✓
Colorado		✓	
Connecticut	✓ <sup>4</sup>	✓	✓
Delaware		<sup>5</sup>	✓
District of Columbia		✓	
Florida		✓	
Georgia		✓	✓
Hawaii			
Idaho		✓	<sup>2</sup>
Illinois		✓	
Indiana		✓	<sup>2</sup>
Iowa	✓ <sup>6</sup>		
Kansas			
Kentucky		<sup>7</sup>	
Louisiana		<sup>7</sup>	
Maine			
Maryland		✓	✓
Massachusetts	✓	✓	
Michigan		✓	✓
Minnesota		✓	✓ <sup>8</sup>
Mississippi			
Missouri	✓	✓	
Montana			
Nebraska	✓	✓ <sup>9</sup>	✓
Nevada			
New Hampshire		✓	<sup>2</sup>
New Jersey		✓	✓
New Mexico		✓	
New York		✓	
North Carolina		✓ <sup>10</sup>	
North Dakota		✓	<sup>2</sup>
Ohio		✓	✓
Oklahoma		✓	✓
Oregon		✓	
Pennsylvania			
Rhode Island		✓	
South Carolina		✓	
South Dakota			
Tennessee		✓	
Texas		✓	
Utah			
Vermont		✓	
Virginia		✓	<sup>11</sup>
Washington		✓	✓
West Virginia		<sup>7</sup>	
Wisconsin		✓	
Wyoming		✓	✓
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: Authors' research.

(Continued from page 23)

When we judged each state's early childhood programs on this dimension, we examined whether the state required one teacher or worker for every 10 children or fewer in all settings.

### Program Accreditation and School Readiness Standards

State program monitoring should extend beyond compliance with health and safety standards to include program quality. Having programs that are regularly monitored for accreditation helps to ensure quality, continuous improvement, and accountability for public funds. In particular, national accreditation, such as that offered by the NAEYC, supports professionally accepted levels of quality, coherence among programs, and widespread high-quality practices.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, programs should have and use school readiness standards and curricula that specifically address early language and literacy, early numeracy, social-emotional competence, motor readiness, and physical abilities. Chil-

dren who are best prepared for the challenges of elementary school have been exposed to extensive language and preliteracy experiences, preliminary math and science, and a variety of age-appropriate classroom activities that develop and enhance reasoning, communication, and problem-solving. When early learning skills fail to develop during the preschool years, risk for later school difficulties increases.<sup>16</sup>

When we judged each state's early childhood programs on this dimension, we looked at whether states' policies required programs to: (1) be nationally accredited; (2) have school readiness standards; and (3) use the school readiness standards.

### What We Found

Nearly every state provides funds for some type of preschool program for children under the age of 5. While this is notable progress, the breadth of these programs remains limited: States only provide state-funded programs to approxi-

## Content Matters

**C**ontent matters in early childhood education. As was detailed in American Educator's last issue, poor children reach age 3 having heard 30 million fewer words than their affluent counterparts. Since words represent knowledge, these young children are likely to enter kindergarten with not only a language deficit, but without the basic knowledge and concepts that underlie school learning. Many have had little practice with certain preacademic skills, few opportunities for creative play, and little socialization in the ways of school. Early education must systematically and creatively, and with due attention to children's developmental needs and abilities, introduce children to the knowledge they need. We offer here snippets from three sources that have outlined and sequenced the knowledge preschool children should be exposed to.

The first is a list of prereading skills identified in the National Academy of Science's Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success. The second is taken from one of the month-by-month guides in the Core Knowledge Foundation's preschool sequence. The third is a portion of the "Discovering the World" goals taken from the French national curriculum for the école maternelle, France's world-

renowned, publicly-funded preschool program that enrolls (on a voluntary basis) virtually all of the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds. In each case, the content to be conveyed is clear; so is the need to convey it in ways that are appropriate to the energetic, creative minds of 3- and 4-year-olds.

—EDITOR

### National Academy of Science

*Recommended Prereading Accomplishments for 3- to 4-Year-Olds.*

- Knows that alphabet letters are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.
- Recognizes print in the local environment.
- Knows that it is the print that is read in stories.
- Understands that different text forms are used for different functions of print (e.g., a list for groceries is different than the list on a menu).
- Pays attention to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g., in Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater: Peter Eater).
- Uses new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in own speech.
- Understands and follows oral directions.
- Is sensitive to some sequences of

events in stories.

- Shows an interest in books and reading.
- When being read a story, connects information and events to real-life experiences.
- Questions and comments demonstrate understanding of literal meaning of story being told.
- Displays reading and writing attempts, calling attention to self: "Look at my story."
- Can identify about 10 alphabet letters, especially those from own name.
- Writes (scribbles) message as part of playful activity.
- May begin to attend to beginning or rhyming sounds in salient words.

### Core Knowledge Foundation

*Samples of the Suggested January Goals for 4-Year-Olds*

#### Mathematical Reasoning

- Continue a complex, 2-color pattern of objects as represented by a pattern card.
- Create and verbally describe a pattern of concrete objects.
- Divide an object into approximately equal pieces for 2 people.
- Name and match the numerals 1-6 with the corresponding quantities.

mately 12 percent of all 3- and 4-year-olds. What we have nationwide can, at best, be described as a patchwork of early childhood education programs and initiatives that vary widely in quality, administration, funding, policies, providers, targeted communities, and other matters.

The following findings provide an overview of states' provision of early childhood education, as reflected by the criteria we identified:

- Four states—Mississippi, Montana, South Dakota, and Utah—neither provide a preschool program of their own nor do they supplement Head Start with state funds.
- Twenty-eight states provide preschool programs to at least some of their 3- and 4-year-olds. (See Table 2, pg. 24.)
- Twenty-one states give enrollment priority to low-income children and children with other risk factors for all state-funded preschool programs. (See Table 2, pg. 24.)
- Eight states and the District of Columbia require all early childhood teachers to have a bachelor's degree and all early childhood workers to have at least a child development as-

sociate (CDA) credential or equivalent.

- Eight states pay lead teachers in state early childhood programs a salary comparable to the state's K-12 teachers. National averages, however, reveal great disparities. While the average annual salary of kindergarten teachers is \$36,770, that of early childhood teachers is \$19,610, and that of early childhood workers is just \$15,430.
- Thirty states require a 1:10 adult/child ratio for all state-funded preschool programs.
- Fourteen states have school readiness standards *and* require state-funded programs to use them. (See Table 3, pg. 25.)
- Every state and the District of Columbia fund half- or full-day kindergarten: Five states provide funds only for half-day kindergarten, nine states and the District of Columbia provide funds only for full-day kindergarten, and 36 states provide funds for both full- and half-day kindergarten.
- Ninety-three percent of U.S. children go to kindergarten; 13 states require enrollment in kindergarten.

(Continued on page 45)

### Orientation in Time and Space

- Time: Use a yearlong timeline to mark events. [Engaged in all year.]
- Time: Sequence and describe photos and/or drawings that represent a timeline of one's life and experiences.
- Time: Sequence photos and/or drawings of a baby, school-age child, young adult, elderly adult, and describe in terms of the progression of the stages of development in the life of one person.
- Space: Match halves of symmetrical objects to make wholes.
- Space: Mark the location of specific objects, places on a simple map of a familiar location.
- Space: Jungle [other months include forest, mountain, island, etc.].

### École Maternelle

*Samples of the Preschool Curriculum*

#### Discovering the world of objects

- Using various technical objects in functional situations (life at school, nutrition and cooking, internal and/or external communication, games, building workshops, etc.).
- Playing construction games.
- Assembling objects and taking them apart.
- Building objects: project involving the creation of an object, choices of appropriate tools and materials for

the task, specific technical acts (folding, cutting, gluing, etc.).

#### Discovering the world of matter

- Discovering some of the properties of natural materials (wood, earth, stone, etc.).
- Introducing the notion of air (wind, etc.).
- Introducing the notion of water (liquid, rain, snow, ice).
- Observing the effects of light (shadows).

#### Discovering live matter

- Discovering one's own body, both the entire body and body parts.
- Observing some characteristics of life (birth, growth, development, aging, and death).
- Introducing some of the important functions of life (growth, locomotion, nutrition, reproduction) by observing life in various environments (in the classroom or during outings close-by: visit to a pond, animal farm, etc.) or through audiovisual material.

#### Discovering natural and human-made spaces; sensitization to environmental issues

- Visually appraising shapes and dimensions.

- Discovering, observing, and describing nature (plants, animals), the immediate environment and less familiar spaces.
- Learning practical activities such as gardening or caring for animals.
- Identifying varied environments: countryside, sea, mountain, plain, forest, stream, river, waterway, city, etc.
- Observing human constructions: houses, businesses, roads, etc.
- Consciousness-raising about the importance of waste materials, etc.
- Learning to identify sources of pollution: noise, odors, etc.

### Sources:

The National Academy of Science's *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success* is available online at [www.nap.edu/catalog/6014.html](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/6014.html). The Core Knowledge Foundation's *Preschool Sequence: Content and Skills Guidelines for Preschool* can be ordered (for \$25 each) by calling 800/238-3233; more information on the sequence is available at [www.coreknowledge.org/CKproto2/Preschool/index.htm](http://www.coreknowledge.org/CKproto2/Preschool/index.htm). The curriculum for the *école maternelle, Programmes de l'École Primaire Français: English Translation* (1996), is developed by France's Ministry of Education. To read more about the *école maternelle* in English, visit the French-American Foundation's Web site at [www.frenchamerican.org/htm/popres.htm](http://www.frenchamerican.org/htm/popres.htm).

