

AMERICAN Educator

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

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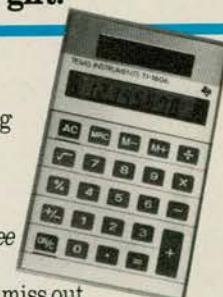
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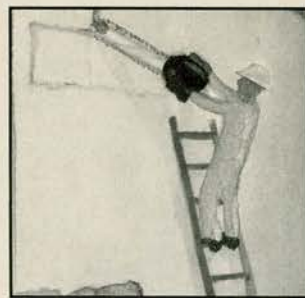
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Have we been too casual in attending to the next generation's understanding and appreciation of democracy? There is cause for concern—and now a growing consensus regarding what we can do about it.

DEMOCRACY'S UNTOLD STORY 19

By Paul Gagnon

A review of the five most frequently used world history textbooks concludes that, overall, they "leave the story of democracy largely untold. . . . Its origins, adventures, needs, and significance are nowhere systematically presented."

THE ASIAN ADVANTAGE: THE CASE OF MATHEMATICS 26

By Harold W. Stevenson

Why are Japanese and Chinese children leaving their American counterparts far behind on a broad range of mathematical abilities? The author explodes some common myths and describes some stunning differences in attitude, curriculum, and classroom activities.

ABILITY GROUPING AND ITS ALTERNATIVES: MUST WE TRACK? 32

By Robert E. Slavin

In an exhaustive review of the research, the author finds that the most commonly used form of ability grouping is also the least effective and potentially the most destructive. But there are more promising ways of dealing with student differences.

HOW TO TALK SO STUDENTS WILL LISTEN AND LISTEN
SO STUDENTS WILL TALK 37

By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

The authors of a widely acclaimed book on parent-child communications show how the same skills can be used in the classroom to engage students' cooperation and to foster self-discipline and autonomy.

CENSORING THE SOURCES 43

By Barbara Cohen

In the textbook adaptation of her book for young children, a writer fights to keep in the religious references she feels are essential to the story's meaning and integrity.

SEPTEMBER 17 is Constitution Day, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the document that shaped our nation. The upcoming press and television coverage makes it an exciting opportunity for teachers to help their students understand and appreciate the ideas — and the sometimes-fierce debate over them — embedded in the Constitution. Many organizations are publishing materials to aid teachers in making the Constitution come alive.

ACTIVITIES

■ Every school principal in the U.S. has received a packet of materials on "A Celebration of Citizenship," a nationwide teach-in on September 16, 1987. The packet contains curriculum material for elementary, middle, and senior-high school students plus a four-color wall poster. The big event of the day will be a national television spot featuring the President leading the country in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by former Chief Justice Warren Burger discussing the Preamble. Check with your school office.

MATERIALS

■ The Bicentennial Commission offers these materials for teachers: an extensive bibliography, Bicentennial Calendar, pocket constitution, and a copy of *We the People*, the Commission's newsletter. Pocket constitutions cost 15 cents each if 50 are ordered. Contact: The Resource Center, Commission of the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 736 Jackson Place, NW,

THE CONSTITUTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Ideas and Resources for Teaching and Learning about the U.S. Constitution



Washington, D.C. 20503 — or call (202) USA-1787.

■ The National Archives, home of the original Constitution, has a free brochure, "Celebrating the Constitution," which describes publications, posters, T-shirts, learning kits, and other items available. Write: Publications Services Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. 20408 and send a mailing label.

■ *The U.S. Constitution Bicentennial: A We the People Resource Book* provides information, material, and suggested activities to help teachers

and librarians plan programs and displays. Developed by the American Library Association, it costs \$10 and contains four posters, camera-ready art for ads and bookmarks, and lists of books, audiovisual materials, and plays on the U.S. Constitution. Write the American Library Association, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611 or call (312) 944-6780.

■ "Miracle at Philadelphia," the successful Bicentennial exhibit in Philadelphia, has developed educational materials. The packet

contains *The Confederation Chronicle*, a newspaper in modern format written to reflect the perspective of the nationalist leadership coming to draft a constitution. Delegate Biography cards are styled like popular baseball trading cards with a picture of the delegate on the front and his occupation, education, and role at the convention on the back. "Philadelphia in 1787" is a colorful map showing Philadelphia as an 18th-century metropolis. Two booklets detail the intellectual heritage of the constitutional era as well as historians' analyses of the times. These items may be ordered separately or together in a Teacher's Packet that includes additional document reproductions and other items for use in

classrooms, grades 7-12. The cost is \$19.50. To order by phone call toll-free (800) 821-2903 or write Eastern National, 313 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. ■ *Perspectives*, a book published by the Close Up Foundation, features a first-person perspective on government. Governor Mario Cuomo, Congressional representatives, and other government leaders give their points of view on how our form of government works. The book has a special section on the Constitution and costs \$14.00 (bulk rates offered). A videotape and posters are available also; write for their catalogue: Close Up Foundation, 1235 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202. □