# Now That I'm Here

## *What America's Immigrants Have to Say about Life in the U.S. Today*

By Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett, and Jean Johnson  
with Leslie Moyer and Jackie Vine

**N**ow *That I'm Here*, a new poll of America's immigrants, comes at a time when the American public as a whole appears to be rethinking the country's openness to immigration. Surveys over the last decade suggest that the public has consistently held mixed views about immigrants. People are often quick to say that immigrants are hardworking and, according to one recent Public Agenda survey, most Americans believe they are particularly appreciative of the country's freedoms.<sup>1</sup>

Yet there also have been elements of doubt. Other surveys have revealed broad public feeling that immigration burdens the country,<sup>2</sup> and there is long-standing frustration about lax enforcement of immigration law.<sup>3</sup> In fact, a recent CBS News/*New York Times* poll showed that half (53 percent) of the public believes that most immigrants who came to the U.S. in the last few years are in the country illegally,<sup>4</sup> although official estimates suggest the percentage of undocumented or illegal immigrants is closer to 26 percent.<sup>5</sup> For *Now That I'm Here*, we used random sampling techniques to explore the opinions of those who have come from other

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*Steve Farkas is director of research with Public Agenda, where Ann Duffett is associate director of research, Jean Johnson is director of programs, Leslie Moyer is research administrator, and Jackie Vine is senior research associate. Public Agenda is a non-profit organization that studies citizens' opinions on key policy issues and develops materials to help citizens make more informed decisions. This article presents the first chapter of a report by Public Agenda of the same name and is reprinted by permission of Public Agenda. For more information about Public Agenda's national survey on immigrants in America (including ordering information) and other research, please contact Public Agenda at 212-686-6610, fax 212-889-3461, e-mail [info@publicagenda.org](mailto:info@publicagenda.org) or visit [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).*

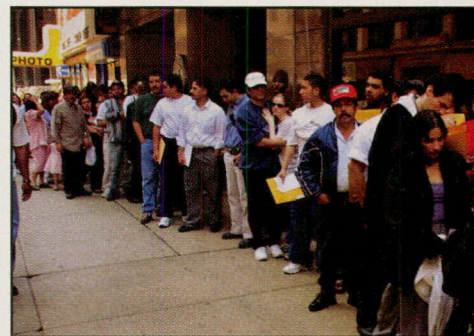
countries to live in the U.S. We asked immigrants about their hopes and aspirations and their sense of what it means to be "an American." If the country is now poised to rethink immigration more broadly, it seems to us only fair that immigrants themselves be given a voice.

*Now That I'm Here* vividly captures an immigrant population that is thankful and appreciative of its adopted nation. The admiration and affection immigrants display is neither unthinking nor unsophisticated. It is anchored in the view that the U.S. holds the comparative advantage over their home countries in some crucially important areas, and these are not limited to economic considerations. It is also moderated by the sacrifices and struggles they've experienced.

### **Freedom Reigns**

The focus group conversations with immigrants would typically follow this pattern: an initial outpouring of affection for this country would be followed by candid talk about the nation's shortcomings and would end with a bottom-line assessment—its problems notwithstanding, there is no place better than the U.S. in which to build their home.

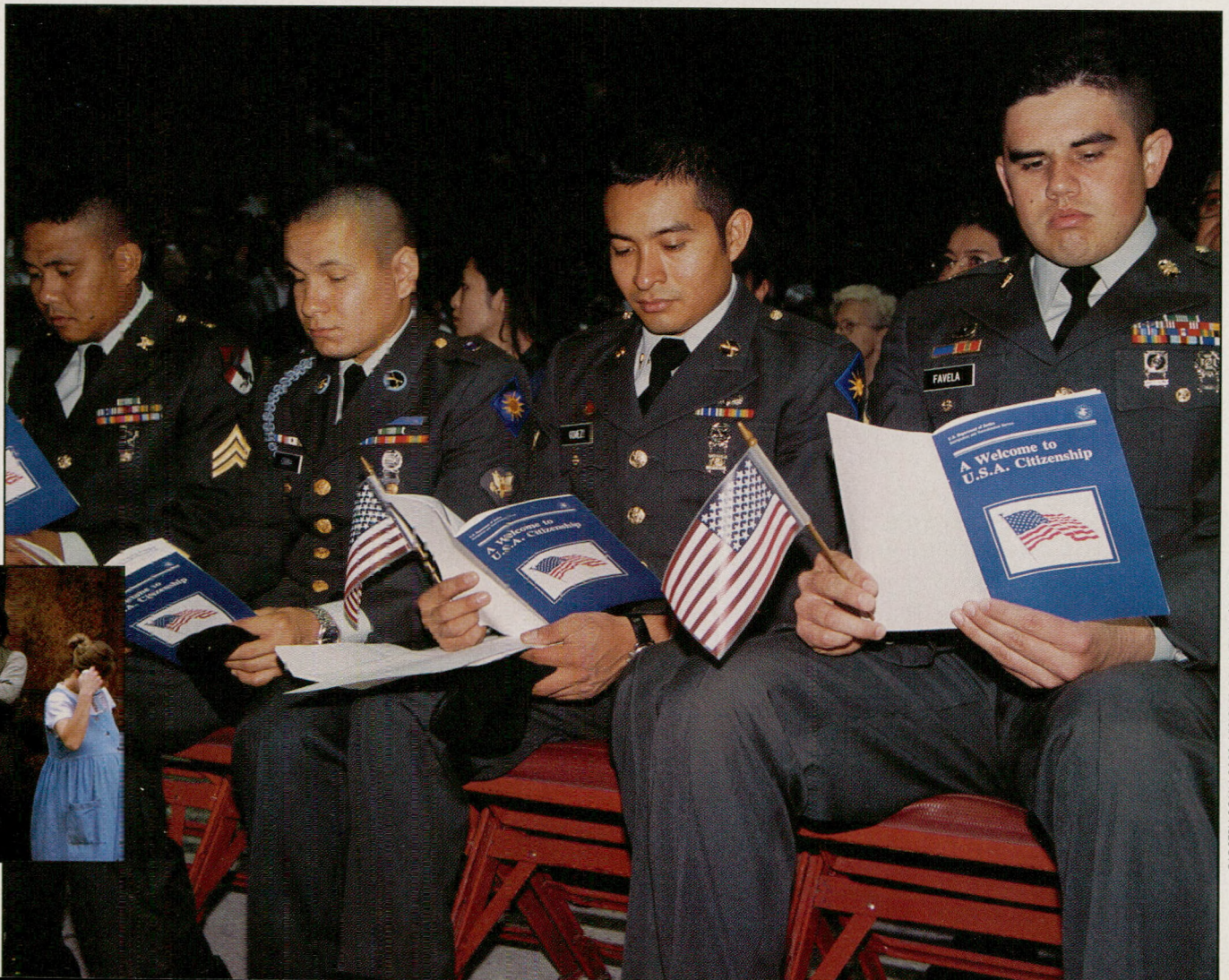
Underlying this attitude is their sense that while the U.S. is not perfect, it is far better than what they have experienced. Fully 80 percent of immigrants say they consider the U.S. to be "a unique country that stands for something special in the world"; only 16 percent say it's no better or worse than any other nation. The



SCOTT OLSON 2001/AFP/CORBIS

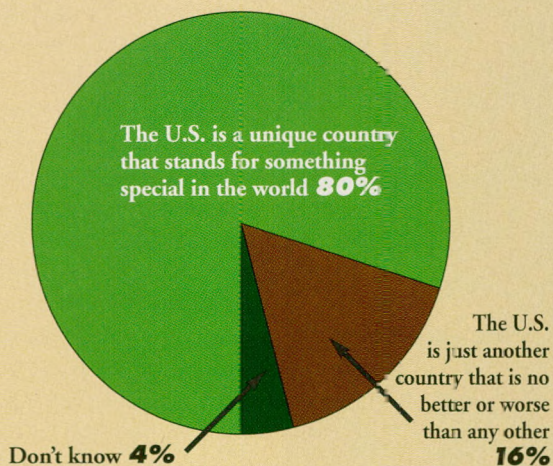


Between 1992 and 2002, 6.5 million people became naturalized citizens. At left, Clive Chamberlain from Jamaica holds up his right hand to swear loyalty to the U.S. during an Independence Day naturalization ceremony. Below, four U.S. military men review their "A Welcome to U.S.A. Citizenship" booklets during a naturalization ceremony at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. Achieving citizenship is often a long, arduous process. Below left, immigrants are waiting in line outside the Immigration and Naturalization Service's office in Chicago to submit immigration-related paperwork.



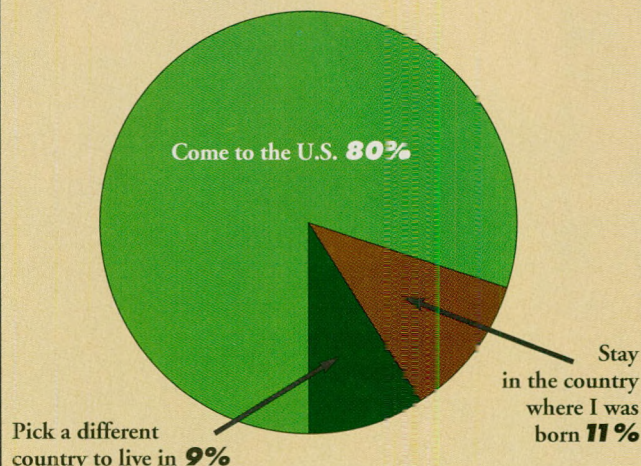
## Something Special in the World

Which of these two statements comes closer to your own view?



## I'd Choose to Do It Again

If you could do it again, would you come to the U.S., stay in the country where you were born, or pick a different country to live in?



immigrants who spoke to us in the focus groups sometimes spoke in halting English, and some had to be interviewed in Spanish; but they expressed thankfulness for being here with a ringing clarity. A comment from an immigrant living in New York encapsulates the feeling that was so prevalent in the focus groups: "It is the best country in the world—with its bad and good things. We have the right to vote. Women do not need to wear a veil to go out. If someone hits you on the street, you just have to call the first cop, and it's okay, he is going to take care of you. Freedom really does exist in America."

### "I Bless America"

Regrets are few for the overwhelming majority of people who have immigrated to the U.S. and made the country their home. If they had the chance to do it all again, 8 in 10 (80 percent) say they would come to the U.S. Virtually all say they are happy with life here: 55 percent say they are extremely happy and 41 percent say somewhat happy. Only 2 percent, barely 20 people out of 1,000, say they are generally disappointed with life in America.

We often heard immigrants talk about the U.S. in admiring, even glowing, terms. "My dream was always to come to America," said a woman who emigrated from Bolivia many years ago. "I was 19 years old, and I said to my parents, 'I'm leaving.' I love this country. I don't regret it for a minute." "I owe the U.S. everything," said an Ethiopian man. A woman from Mexico said, "I bless America. It gave me a life. I didn't have anything over there."

### Here to Stay

Some pundits ask whether today's newcomers have a lukewarm commitment to the country, a sort of one foot in, one foot out mentality. This half-hearted commitment to the

American way of life, critics say, can be seen in the number of immigrants who come here only to work and send their money back "home," or in the pains some immigrant parents take to keep their children connected to their original language and culture to the exclusion of speaking English and adopting American customs.

Are immigrants coming here to stay? Nearly 3 out of 4 (74 percent) say it's most likely that the U.S. will be their permanent home; only 15 percent think that some day they "will go back to live in the country where [they] were born." A man from the Philippines who came here when he was in his late teens described it this way: "It's like all my life belongs here. Even though I went back to the Philippines to visit, my feeling inside is still in the U.S., where my home is."

### Who Am I?

The question of identity is an important indication of commitment, and to most immigrants being an American is an important part of their self-definition. "I'm American, 100 percent," said a woman from South America, and the survey findings strongly suggest that many immigrants feel the same. We gave survey participants two opportunities to tell us the degree to which they have taken on an American identity.