SPECIAL OFFER

The AFT has prepared a kit of materials to help AFT members celebrate the Constitution. The kit contains source lists, suggestions, lesson enhancements on the Constitution, and a special U.S. Constitution that is easy to reproduce. The kit is free to AFT members, one copy per teacher. Write to: Paula O'Connor, Constitution in the Classroom, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Items in this list chosen and compiled by Paula O'Connor, director of AFT information services.

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EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

A Statement of Principles



Will democracy grow and flourish—indeed, will it even survive—if we are casual about the next generation's understanding and appreciation of it? Are our children born good democrats? Daily breathing the air of freedom, will they effortlessly acquire the values, knowledge, and habits that are democracy's indispensable foundation? Or must we more purposefully, more consciously pass on to them the lessons of the past, to which they can then add their own unique contributions? If so, what responsibility do our schools have in this regard, and how might they most effectively fulfill it?

It is these questions—amidst growing evidence that today's young people are coming of age ill-equipped to preserve and extend their political inheritance—that prompted the American Federation of Teachers, in joint sponsorship with Freedom House—the well-known human-rights monitoring organization—and the Educational Excellence Network—an education reform coalition headquartered at Teachers College, Columbia University—to launch the Education for Democracy project and to prepare the Statement of Principles that appears below. This document, recently released to wide critical acclaim and endorsed by over 150 prominent Americans spanning a broad political spectrum, sets forth the basic perspective that will guide a series of activities (see related review of world history textbooks on page 19) aimed at strengthening

the teaching of democratic values.

As always, we welcome comments and discussion from our readers.

—EDITOR

AS THE bicentennial of our Constitution approaches, we call for a special effort to raise the level of education for democratic citizenship. Given the complexities of our own society, of the rest of the world, and of the choices we confront, the need is self-evident and improvement is long past due.

As the years pass, we become an increasingly diverse people, drawn from many racial, national, linguistic, and religious origins. Our cultural heritage as Americans is as diverse as we are, with multiple sources of vitality and pride. But our political heritage is one—the vision of a common life in liberty, justice, and equality as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution two centuries ago.

To protect that vision, Thomas Jefferson prescribed a general education not just for the few but for all citizens, “to enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom.” A generation later, Alexis de Tocqueville reminded us that our first duty was to “educate democracy.” He believed that all politics were but the playing out of the “notions and sentiments dominant in people.” These, he said, are the “real



ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID WISNIEWSKI

causes of all the rest." Ideas—good and bad—have their consequences in every sphere of a nation's life.

We cite de Tocqueville's appeal with a sense of urgency, for we fear that many young Americans are growing up without the education needed to develop a solid commitment to those "notions and sentiments" essential to a democratic form of government. Although all the institutions that shape our private and public lives—family, church, school, government, media—share the responsibility for encouraging democratic values in our children, our focus here is on the nation's schools and their teaching of the social studies and humanities.

In singling out the schools, we do not suggest that there was ever a golden age of education for citizenship, somehow lost in recent years. It is reported that in 1943—that patriotic era—fewer than half of surveyed college freshmen could name four points in the Bill of Rights. Our purpose here is not to argue over the past, but only to ask that everyone with a role in schooling now join to work for decisive improvement.

OUR CALL for schools to purposefully impart to their students the learning necessary for an informed, reasoned allegiance to the ideals of a free society rests on three convictions:

First, that democracy is the worthiest form of human

governance ever conceived.

Second, that we cannot take its survival or its spread—or its perfection in practice—for granted. Indeed, we believe that the great central drama of modern history has been and continues to be the struggle to establish, preserve, and extend democracy—at home and abroad. We know that very much still needs doing to achieve justice and civility in our own society. Abroad, we note that, according to the Freedom House survey of political rights and civil liberties, only one third of the world's people live under conditions that can be described as free.

Third, we are convinced that democracy's survival depends upon our transmitting to each new generation the political vision of liberty and equality that unites us as Americans—and a deep loyalty to the political institutions our founders put together to fulfill that vision. As Jack Beatty reminded us in a *New Republic* article one Fourth of July, ours is a patriotism "not of blood and soil but of values, and those values are liberal and humane."¹

Such values are neither revealed truths nor natural habits. There is no evidence that we are born with them. Devotion to human dignity and freedom, to equal rights, to social and economic justice, to the rule of law, to civility and truth, to tolerance of diversity, to mutual assistance, to personal and civic responsibility, to self-restraint and self-respect—all these must be taught and learned and practiced. They cannot be taken for granted

or regarded as merely one set of options against which any other may be accepted as equally worthy.

WHY WE ARE CONCERNED

Are the ideas and institutions—and above all the worth—of democracy adequately conveyed in American schools? Do our graduates come out of school possessing the mature political judgment Jefferson hoped for, an ability to decide for themselves “what will secure or endanger” their freedom? Do they know of democracy’s short and troubled tenure in human history? Do they comprehend its vulnerabilities? Do they recognize and accept their responsibility for preserving and extending their political inheritance?

No systematic study exists to answer these questions. We lack adequate information on students’ knowledge, beliefs, and enthusiasms. There has been little examination of school textbooks and supplementary materials, of state and district requirements in history and social studies, or of what takes place in everyday school practice. A study of how high school history and government textbooks convey the principles of democracy is under way, and we hope that several other studies will be launched soon.

Meanwhile, the evidence we do have—although fragmentary and often anecdotal—is not encouraging. We know, for instance, of the significant decline over several decades in the amount of time devoted to historical studies in American schools, even in the college preparatory track; today, fewer than twenty states require students to take more than a year of history in order to graduate. We know that, as a result, many students are unaware of prominent people and seminal ideas and events that have shaped our past and created our present. A recent study shows that a majority of high school seniors do not know what the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was about.² Nor could majorities identify Winston Churchill or Joseph Stalin. Without knowledge of our own struggle for civil rights, how much can students understand of democracy’s needs at home—what it has taken and will still take to extend it. And what can they know of democracy’s capacity to respond to problems and to reform? In ignorance of the Second World War and its aftermath, how much can they grasp of the cost and necessity of defending democracy in the world? Having never debated and discussed how the world came to be as it is, the democratic citizen will not know what is worth defending, what should be changed, and which imposed orthodoxies must be resisted.

WE ARE concerned also that among some educators (as among some in the country at large), there appears a certain lack of confidence in our own liberal, democratic values, an unwillingness to draw normative distinctions between them and the ideas of nondemocratic regimes. Any number of popular curriculum materials deprecate the open preference for liberal democratic values as “ethnocentric.” One widely distributed teaching guide on human rights accords equal significance to freedom of speech, the right to vote, and the guarantee of due process on the one hand,

A majority of high school seniors could not identify Winston Churchill or Joseph Stalin.



with the “right” to take vacations on the other.³

In the rush to present all cultures in a positive light, the unpleasant realities of some regimes are ignored, as when this guide talks of the high value accorded the right to strike by governments in Eastern Europe (a notion that would surely be disputed by the supporters of Solidarnosc). Or as when another guide—financed by the U.S. Department of Education—lauds the Cuban government’s commitment to women’s rights, noting with approval that men who refuse to share equally in household responsibilities can be penalized with “re-education or assignment to farm work.”⁴

This insistence upon maintaining neutrality among competing values, this tendency to present political systems as not better or worse but only different, is illustrated by this test question designed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress and administered in the 1981-82 school year to students aged nine, thirteen, and seventeen:

Maria and Ming are friends. Ming’s parents were born in China and have lived in the United States for twenty years.

“People have no freedom in China,” Maria insists. “There is only one party in the election and the newspapers are run by the government.”

“People in China do have freedom,” Ming insists. “No one goes hungry. Everyone has an opportunity to work and medical care is free. Can there be greater freedom than that?”

What is the best conclusion to draw from this debate?

- A. Ming does not understand the meaning of freedom.
- B. Maria and Ming differ in their opinions of the meaning of freedom.
- C. There is freedom in the U.S. but not in China.
- D. People have greater freedom in China than in the U.S.

According to NAEP, choice B—“Maria and Ming differ in their opinions of the meaning of freedom”—is correct. The test’s framers explained in a 1983 report summarizing the survey’s findings that students choosing answer B “correctly indicated that the concept of freedom can mean different things to different people in different circumstances.” And, of course, in the most narrow, literal sense, B is correct.