On the first occasion, immigrants were asked to choose among three statements that come closest to describing them: 42 percent chose "I have become an American," and a sizable number (41 percent) took a middle position of "I act like an American outside, but at home I keep my own culture and traditions." Only 14 percent said "I live here, but I don't consider myself an American." As a Peruvian woman explained, "The key to live in this country—you have to follow the rules outside and leave your traditions at home. My





For many immigrants, life in the U.S. means a struggle to keep family ties strong and hold onto traditions while joining American society. Top left, a Chinese woman holds a portrait of her father. Top right, a U.S. government employee from India and her daughter don saris for a special occasion. Center, Russian Jews gather at "Odessa on the Atlantic," the boardwalk on Brooklyn's Brighton Beach so nicknamed because of the large population of Soviet Jews. Bottom, Arab men bring traditional foods to their new country by baking pita bread for the Al Ahram Bakery in Chicago.

food, my religion, all these things I have to make my family stronger. But outside, I have to follow all the rules, the law.”

On the second occasion, immigrants were asked if they mostly think of themselves in terms of the nationality they were born to or as an American, and more than half (54 percent) said they mostly think of themselves as Americans. A man from El Salvador clarified: “I strongly consider myself an American. By saying I’m American I’m not talking about race, I’m talking a state of mind. I owe this country a lot of things. The opportunities in this country, there are no other countries in the world like this one.” Twenty-two percent said that they mostly think of themselves in terms of the country where they were born, and about the same proportion (23 percent) said that they consider themselves to be both equally. As one Mexican man put it: “I think like an American, but I’m Mexican.”

### Bonds That Tie

But to simultaneously cherish America and one’s own heritage has been an honored tradition, and this blending is part and parcel of life for many immigrants. Many immigrants do maintain a strong bond with the country where they were born. More than half (59 percent) phone family or friends in their home country at least a few times a month, and 44 percent send money back to their family at least once in a while. Almost half (47 percent) say they follow current events, such as sports or politics, in their home country. Finally, almost 1 in 3 (32 percent) hold dual citizenship.

In a focus group in Northern Virginia, one woman said, “I love Peru so much, because all my family is over there.... But I feel that the U.S. gave me the opportunity to achieve in my career, to reach what was my dream. I cannot deny it. I do love this country, and I respect a lot of the same things in my country.” Perhaps inevitably, these connections appear to weaken across generations. The overwhelming majority (70 percent) of parents who have children under 18 years of age say it’s unlikely that their own children would want to live in the country of their parents.

### Old Immigrants, New Immigrants

The connections also appear to weaken over time. The survey shows that “more settled” immigrants (those here for 20 years or more) are consistently more likely than new immigrants (those here for less than 5 years) to grow distant from their country of origins.

Not surprisingly, more settled immigrants are more likely than newcomers to say, “I have become American” (58 percent vs. 18 percent). Meanwhile, newcomers have stronger ties to their nations of origin. Newcomers are more likely to follow current events in their home country (63 percent vs. 40 percent); to phone family or friends back home at least a few times a month (87 percent vs. 45 percent); and to send money back to their family at least once in a while (52 percent vs. 33 percent). Newcomers are also more likely to think that someday they will go back to live in the country where they were born (39 percent vs. 8 percent). A woman from New York had this to say: “I originally came out to

work...and I thought I’d earn lots of money, and then go back and set myself up in business.... That was 21 years ago.”

Again, these differences are hardly surprising. Some observers might argue that such differences point to a lack of commitment on the part of the new wave of immigrants to the U.S. But assimilation—by definition—takes time. This survey is a snapshot of where immigrants, both newcomers and more settled, stand today. Only time will tell where the present cohort of newcomers will be in 20 years.

### So What’s So Good About America?

Common wisdom holds that economic opportunity is the magnet that draws immigrants to this country. But our findings show that while this is certainly true, it’s only part of the story. Asked to choose which is personally most important to them when they think about living in the U.S., 37 percent do point to “the opportunity to work and make a living,” but a slightly larger proportion of immigrants (40 percent) say it’s “the personal freedom to live your life the way you choose.” Another 18 percent say that “the political freedoms like voting or freedom of speech” are most important to them.

As we will see in this finding, immigrants appreciate the U.S. on many levels. They can also point to areas where the U.S. falls short. When respondents were asked to compare the U.S. to their home country on 11 specific criteria—from economic opportunity to trust in government—majorities give the nod to the U.S. on 7 of the 11. But in some areas, such as civility and the overall way people treat one another, immigrants are noticeably less enthusiastic about the U.S.

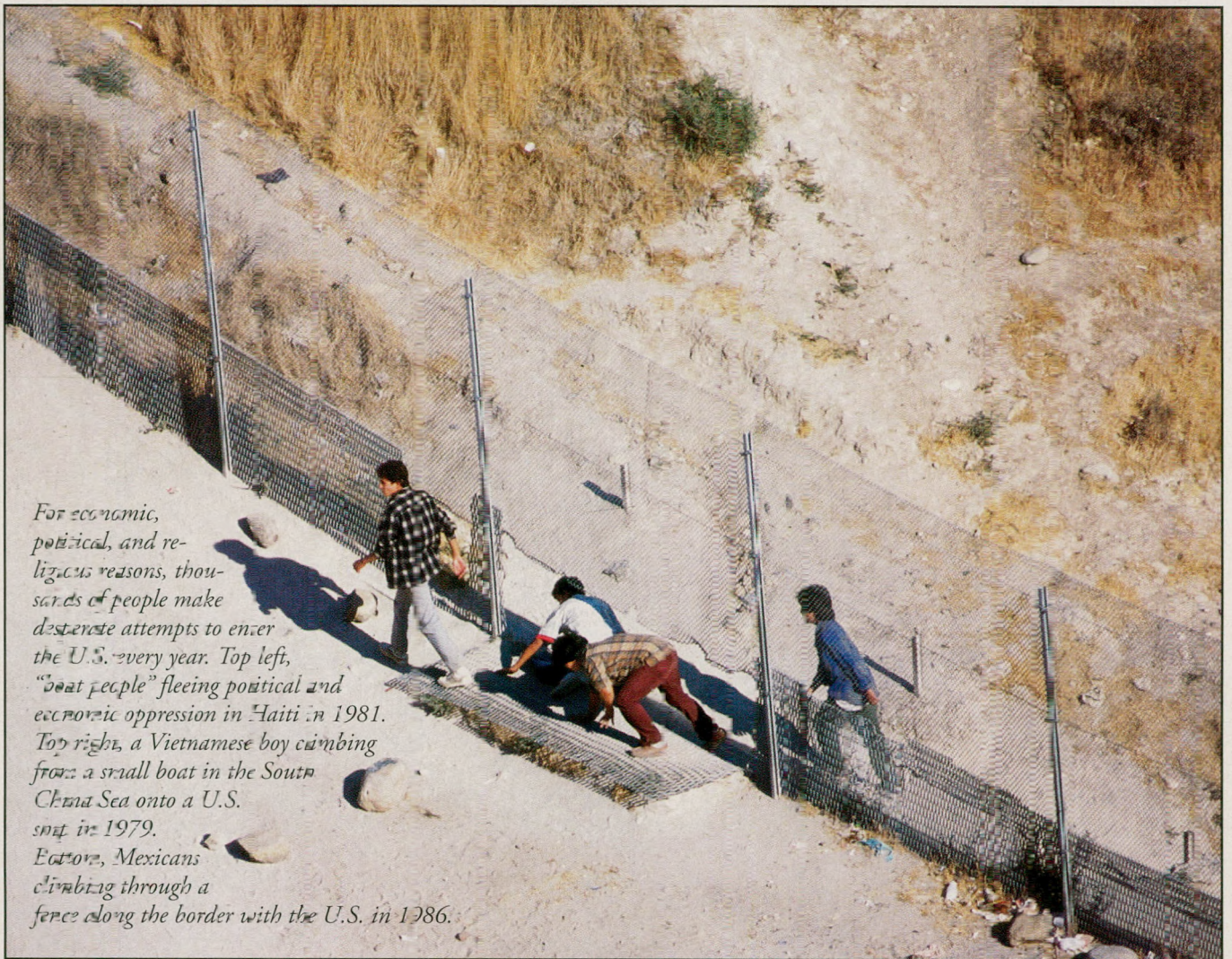
### Here vs. There

When it comes to the following, which is better? The country where you were born, the U.S., or are they about the same?

% OF IMMIGRANTS WHO SAY:	THE U.S.	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	ABOUT THE SAME
Having more opportunity to earn a good living	88%	4%	7%
Women’s rights	68%	5%	23%
Making good health care available	67%	18%	11%
Having a legal system you can trust	67%	6%	19%
Having an honest government	62%	6%	24%
Having a good education system	60%	18%	18%
Having respect for people with very different lifestyles and backgrounds	52%	15%	27%
Being a good place to raise children	49%	22%	24%
Treating new immigrants well	47%	14%	27%
Letting people practice the religion they choose	46%	6%	44%
People being nice to each other	32%	27%	37%



1979 CORBIS/BETMANN



For economic, political, and religious reasons, thousands of people make desperate attempts to enter the U.S. every year. Top left, "boat people" fleeing political and economic oppression in Haiti in 1981. Top right, a Vietnamese boy climbing from a small boat in the South China Sea onto a U.S. ship in 1979. Bottom, Mexicans climbing through a fence along the border with the U.S. in 1986.

## “Everybody Wants to Come Here”

Almost 9 in 10 immigrants (88 percent) say the U.S. is better than their own country when it comes to “having more opportunity to earn a good living,” compared to barely a handful (4 percent) who say their birth country is better. “Everybody wants to come here,” said a man from Bosnia. “It’s the land of opportunity.” In the survey, people were asked to describe in their own words the main reason they had for coming to America. For 20 percent of immigrants, the first thing that came to mind was economic opportunity; another 22 percent mentioned things such as “to make a better life” or “to have a brighter future for my children.” As one man said, “Because you can have a better life. I have a wife and daughter, and they can have a better life too.”

## “They Had a Husband Picked for Me”

Skirmishes over admitting women to the Augusta golf club or comparable pay for comparable work indicate that women’s rights is not a settled issue in the U.S. But it’s clear to immigrants that the U.S. is ahead of many other countries: An overwhelming 68 percent to 5 percent margin says the U.S. is better than their birth country when it comes to women’s rights. Immigrants from Mexico are even more likely to feel this way (85 percent).

A female survey respondent, when asked her biggest reason for coming to this country, replied, “I ran away from home because they had a husband picked for me.” In a focus group, a woman described why her mother emigrated from

Colombia: “If she stayed, being a widow, she didn’t have much control over her life. Here, as a secretary, she felt she had more chances, more opportunities as a woman alone.”