Around the world, people and governments do apply different meanings to the word “freedom.” Some states that deny freedom of religion, speech, and conscience nonetheless define themselves as free. But we need not accept their Orwellian self-definitions as if words had no meaning. Were we used to Ming’s definition of free-

dom—a job, medical care, and ample food—many of history's slaves and today's prisoners would have to be called "free"! To offer such a definition, and to leave it at that, without elaboration—as NAEP has done—is grossly to mislead students about history, about politics, and above all, about human rights. In fact, the "rights" to food and work and medical care, when separated from the rights to free speech, a free press, and free elections, are not rights at all. They are rewards from the government that are easily bestowed and just as easily betrayed.

We are rightly accustomed to honest scrutiny of our own faults, and so it is all the more inexplicable when educational materials sidestep or whitewash violations of human rights and pervasive injustice in other lands. Students need an honest, rigorous education that allows them to penetrate Orwellian rhetoric and accurately compare the claims and realities of our own society and those of others.

Such a goal is compromised when the drawing of normative distinctions among values is frowned upon as a failure of objectivity, on the premise that all values are arbitrary, arising from personal taste or conditioning, without cognitive or rational bases. They are not to be ranked or ordered, the argument runs, only "clarified"; so the teacher must strive to be "value-free." But such a formulation confuses objectivity with neutrality. It is hardly necessary to be neutral in regard to freedom over bondage, or the rule of law over the rule of the mob, or fair wages over exploitation, in order to describe objectively the differences among them or among their human consequences.

What of Nazi values and their consequences? To grasp the human condition in the twentieth century objectively, we need to understand the problems of German society that pushed so many to join the Nazis and to acquiesce in their crimes. But to "understand" is not to forgive, or to trivialize, those crimes or to teach, in Richard Hunt's phrase, "no-fault, guilt-free history" where nobody is to blame for anything and fixing moral responsibility is disallowed.

FINALLY, NO discussion of the discomfort that some feel in teaching children to cherish democracy can fail to mention that some may be indifferent, or even alienated from American democracy, out of disillusion over its failings in practice. The postwar confidence in the American way of life was undermined by the political upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s. First, Amer-

Such a formulation confuses objectivity with neutrality.



ica had its long-overdue reckoning with the historic national shame of racial discrimination. Then the country found itself mired in the Vietnam War—and was further shocked and disheartened by assassinations and the events of Watergate. As we struggled to confront our failings and correct our flaws, legitimate self-criticism turned at times into an industry of blame. The United States and its democratic allies were often presented as though we alone had failed and as though our faults invalidated the very ideal that taught us how to recognize failure when we met it.

We do not ask for propaganda, for crash courses in the right attitudes, or for knee-jerk patriotic drill.



While the realities of our own society are daily evident, many students remain ignorant of other, quite different, worlds. How can they be expected to value or defend freedom unless they have a clear grasp of the alternatives against which to measure it? The systematic presentation of reality abroad must be an integral part of the curriculum. What are the political systems in competition with our own, and what is life like for the people who live under them? If students know only half the world, they will not know nearly enough. We cannot afford what one young writer recalled as a "gaping hole" in his prestigious, private high school's curriculum.⁵ He and his classmates, he says, were "wonderfully instructed in America's problems . . ."

But we were at the same time being educated in splendid isolation from the notion that democratic societies had committed enemies; we learned next to nothing of the sorts of alternatives to bourgeois liberalism that the twentieth century had to offer. . . . Exeter students learned nothing of what it meant to be a small farmer in Stalin's Russia or Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam. That it had been part of Communist policy to "liquidate as a class" the "kulaks" was something we had never heard spoken of. It was perfectly possible to graduate from the Academy with high honors and be altogether incapable of writing three factual paragraphs on the history of any Communist regime (or for that matter of any totalitarian regime whether of the Right or Left).

WHAT THE CITIZEN NEEDS TO KNOW

What was, and is, lacking is a fullness of knowledge, an objective and balanced picture of world realities, historical and contemporary. We do not ask for propaganda, for crash courses in the right attitudes, or for knee-jerk patriotic drill. We do not want to capsulize democracy's

argument into slogans, or pious texts, or bright debaters' points. The history and nature and needs of democracy are much too serious and subtle for that.

Education for democracy is not indoctrination, which is the deliberate exclusion or distortion of studies in order to induce belief by irrational means. We do not propose to exclude the honest study of the doctrines and systems of others. Or to censor history—our own or others'—as closed societies do, or to hide our flaws or explain them away. We do not need a bodyguard of lies. We can afford to present ourselves in the totality of our acts. And we can afford to tell the truth about others, even when it favors them and complicates that which indoctrination would keep simple and comforting.

The kind of critical thinking we wish to encourage must rest on a solid base of factual knowledge.