## In Mexico, You Know Who Will Win the Election

By overwhelming margins, immigrants are more likely to say the U.S. is better than their own country on matters such as “having a legal system you can trust” (67 percent vs. 6 percent) and “having an honest government” (62 percent vs. 6 percent). A man from Mexico said about his native country: “You have an election every four years, but you know ahead who is going to win.”

“In the U.S., they go by the laws,” said a woman who makes her home in Miami. “In Chile, there’s always ways to go around it if you have money, under the table.” “There is no country like the U.S.,” said a man from East Africa. “It starts because of the Constitution of the U.S. ...it is clear to anybody, so nobody can violate. That’s why this country has become very important for a lot of people... Our countries, they have constitution, but the constitution is not on the table to serve the people.”

## “He Can Say He’s Gay”

The U.S. is also perceived as better when it comes to “having respect for people with very different lifestyles” (52 percent) and “letting people practice the religion they choose” (46 percent). The pro-U.S. percentages are not overwhelming because many immigrants say the U.S. and their home country are about the same (27 percent and 44 percent respectively). There is an eye-catching difference among immigrants from the Middle East who, of course, can be of any religion: by a 67 percent to 5 percent margin, they say religious freedom is stronger in the U.S. than it is back home. Although speculative because of the small number of Middle Eastern respondents, this suggests that regardless of any fallout from September 11, tolerance is still perceived to be stronger here.

One woman from Chile poignantly described her cousin’s predicament: “My cousin is gay, and he had to leave Chile because if you’re gay you can’t be open. He can live freely; he can say he’s gay. That’s something about the U.S. that’s very positive. You can be whatever culture you are, whatever religion you are, freely.”

## Even Health Care and Education

Health care and education are routinely at the top of the public’s list of things that need improving in this country. But when they think about what they left behind, most immigrants give these two American institutions better marks than their home country. Immigrants give the nod to the U.S. over their native country when it comes to “making good health care available” by a 67 percent to 18 percent margin. A similar margin (60 percent vs. 18 percent) also says the U.S. has a better education system. Perhaps not surprisingly, European immigrants are not as impressed with the quality of America’s system of education (only 38 percent say it’s better than their own country’s) or its system of health care (37 percent say it’s better).

### The Reasons Why

Is the following a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all for becoming a citizen?

% OF IMMIGRANTS WHO SAY:	MAJOR REASON	MINOR REASON	NOT A REASON AT ALL
To get the right to vote	76%	15%	8%
To have better legal rights and protections in the U.S.	70%	16%	12%
To show a commitment and pride in being an American	65%	21%	10%
I would not have to worry about immigration status	58%	20%	19%
To make it easier to get certain jobs	55%	22%	22%
To make it easier to travel in and out of the U.S.	51%	26%	21%
To make it easier to bring other family members to this country	36%	24%	38%
To qualify for government programs like Medicaid or food stamps	22%	20%	54%



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While immigrants enjoy the opportunities that come with living in a free society, they also give the U.S. the rich, diverse culture that benefits us all. At top, a woman from Cambodia gets an English lesson from her daughter in their home in Rhode Island. Above left, Iraqi exiles in Michigan celebrate the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003. Above, a Washington, D.C., professor of public health (far left in the photo) visits his family in Gefersa, Ethiopia. Like many immigrants, he first came to the U.S. to complete his education. He settled permanently in the U.S. after his reforms of Ethiopia's basic health services resulted in death threats. Left, Tijana Bosnic and her mother play in a park in Philadelphia after emigrating from Sarajevo in the mid-1990s.

## People Could Be Nicer

But even in a comparative perspective, America is hardly perfect in the minds of immigrants. In their view, the U.S. fails to shine when it comes to “people being nice to each other”—only 32 percent say the U.S. is better than their home country. And immigrants are keenly aware of anti-immigrant discrimination in the U.S. An Asian immigrant in Los Angeles learned that America could be harsh to people who don’t learn to fight back: “If you let people intimidate you, they will. You have to stand up for yourself. At the beginning when I came here, I didn’t really speak up. When you have been taken advantage of a lot, then you learn to speak up for yourself.”

This is probably more than a simple case of nostalgia for the old country. A study of the general public conducted by Public Agenda in 2002—*Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America*—showed that a majority of Americans believe that a lack of respect and rudeness is on the rise in the U.S. today. Four in 10 (41 percent) even admitted that they themselves are sometimes part of the problem.<sup>6</sup>

## Kids Here Do Whatever They Want

And although the plurality of immigrants (49 percent to 22 percent) think the U.S. is better than their home country “when it comes to being a good place to raise children,” it may be telling that the views of Caribbean immigrants diverge: A slight plurality give the nod to their home country (40 percent) over the U.S. (37 percent). Several focus group interviews suggested that concerns over children’s character, discipline, and respect were the driving force behind this difference. One woman recalled her parents postponing the family’s reunification so that their kids finished school back home: “Finish high school then bring them here because they realized that high school here is not as disciplined as it is in Jamaica. Kids here just get to do whatever they want to.” Another recent Public Agenda study—*A Lot Easier Said Than Done*—documented the sense among a cross-section of America’s parents that their own kids fall short on critical character traits.

## “Everything Is About Money”

The immigrants we spoke with had other doubts. Some, for example, would point out that without money, little progress is possible in the U.S. After all, no one gives you anything for free. There was even a price to getting onto a beach, complained one Brazilian: “Everything is about money,” he said. “Last weekend I went to the beach and I thought it was absurd to pay \$6, and it’s a very bad beach. They charge for everything. Nothing is free.”

Skepticism about politics and politicians was also rampant. Said one focus group participant, “The people who don’t have money don’t have a say.” Nor are immigrants unwilling to critique American foreign policy. Half (51 percent) said that “the U.S. is too pushy in how it treats other countries around the world,” compared to 36 percent who disagree.

## A Perspective People Born Here Don’t Have

Immigrants are certainly not looking at America through rose-colored glasses. They do not suspend critical judgment or overlook the nation’s shortcomings. But this study captures an alert appreciation for what this country offers.

Immigrants sometimes contrasted their own appreciation for life in the U.S. with their sense that native-born Americans often take it for granted. One Latino immigrant in Los Angeles captured it: “For most of the people I talk to, white people, they don’t appreciate anything. A guy at my job was telling me, ‘We don’t care about government.’ I said, ‘Why? I care for a lot of things, for the law, for propositions, for stuff like that.’ He says, ‘My dad had this and that. My son and wife have everything. Why should I care?’ I tell him, ‘You don’t care because you haven’t suffered. You haven’t been through what I have been.’ He said, ‘Yes, probably I would appreciate it more if I were like you guys.’”

More than anything, it is the concrete sense of perspective from having a point of comparison that centers the affectionate judgment of immigrants toward their new country. As one immigrant said: “It’s not a perfect society, but it’s good. It’s better than my own country. It’s worth it.” □

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Knowing It By Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning*, Public Agenda, 2002. “Compared to other Americans, do you think that immigrants have more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms (57 percent), less appreciation (23 percent), or is there no difference (13 percent)?” Don’t Know (7 percent).
- <sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Gallup Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,008 adults, conducted September 11-13, 2000. “Which comes closer to your point of view—immigrants in the long run become productive citizens and pay their fair share of taxes (48 percent) or immigrants cost the taxpayers too much by using government services like public education and medical services (40 percent)?” No opinion (12 percent).
- <sup>3</sup> See, for example, Center for Immigration Studies. National telephone survey of 1,018 adult likely voters, conducted September 15-16, 2001. “Do you think the government is doing enough (18 percent) or not enough (77 percent) to control the border and to screen people allowed into the country?” Don’t Know (5 percent).
- <sup>4</sup> *CBS News/New York Times Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,052 adults, conducted December 7-10, 2001. “Do you think most of the people who have moved to the United States in the last few years are here legally (29 percent), or are most of them here illegally (53 percent)?” Half & half (volunteered response, 3 percent); Don’t Know/No Answer (15 percent).
- <sup>5</sup> Center for Immigration Studies. “Eight Million Illegal Aliens in 2000: Census Bureau Finding Raises Concern Over Border Control in Light of Terrorist Threat,” October 24, 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America*, Public Agenda, 2002. “Do you think that Americans used to treat each other with more respect and courtesy in the past (73 percent), or is this just nostalgia for a past that never existed (21 percent)?” Don’t know (6 percent). “And have you yourself ever been rude and disrespectful?” Yes (41 percent); No (59 percent); Don’t know (1 percent).

# HOW WE LEARN

## ASK THE COGNITIVE SCIENTIST

### Students Remember ... What They Think About

*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 who 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

**Issue:** The teacher presents a strong, coherent lesson in which a set of significant facts is clearly connected to a reasonable conclusion. But, at test time, the students show no understanding of the connections. Some students parrot back the conclusion, but no facts. Others spit back memorized facts, but don't see how they fit together. Though the lesson wasn't taught in a rote way, it seems like rote knowl-

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ILLUSTRATED BY BRU ASSOCIATES

edge is what the students took in. Why do well-integrated, coherent lessons often come back to us in a less meaningful, fragmented form? Can cognitive science help explain why this result is so common—and offer ideas about how to avoid it?

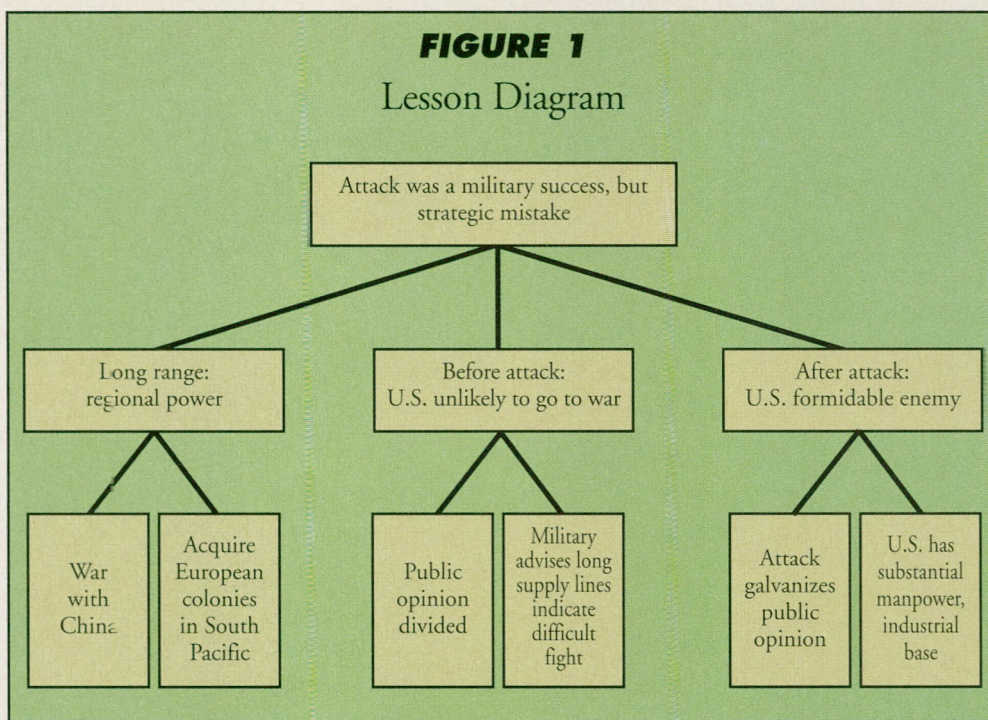
**Response:** Rote knowledge is devoid of all meaning (as discussed in my last column, Winter 2002). The knowledge that these students appear to be regurgitating is probably not rote knowledge. It is probably “shallow” knowledge: The students’ knowledge has meaning (unlike rote knowledge), in that the students understand each isolated part, but their knowledge lacks the deeper meaning that comes from understanding the relationship among the parts. For reasons noted below, this is a common problem in the early stages of learning about a new topic. But it also has another remediable source, which is the focus of this column.

Cognitive science has shown that what ends up in a learner’s memory is not simply the material presented—it is the product of what the learner thought about when he or she encountered the material. This principle illuminates one important origin of shallow knowledge and also suggests how to help students develop deep and interconnected knowledge.

\* \* \*

Let’s start with an example of shallow knowledge. Suppose that you are teaching a high school class unit on World

**FIGURE 1**  
Lesson Diagram



War II and develop a lesson on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Many facts might be included in such a lesson: (a) Japan had aspirations to be a regional power; (b) Japan was engaged in a protracted war with China; (c) because they were at war, European countries could not protect their colonies in the South Pacific; and (d) the attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in a declaration of war on Japan by the United States. The overarching point of this lesson might be to show that the attack on Pearl Harbor was a strategic mistake for the Japanese, given their war aims. (See Figure 1 for a diagram of the lesson.)

We can see two ways that this meaningful lesson might end up as shallow knowledge in the student's mind. The student might commit to memory some or all of these four facts. But knowing these facts without understanding how they relate to one another and can be integrated to support the conclusion leaves the facts isolated; they are not without meaning, but neither are they as rich as they might be. The student has the trees, but no view of the forest.

Alternatively, the student might commit to memory the conclusion, "The attack on Pearl Harbor, although militarily a successful battle for Japan, was ultimately detrimental to its long-range war plans." But memorizing this conclusion without understanding the reasoning behind it and knowing

\* My last column (Winter 2002, available at [www.aft.org/american\\_educator/winter2002/CogSci.html](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/winter2002/CogSci.html)) discussed another common problem for students: inflexible knowledge. Like shallow knowledge, inflexible knowledge is meaningful—the catch is that it doesn't translate well to other relevant situations. To extend our World War II example, a student with inflexible knowledge may learn the conclusion and an adequate number of supporting facts, developing a real understanding of Japan's mistake. But, when the history class moved on to study another war, the student may not recognize an analogous strategic mistake. Developing flexible knowledge, such as being able to track strategic mistakes as a theme throughout military history (or to generalize, for example, to corporate history) requires much further study.

the supporting facts is empty. It isn't rote—the student knows Japan initiated and won a battle at the place called Pearl Harbor. But the knowledge certainly is "shallow"—it has no connections.\*

We have all had students memorize phrases from class or a textbook more or less word-for-word, and although what the student says is accurate, we can't help but wonder whether he or she really understands the ideas those words represent. Let's dig deeper.

### Memory Is as Thinking Does

When students parrot back a teacher's or the textbook's words, they are, of course, drawing on memory. Thus,

the question of why students end up with shallow knowledge is really a question about the workings of memory. Needless to say, determining what ends up in memory and in what form is a complex question, but *there is one factor that trumps most others in determining what is remembered: what you think about when you encounter the material.* The fact that the material you are dealing with has meaning does not guarantee that the meaning will be remembered. If you think about that meaning, the meaning *will* reside in memory. If you don't, it won't. For example, if I teach about Pearl Harbor, some sailing enthusiasts may start thinking about the ships of the era and pay minimal attention to the rest of the class—just a few minutes after the bell rings they won't remember much about the causes and consequences of Pearl Harbor. Memory is as thinking does.

A classic experiment illustrating this principle was conducted by Thomas Hyde and James Jenkins in 1969. It examined how one thinks about material and the effect of that thinking on memory. Subjects in their experiment listened to a list of words at a rate of one word every two seconds. Different groups of subjects were to perform different tasks upon hearing each word. Some were to rate each word as to whether it made them think of pleasant or unpleasant things, whereas others were asked to count the number of times the letter *E* appeared in the word. Rating the pleasantness forces the subject to think about the word's meaning; the word *garbage* is unpleasant because of what it means—what it is associated with in one's memory. Counting *Es*, on the other hand, forces one to think about the spelling of the word, but not its meaning. Thus, the experimenters manipulated what subjects thought about when they encountered each word. Subjects were not told that their memory for the words would later be tested; they thought they were merely to make the pleasantness or the *E*-counting judgment.

One other detail of the experiment is especially important. The word list actually consisted of 12 pairs of very



highly associated words, such as *doctor-nurse*, although this fact was not pointed out to any of the subjects. The order in which the words were read was random (except that related words were not allowed to be next to one another in the list).

The results are shown in Figure 2. First look at the left side of the chart, which shows the mean number of words recalled. Memory was much better when subjects made the pleasantness ratings. Thinking about the meaning of material is especially helpful to memory. This finding is consistent across hundreds of other experiments.

The right side of the figure shows a measure of clustering—the extent to which subjects paired the associated words as they tried to remember them. When a subject recalled a word (e.g., *doctor*), what percentage of the time was the next word recalled the highly associated one (*nurse*)? As the figure shows, subjects who thought about the word’s meaning (i.e., rated pleasantness) not only remembered more words, they tended to remember the related words together, even though the related words did not appear together in the list. The subjects who counted *Es* did not tend to remember related words together.

These results forcefully make the point that meaningful structure that is in the environment may or may not end up being stored in memory. In the Hyde and Jenkins experiment, the fact that some of the words were related in meaning was largely lost on the subjects who counted *Es* because thinking about *Es* did not encourage the subjects to process meaning. Subjects who made the pleasantness ratings tended to group the words together by meaning as they recalled them. Whatever subjects thought about when they heard the words (which, teachers will note, depends on what they were asked to think about) was what ended up in memory.

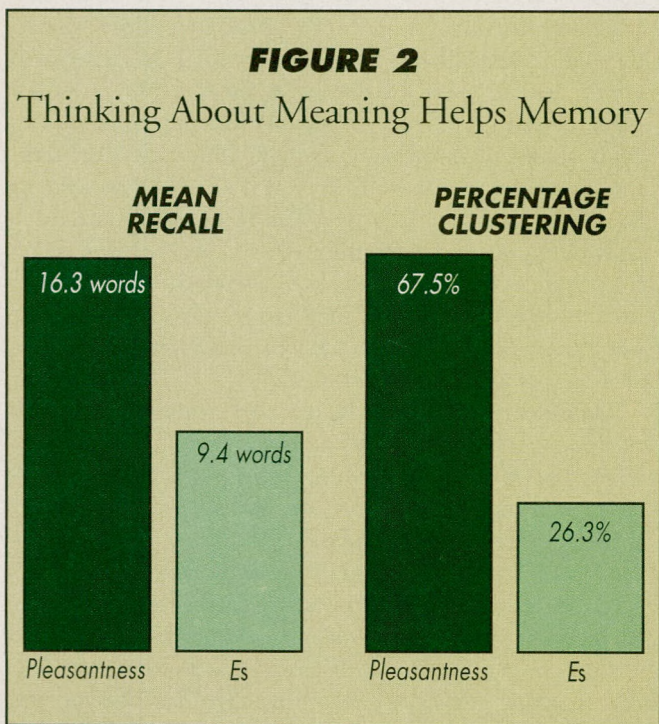
In the Hyde and Jenkins experiment, the “what they think about” principle is divided into thinking about mean-

ing versus not thinking about meaning. Other experiments show that even if one thinks about meaning, the particular *aspect* of the meaning that one considers will be stored in memory, and other aspects of meaning will not. For example, in one experiment (Barclay et al., 1974), subjects were presented with words to remember in the context of a sentence. The sentence biased subjects to think of one or another feature of the to-be-remembered word: For example, some subjects read “The man lifted the *piano*,” which encouraged thinking about the fact that pianos are heavy. Other subjects read “The man tuned the *piano*,” which encouraged considering that pianos produce music. In the next phase of the experiment subjects were told that their memory for some of the nouns in the sentences would be tested and that for each sentence they would get a hint. For *piano*, some subjects were given the hint, “something heavy.” If they had read the sentence about lifting the piano, this hint matched the feature they had thought about, but if they read the sentence about tuning the piano, the hint didn’t match. (Other subjects saw a hint that matched the piano tuning sentence; that hint was “something with a nice sound.”)

The results showed that subjects remembered about three times as many words when the hint for the test matched what subjects had thought about when they first read the word. Again, the point is that what is stored in memory is quite specific to what you think about when you encounter the material. It is not the case that if you think about *piano*, then *piano* and all of its features are stored in memory. You might think about its music-producing qualities, its weight, its cost, and so on. Or you might not focus on the referent at all, but rather on the physical properties of the word itself, as when Hyde and Jenkins asked subjects to count *Es*. In each case, what you think about is what you remember.

So what does this have to do with shallow knowledge? It shows where shallow knowledge might come from. Meaning that is in the environment won’t end up in memory if students don’t think about it. Students with shallow knowledge have apparently thought about the material in a shallow way. This conclusion reframes the question we might ask: Why would students think about the material in a shallow way, given that we didn’t present it to them that way? Obviously, a student would learn only isolated facts or unsupported conclusions if that is what the teacher taught, but I find it difficult to believe that this is a common practice. The notion that education should emphasize meaning is deeply ingrained in our system and has been for a generation or more. There cannot be many teachers who ask their students to learn facts without concern for a larger picture. So how do students end up with shallow knowledge? There are several possible answers.

1. As noted at the beginning of this article, in one form, shallow knowledge is simply a step on the way to deep knowledge. Consider again the hierarchical diagram shown in Figure 1. I argued that shallow knowledge could either be memorization of the conclusion (top of the hierarchy) without knowing the facts that back it up



(bottom of the hierarchy), or memorization of the facts without integrating them into a conclusion. Clearly the sort of deep knowledge we want our students to have is objectively harder to obtain than shallow knowledge, because knowledge of the facts *and* knowledge of the conclusion *and* knowledge of their interrelationships are prerequisite to it. We want students to know how the different levels of hierarchy relate to one another; it's not enough to have memorized each level in isolation of the others. That connected knowledge will inevitably be the last thing that the student acquires. Thus, some students' knowledge will be shallow simply because they are not far enough along yet.

2. Other students may effectively quit learning before they reach the deep understanding that is our goal for them. A student may learn the facts about Pearl Harbor and think "All right, I've learned a lot about this stuff." The student is correct (so far as it goes) and simply doesn't realize that there is yet more to do.
3. Students' perception of what they are supposed to learn—and what it means to learn—may contribute to shallow knowledge. A student may seek to memorize definitions and pat phrases word-for-word from the book because the student *knows* that this information is correct and cannot be contested. When I was in eighth grade, we were given a list of vocabulary terms that we were to define and then study in preparation for a weekly test. A friend defined "cherub" as "an angel of the second order." My friends and I teased him because his definition missed what we thought was the key aspect of the word—that a cherub is small, chubby, and rosy-cheeked. He was unmoved and kept repeating "that's what the dictionary said." He liked the fact that his answer was uncontestable. Students may memorize exactly what the teacher or textbook says in order to be certain that they are *correct*, and worry less about the extent to which they understand.
4. Despite what was offered to students in the teacher's lesson, the students attended to (thought about) something different—and that's what they remembered.

### What Does This Mean for Teachers?

This fundamental principle of memory—memory is as thinking does—yields a clear strategy to encourage deep, meaningful knowledge. If students think about the meaning of material, meaning will end up in memory. How can teachers be sure that students are thinking about meaning?

Obviously there is no one way to ensure that students think about the meaning of material. A compelling story may be appropriate for one lesson, whereas a carefully designed laboratory project works for a second, and a well-structured group discussion for a third. One possible common misconception is that learners can only understand meaning if they themselves construct the meaning in a physically active way. A moment's reflection should tell us that "listening" does not imply passivity or shallowness. We have all been to "active, participatory" workshops that felt like a waste of time, and we have been to lectures where we "just

listened" that were gripping and informative. Constructing meaning is a matter of being *mentally* engaged; being physically engaged might help at times, but it is not necessary.

How can we ensure that students are mentally engaged? While there is still more to learn about applying this research on thinking and memory to teaching, several key principles have emerged to guide teachers in developing assignments, classroom activities, and assessments.

■ **Anticipate what your lesson will lead students to think about.** The direct relationship between thought and memory is so important that it could be used as a self-check for a teacher preparing virtually any assignment: *Always try to anticipate what students will be thinking when they are doing the assignment.* Doing so may make it clear that some assignments designed with one purpose in mind will achieve another. For example, a teacher once told me that, as part of a unit on the Underground Railroad, he had his students bake biscuits so that they would appreciate what escaped slaves ate most nights. He asked what I thought of the assignment and my reply was that his students will remember baking biscuits. In other words, his students probably thought for 30 seconds about the relation of the baking to the course material, and then spent 30 minutes thinking about measuring flour, mixing dough, and so on.

Another example comes from my recent observation of my nephew as he completed a book report. The teacher asked the students to draw a poster that depicted all of the events of the book. The purpose of the assignment was to have students think of the book as a whole, and to consider how the separate events related to one another. This purpose got lost in the execution. My nephew spent a lot more time thinking about how to draw a good castle than he did about the plot of the book.

■ **Use discovery learning carefully.** The principle above—anticipate the students' thoughts—also illuminates the use and misuse of discovery learning. There is little doubt that students remember material they generate themselves better than material that is handed to them. This "generation effect," as it is called (Slamecka & Graf, 1978), is indeed powerful, and it is due, in part, to forcing the learner to think about the meaning of material (although other techniques can do that as well). Part of the effect does seem to be unique to the actual generation of the answer, over and above thinking about meaning. One might suppose, therefore, that discovery learning should be employed whenever possible. However, given that memory follows thought, one thing is clear: *Students will remember incorrect "discoveries" just as well as correct ones.*

Considerable care must be taken to ensure that the path of students' thoughts will be a profitable one. For example, advocates of discovery learning often point out that children learn to use some computer software rapidly and effectively merely by "playing around with it." That may be true, but that learning environment is also quite structured in that profitless actions are immediately discouraged by the system not working. In effect, the system is so structured that profitless discoveries are impossible; but few classroom activities can achieve this kind of structure. How much anatomy will students learn by "playing

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## Constructing meaning is a matter of being mentally engaged.

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around” with frog dissection? Can one anticipate the thoughts of students who dissect frogs with little direction? Although discovery learning may be powerful in highly structured contexts that make the correct discovery virtually inevitable, in others it is likely to prove unproductive.

■ **Design reading assignments that require students to actively process the text.** Many concrete strategies have been suggested for helping students to get more out of reading that likely have some or all of their effect by making readers think about the meaning of what they are reading. *Techniques such as writing outlines, self-examination during learning, review questions, and previews can encourage or require students to integrate the material and to thereby process (i.e., think about) the meaning.* These different techniques are more or less effective in different situations, perhaps due to the specific materials being studied (e.g., McDaniel & Einstein, 1989); general principles guiding when each technique should be used have not been forthcoming. Nevertheless, although one technique or another may be more effective for a given lesson or group of students, using any strategy that encourages the processing of meaning is almost always better than not using one.

■ **Design lessons so that students can't avoid thinking about the lesson's goal.** On a more positive note, the “memory is as thinking does” principle can yield steps teachers can take to help students develop deep, interconnected knowledge: *Lessons should be directed so that students are very likely to think (or can't help but think) about the goal of the lesson.* The goal of the Underground Railroad lesson was not really about biscuits—it was to encourage students to consider the experience of escaped slaves. Therefore, a more effective starting point for that lesson would be to ask students leading questions that encourage consideration of what escaped slaves' experiences would be like, which might include questions of how they would obtain food, and what the constraints were on the food they could get (inexpensive, cooked rapidly, etc.). My nephew would have gotten more out of his book report project if it had emphasized what the teacher was really interested in (the connection among the book's events), perhaps by having the students label the events and connections among them (e.g., this event moves the character towards his goal; this event causes that event) and de-emphasizing the students' artistic contribution by having them use clip art or simply writing the events in words.

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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](mailto:amered@aft.org).

■ **Design tests that lead students to think about and integrate the most important material.** The “memory is as thinking does” principle may also be applied to methods of assessing student knowledge: *Like lessons, study guides for texts should be developed that force students to think about the goals of the lessons being assessed.* For better or worse, some students expend their greatest effort to understand material as they prepare for an examination. Even if you would rather see such students motivated by a passion to learn, you can use the students' motivation to earn a good grade to ensure that they are getting the most out of your lessons. Announcing the general topics to be covered on an exam leaves the specifics of what to learn up to the student. Even if the teacher emphasizes that deep understanding will be tested, the student may misconstrue what is deep or, as noted earlier, the student may quit once some facts have been memorized, believing that he or she has already done quite a bit of studying. Suppose, however, that the teacher provides a list of integrative questions for the students to study from, such as “Describe why the attack on Pearl Harbor was a strategic mistake by Japan, given its war aims.” Suppose further that the students know that the examination will consist of five questions from the 30-question list that they have been given, with an essay to be written on each of the five questions. Students will very likely restrict their studying to the 30 question list, but that might be just fine with the teacher if he or she feels that any student who can answer those 30 questions has mastered the material. This method of testing has the advantage of ensuring that while students are highly motivated, they think about the deepest meaning of the material that the teacher intended.

**I**n summary, in the early stages of learning, students may display “shallow” learning. These students have acquired bits of knowledge that aren't well-integrated into a larger picture. Research tells us that deep, connected knowledge can be encouraged by getting students to think about the interrelation of the various pieces of knowledge that they have acquired. Cognitive science has not progressed to the point that it can issue prescriptions of exactly how that can be achieved—that job is very much in the hands of experienced teachers. But in considering how to encourage students to acquire meaningful knowledge, teachers will do well to keep the “memory is as thinking does” principle in mind. □

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# Thinking About September 11

## *Defining Terrorism and Terrorists*

*In the aftermath of September 11, most of the world saw the attackers and the attacks for what they were: terrorists and terrorism. But in some quarters there was less clarity. Notably, the Reuters News Agency asked its reporters to avoid both words, arguing, in part, that "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." This notion—that distinctions can't or shouldn't be made between terrorists and freedom fighters—also found its way into several teaching guides.*

*Political scientist Walter Berns commented on these teaching guides in the Spring 2002 American Educator with this: "Of course we want students to be familiar with the perspective that drives our adversaries.... But we also want students—and citizens—who can make judgments about the worthiness of various regimes and the ideas that animate them, who can make distinctions between freedom fighters and terrorists based on the methods used and the ends that are being fought for...."*

*In this American Educator, the last to be published before September 11, a leading scholar of ethics and politics walks us through these distinctions and reminds us of the importance of clear-thinking and clear language.*

—EDITOR

### By Jean Bethke Elshtain

As I pen these words, September 11 is a year behind us. By the time this appears in print, the second anniversary of the attacks will be approaching. Other events may have crowded out our memories of that horrible day in 2001, and the waters may have started to close over. Some of us may be forgetting what it was really like. We shouldn't. It was just as bad as we remember it. Our emotions at the time were not extreme: They were appropriate to the horror. Anger remains an appropriate feeling.

An image that crowds out many others in my mind is that of tens of thousands fleeing New York City by foot. As I watched and wept, I recalled something I had said many times in my classes on war: "Americans don't have living memories of what it means to flee a city in flames. Americans have not been horrified by refugees fleeing burning cities." No more. Now we know.

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*Jean Bethke Elshtain is professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and author of over 200 works on feminist theory, family, theology, and international relations. This article is excerpted with permission from Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World, Basic Books, New York, 2003.*

### What Happened on September 11?

Many recall a memorable line associated with Sergeant Joe Friday of the classic television series *Dragnet*. At some point in his interrogation of a witness or a suspect, the stony-faced Friday would stare the person in the eye and intone flatly: "Only the facts, ma'am," or, "Just give us the facts, sir." There is no substitute for the facts. If we get our descriptions of events wrong, our analyses and our ethics will be wrong, too. The words we use and our evaluations of events are imbedded with important moral principles. Even though ethicists and moral philosophers engage in heated debates about this and related matters, most of us intuitively understand what is at stake. When Pope John Paul II described the attacks of September 11 as an "unspeakable horror," we nodded our heads: Yes, that seemed right.

Those attacks would have been an "unspeakable horror" whether they happened in New York City or Moscow or Tokyo or Delhi or Karachi or Riyadh. But they happened here, and we bear a special burden to pay attention and get the facts about them right. Our depiction of the event carries our moral evaluation of it. "Unspeakable horror" is not a neutral description of September 11. The pontiff's words convey the ghastly, almost unimaginable viciousness of the perpetrators and the miserable fruits of their labor.

By contrast, the ideological fanatic who sees the events of September 11 as a "glorious deed" begins by misdescribing what happened. His words aim to draw our attention away from the desperate office workers plunging like birds with broken wings to their deaths, trying to escape a more horrible death by fire or from buildings imploding and shattering thousands of human beings into minute bits of rubble and dust. The fanatic does not represent the innocent civilians as what they were on September 11: workers from more than 86 countries doing their jobs in the World Trade Center towers and at the Pentagon, four planeloads of businesspeople and retirees, children and grandparents, traveling coast to coast. Instead, he represents these civilians as "infidels" and delights in their destruction. He strips them of their status as noncombatants and denies them the protection against intentional targeting and assault afforded anyone of that status by the laws of war.

One description condemns an intentional attack using instruments of peaceful travel—commercial airliners—against buildings in which commerce was conducted and people worked to support their families, and the other revels in it. Labeling their victims—calling them "infidels," the Islamist



term for non-Muslims or Muslims who do not share their hatred; “bacilli,” a Nazi term for Jews; or “bourgeois reactionaries,” a Communist term for any who opposed their violent revolution—is but one way in which some human beings strip others of their protected status as noncombatants or, even more radically, of their very humanness. Such rhetoric is endemic to terror that knows no limit and traffics in strategies of exculpation and denial. Islamist fanatics tell themselves that the infidel is a lower order of being and a menace, and they are doing a good deed by eliminating a threat to the purity of their faith and all the faithful.

How we describe the attack is closely related to how we speak about the attackers. How should we describe the hijackers? Were they martyrs to their faith, as some claim? A martyr is generally recognized as one who dies for his or her faith. Even if he kills himself in the process, however, *a person who murders is not a martyr but a murderer*. To glorify as martyrs those whose primary aim is to murder civilians because they deem the end glorious is to perpetuate a distorted view of the world. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the original definition of martyr as one who “voluntarily undergoes the penalty of death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith or any article of it.” A martyr, it follows, is one who suffers death on “behalf of any religious or other belief or cause.” Nowhere is a martyr defined as one who “tries to kill as many unarmed civilians as possible and, in the process, meets his or her own end.”

Why should we accept a radical redefinition of an old and noble term? When we think of a martyr, we picture an unarmed individual who meets death bravely because he or she refuses to recant the faith. If we extend this idea of unearned suffering to encompass perpetrators of mass murder, we traffic in distortions of language that lead to contortions of moral meaning. Muslim scholars have pointed out that Islam looks upon suicide as an “unpardonable sin,” not a glorious deed. As was true of the early Christians, an Islamic martyr is also a witness for the faith. But naming a martyr is the business of Allah, the scholar Amir Taheri reminds us, not of those “in pursuit of political goals.... Muslims who implicitly condone terror know they cannot smuggle a new concept into Islamic ethics.” Taheri argues that “not a single reputable theologian anywhere” endorses the new trick word that has been added to the Islamic lexicon by those who are trying to get around restrictions against suicide bombing.<sup>1</sup> In other words, those who describe suicide bombers and other mass murderers as “martyrs” knowingly get the description

wrong in order to justify and glorify what cannot be justified and should not be glorified.

## What Is a Terrorist?

This line of reasoning pertains directly to how we talk about *terror* and *terrorists*. Just as the words *martyr* and *martyrdom* are distorted, whether in the Western or the Islamic tradition, when applied not to those prepared to die as witnesses to their faith but instead to those who commit suicide while killing as many civilians as possible. So *terrorist* is twisted beyond recognition if it is used to designate anyone anywhere fighting for a cause.

Terrorists are those who kill people they consider their “objective enemy,” no matter what those people may or may not have done. *Terrorist* and *terrorism* entered ordinary language to designate a specific phenomenon: killing directed against all ideological enemies indiscriminately and outside the context of a war between combatants. According to the logic of terrorism, enemies can legitimately be killed no matter what they are doing, where they are, or how old they are.

The word *terror* first entered the political vocabulary of the West during the French Revolution. Those who guillotined thousands in the Place de la Concorde in Paris were pleased to speak of revolutionary terror as a form of justice. Since the era of the French Revolution, a complex, subtle, and generally accepted international language has emerged to make critical distinctions between different kinds of violent acts. Combatants are distinguished from noncombatants. A massacre is different from a battle. An ambush is different from a firefight. When Americans look back with sadness and even shame at the Vietnam War, it is horrors like the My Lai *massacre* they have in mind. Those who called the slaughter of more than 400 unarmed men, women, and children a *battle* were regarded as having taken leave of their senses, perhaps because they were so determined to justify anything that Americans did in the Vietnam War that they had lost their moral moorings.<sup>2</sup>

A terrorist is one who sows terror. Terror subjects its victims or would-be victims to paralyzing fear. In the words of the political theorist Michael Walzer, terrorism’s “purpose is to destroy the morale of a nation or a class, to undercut its solidarity; [terrorism’s] method is the random murder of innocent people. Randomness is the crucial feature of terrorist activity. If one wishes fear to spread and intensify over time, it is not desirable to kill specific people identified in some particular way with a regime, a party, or a policy. Death must come by chance.”<sup>3</sup> Terrorism is “the random murder of innocent people.” The reference is not to moral innocence, for none among us are innocent in that way, but to our inability to defend ourselves from murderous attacks as we go to work, take a trip, shop, or ride a bus. In other words, civilians are not combatants.

## Making the Right Distinction

The designation of terrorism becomes contested because terrorists and their apologists would prefer not to be depicted accurately. It is important to distinguish between two cases here. In some hotly contested political situations, it may be in the interest of one side to try to label its opponents as

“terrorists” rather than “combatants” or “soldiers” or “fighters.” We must ask who such men (and women) are attacking. Do they target soldiers at outposts or in the field? Do they try to disable military equipment, killing soldiers in the process? As they carry out such operations, are they open to negotiation and diplomacy? If so, it seems reasonable to resist a blanket label of “terrorism” for what they are up to.

In a situation in which noncombatants are *deliberately* targeted and the murder of the maximum number of noncombatants is the *explicit* aim, using terms like “fighter” or “soldier” or “noble warrior” is not only beside the point but pernicious. Such language collapses the distance between those who plant bombs in cafés or fly civilian aircraft into office buildings and those who fight other combatants, taking the risks attendant upon military forms of fighting. There is a nihilistic edge to terrorism: It aims to destroy, most often in the service of wild and utopian goals that make no sense at all in the usual political ways.

The distinction between terrorism, domestic criminality, and what we might call “normal” or “legitimate” war is vital to observe. It helps us to assess what is happening when force is used. This distinction, marked in historic, moral, and political discourses about war and in the norms of international law, seems lost on those who call the attacks of September 11 acts of “mass murder” rather than terrorism and an act of war under international law.

It is thus both strange and disheartening to read the words of those distinction-obliterators for whom, crudely, a dead body is a dead body and never mind how it got that way. Many of these same individuals would, of course, protest vehemently, and correctly, were commentators, critics, and political actors to fail to distinguish between the great world religion that is Islam and the terrorists who perpetrated the events of September 11. One cannot have it both ways, however, by insisting on the distinctions one likes and heaping scorn on those who put pressure on one’s own ideological and political commitments.

If we could not distinguish between a death resulting from a car accident and an intentional murder, our criminal justice system would fall apart. And if we cannot distinguish the killing of combatants from the intended targeting of peaceable civilians and the deliberate and indiscriminate sowing of terror among civilians, we live in a world of moral nihilism. In such a world, everything reduces to the same shade of gray and we cannot make distinctions that help us take our political and moral bearings. The victims of September 11 deserve more from us. □

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Taheri, A. (2002). “Semantics of Murder,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, p. A18.

<sup>2</sup> It would only be fair to point out that the Vietnam War was a terrible one in part because it was often difficult to distinguish combatants from noncombatants (although one is obliged to try), and because noncombatants often harbored combatants who lay in wait to ambush American soldiers. The soldiers at My Lai were inflamed, having just lost comrades. But none of that exculpates or justifies what happened. Massacre it was. Anyone who claimed a glorious victory over these villages and belittled their suffering would rightly be regarded as morally reprehensible.

<sup>3</sup> Walzer, M. (1977). *Just and Unjust Wars*. New York: Basic Books, p. 197.

## STARTING LINE

(Continued from page 27)

Based on this study, we recommend that states make preschool available to all 3- and 4-year-olds (beginning with disadvantaged children) and raise the overall quality of their programs. Critical steps for improving quality include developing and requiring standards, increasing staff training and compensation, and coordinating program administration.

No state has put together all of the components needed to ensure a coherent, comprehensive, high-quality early childhood program for all children. However, some states are well on their way to establishing high-quality early childhood education systems. Other states can and should look to them for guidance and help. States can also study the systems and approaches of other high-achieving industrialized countries, where high-quality, universal preschool is much more widely available than in the United States. □

## Endnotes

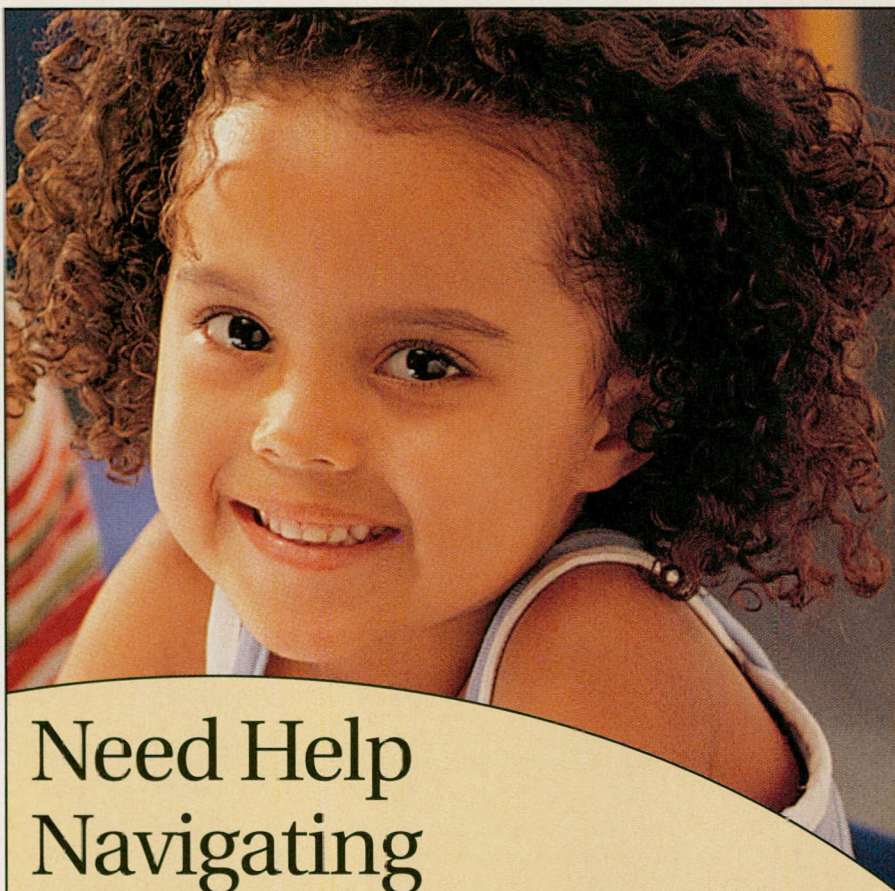
- <sup>1</sup> In addition to the *Perry Preschool Study*, pivotal early childhood studies include: the *Abecedarian Project*; the *Chicago Longitudinal Study*; and the *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study*.
- <sup>2</sup> NRC 1998; NRC 2000a; NRC 2000b.
- <sup>3</sup> Children's Defense Fund, 2002; Schulman, et al., 1999.
- <sup>4</sup> Schulman, et al., 1999.
- <sup>5</sup> NCES, 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Carnegie Task Force, 1994; NCES, 2001.
- <sup>7</sup> Lee and Burkam, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> NCES, 2000a; NCES, 2001.
- <sup>9</sup> This report does not attempt to provide a comprehensive list of all desired program features.
- <sup>10</sup> Lee and Burkam, 2002; NRC, 2000a; NCES 2000a.
- <sup>11</sup> The Urban Institute, 2000.
- <sup>12</sup> Nielsen and Cooper-Martin, 2002; Del Gaudio Weiss and Offenber, 2002. These data confirm findings from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2000a).
- <sup>13</sup> NRC, 1998; NRC, 2000a.
- <sup>14</sup> In places where salaries are high, as in New York, there are larger numbers of fully qualified teachers.
- <sup>15</sup> Gomby, et al., 1995; NAEYC, 1999; *Education Week's Quality Counts, 2002*.
- <sup>16</sup> NRC, 2000a; NRC, 2000b.

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## Need Help Navigating the No Child Left Behind Act?

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is the most sweeping education legislation in decades. Designed to raise academic standards, increase school accountability, and strengthen qualifications for teaching, it requires teachers and paraprofessionals to meet new requirements, students to take regular tests, and school achievement scores to make "adequate yearly progress."

Information about how to address the law's requirements is more important than ever before.

The American Federation of Teachers NCLB Extranet can help members and leaders alike navigate the numerous regulations and requirements facing schools and school staff.

On the AFT's NCLB Extranet, you can:

- Download Q&As on NCLB's impact on teachers and paraprofessionals.
- Learn about strategies for dealing with NCLB.
- Track your state's efforts to implement NCLB's requirements.
- Review the latest regulations and requirements released by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Ask questions about the implementation of NCLB.
- Find out the timelines for implementing public school choice, supplemental services, and other requirements of the law.
- Learn about federal funding opportunities to help implement NCLB.

<http://resource.aft.org/proiss/ESEA>

## LETTERS

(Continued from page 2)

stance, on page 122 of *Auding and Reading* we stated the need for:

methods for improving oral language skills as foundation skills for reading. In this regard, it would seem that, at least with beginning or unskilled readers, a sequence of instruction in which vocabulary and concepts are first introduced and learned via oracy [or listening and speaking] skills would reduce the learning burden by not requiring the learning of both vocabulary and decoding skills at the same time. It is difficult to see how a person can learn to recognize printed words by "sounding them out" through some decoding scheme if, in fact, the words are not in the oral language of the learner. Thus an oracy-to-literacy sequence of training would seem desirable in teaching vocabulary and concepts to unskilled readers.

*Auding and Reading* goes on to discuss concepts of automaticity in decoding, which underlie fluency of decoding in both auding and reading and explain why it is important to develop fluency (automaticity) of decoding.

There remains a need for further understanding of the life-span changes that affect reading. The fact that adults change across the life span argues for more research to better understand literacy development in adulthood beyond what we have learned to-date and what we can glean from studying the literacy development of children. Interestingly, as *American Educator* illustrates, what new learning we acquire about adult literacy development across the life span may have additional, important implications for K-12 literacy education. This adds weight to the importance of policies that emphasize the need for research on adult literacy education.

THOMAS G. STICHT  
*International Consultant in Adult Education*  
El Cajon, Calif.

## Looking for a Good Basal

As an educational consultant, I have been reviewing popular basal series using the consumer's guide developed



by Deborah Simmons and Ed Kame'enui of the University of Oregon. The series vary little in their approaches to teaching text comprehension. Ms. Walsh's article highlights that point (Spring 2003). I want to ask if Ms. Walsh knows of any basal series that does a consistently good job in teaching comprehension. If one does not exist, could she make any recommendations for our preK to third-grade teachers?

WARREN ELLNER

Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22  
Program & Training Specialist  
Doylestown, Pa.

*The author responds:*

In all my research, I did not find a single basal that "taught" reading comprehension appropriately and/or consistently. The area is grossly misunderstood by educators and textbook publishers. They haven't changed the way they teach comprehension because the research on this hasn't reached schools. It is something cognitive psychologists understand quite well but not educators.

If I were running a school system, I would urge teachers to drop the com-

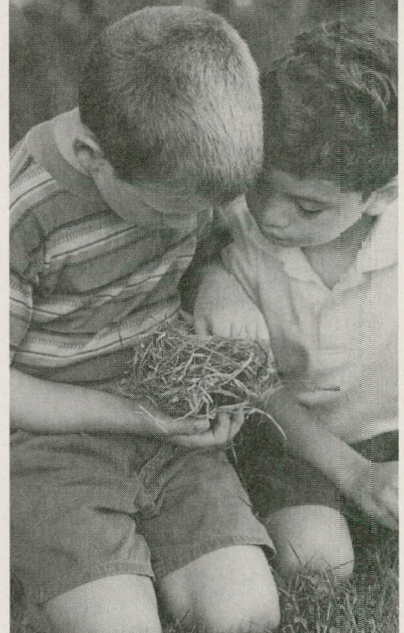
prehension section of their readers and substitute it with sustained study of a nonfiction topic (2-6 weeks per topic). Teachers should also read out loud each day to the children, and the text should be about two years above their reading level. They then need to spend time each day discussing the text, getting kids to talk and write about what they have listened to. Literature and informational texts can be incorporated into the reading so as to develop some knowledge of a selected topic. The goal is to make sure students can understand 90-95 percent of what they hear and are learning 5-10 percent new words.

—KATE WALSH

**The Joys of Poetry**

Your article concerning the loss of poetry memorization in our modern schools (Spring 2003) really resonated with me. I was born and raised in the states of Tamaulipas and Coahuila, Mexico. The Mexican schools I attended expected all students in the elementary grades and beyond to memorize patriotic poems for recitation before our fellow students, the faculty,

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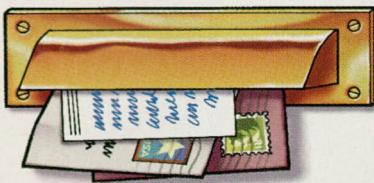
*"You mean we have to read it and comprehend it?"*

and our parents on special occasions.

To this day, I can still recite a few of those poems and evoke all kinds of pleasant memories about my school life over there. And as a third-grade teacher, I've tried to have my students partake in the joys of poetry. This way they will begin to appreciate a type of literature that will enrich their lives for a very long time.

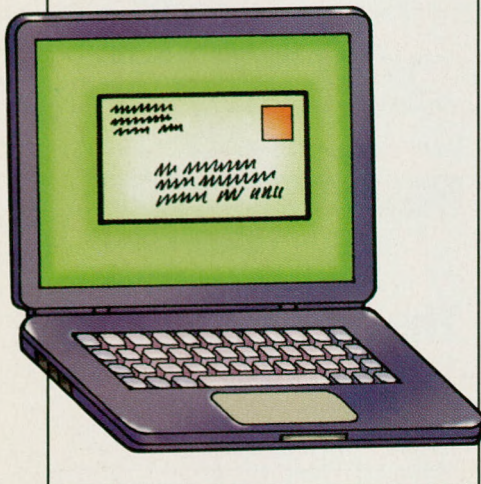
Thank you for writing a wonderful article, Carol [Muske-Dukes], and for taking some time to read my letter.

JULIE CORPUS  
Third-Grade Teacher  
Progreso Elementary  
Progreso, Texas



## Write Us!

We welcome comments on *American Educator* articles. Address letters to Editor, *American Educator*, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001 or via e-mail at [amered@aft.org](mailto:amered@aft.org). Letters selected may be edited for space and clarity and must include your complete address and phone number or e-mail address so we may contact you if necessary.



## Retaining Teachers Means Disciplining Students

I shouted "BRAVO!" yesterday when I read the letters from Nancy Nevil and Scott Walsh (Spring 2003). I, too, had read the winter issue article titled "Attracting Well-Qualified Teachers to Struggling Schools" and had wondered where the "reasons" that it was difficult to keep teachers came from. Every article/study/survey I read fails to mention chronic discipline problems. I remember years ago Albert Shanker wrote that school violence was not nearly as severe a problem as chronic disruption (since there are laws to deal with school violence). He was so right. I have never been threatened or assaulted, but I have wasted hours—no, months—of instructional time "redirecting," writing detention forms, waiting for 15 minutes while students trail in, taking up CD players, asking students to spit out gum/put away food/sit down/be quiet/tuck in shirts, and addressing cries of "I don't have any paper" and "Can I borrow a pencil?"

The old classroom management techniques no longer work because there is no back up from the administration. If I assign a day of detention and the student doesn't show up, I'm supposed to then assign two days. After waiting after school for two more days in case the child comes, then I may write a referral. And that is the end of the story. None of the referrals are dealt with, and students, as well as teachers, learn that detention is pointless.

I never had discipline problems that I couldn't handle until 2000; for 24 years I had enough backing to change behavior. But both in an inner-city school during 2000-2002 and now in a rural school, minor disruptions waste hours of instruction every week.

So I was glad to see two letters in the Spring 2003 issue of *American Educator* saying what I and all my colleagues believe is the real problem—lack of discipline. Society doesn't seem to have a clue what its permissiveness is creating, or how many tax dollars are wasted paying well-educated individuals to say "sit down," "be quiet," and "spit out your gum" instead of teaching.

CYNTHIA W. CARUSO  
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