And then we leave it to our students to apply their knowledge, values, and experiences to the world they must create. We do not propose a "right" position on, say, American involvement in the Vietnam War; or on the type of nuclear weapons, if any, we should have; or on what our policy in Central America should be; or on whether the E.R.A. should be passed or hiring quotas supported. Good democrats can and do differ on these matters. On these and a host of other policy issues, there is no one "truth." Our task is more limited, and yet in its way much greater: to teach our children to cherish freedom and to accept responsibility for preserving and extending it, confident that they will find their own best ways of doing so, on the basis of free, uncoerced thought.

The kind of critical thinking we wish to encourage must rest on a solid base of factual knowledge. In this regard, we reject educational theory that considers any kind of curricular content to be as good as any other, claiming that all students need to know is "how to learn," that no particular body of knowledge is more worth noting than any other, that in an age of rapid change, all knowledge necessarily becomes "obsolete." We insist, on the contrary, that the central ideas, events, people, and works that have shaped our world, for good and ill, are not at all obsolete. Instead, the quicker the pace of change, the more critical it will be for us to remember them and understand them well. We insist that absent this knowledge, citizens remain helpless to make the wise judgments hoped for by Jefferson.

First, citizens must know the fundamental ideas central to the political vision of the eighteenth century

founders—the vision that holds us together as one people of many diverse origins and cultures. Not only the words—never only the words—but the sources, the meanings, and the implications of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, the Bill of Rights.

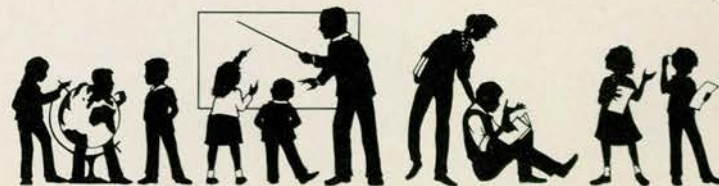
To go deeper than the words, and truly to understand the ideas, students must know where and how they arose, in whose minds, stirred by what other ideas. What historical circumstances were hostile? What were the prevailing assumptions about human nature? About the relationship between God and themselves? About the origins of human society and the meaning and direction of human history? To understand our ideas requires a knowledge of the whole sweep of Western civilization, from the ancient Jews and Christians—whose ethical beliefs gave rise to democratic thought—to the Greeks and Romans, through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation, the English Revolution—so important to America, the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment, and the French Revolution, a violent cousin to our own. Such a curriculum is indispensable. Without it, our principles of government—and the debates over them ever since—are not fully comprehensible. They are mere words, floating in air without source, life, drama, or meaning.

SECOND, CITIZENS must know how democratic ideas have been turned into institutions and practices—the history of the origins and growth and adventures of democratic societies on earth, past and present. How have these societies fared? Who has defended them and why? Who has sought their undoing and why? What conditions—economic, social, cultural, religious, military—have helped to shape democratic practice?

What conditions have made it difficult—sometimes even impossible—for such societies to take root? Again, it is indispensable to know the facts of modern history, dating back at least to the English Revolution, and forward to our own century's total wars; to the failure of the nascent liberal regimes of Russia, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan; to the totalitarianism, oppressions, and mass exterminations of our time. How has it all happened?

Third, citizens in our society need to understand the current condition of the world and how it got that way

What conditions have made it difficult—sometimes even impossible—for democratic societies to take root?



and to be prepared to act upon the challenges to democracy in our own day. What are the roots of our present dangers and of the choices before us? For intelligent citizenship, we need a thorough grasp of the daily workings of our own society, as well as the societies of our friends, of our adversaries, and of the Third World, where so many live amid poverty and violence, with little freedom and little hope.

This is no small order. It requires systematic study of American government and society; of comparative ideologies and political, economic, and social systems; of the religious beliefs that have shaped our values and our culture and those that have shaped others; and of physical and human geography. How can we avoid making all of this into nothing more than just another, and perhaps longer, parade of facts, smothering the desire to learn? Apart from needed changes in materials and methods, in the structure of curricula and of the school day itself, we believe that one answer is to focus upon the fateful drama of the historical struggle for democracy. The fate of real men and women, here and abroad, who have worked to bring to life the ideas we began with deserves our whole attention and that of our students. It is a suspenseful, often tragic, drama that continues today, often amid poverty and social turmoil; advocates of democracy remain, as before, prey to extremists of Left and Right well-armed with force and simple answers. The ongoing, worldwide struggle for a free center of "broad, sunlit uplands," in Churchill's phrase, is the best hope of the earth, and we would make it the heart of a reordered curriculum for history and social studies.

HISTORY AND THE HUMANITIES SHOULD BE THE CORE

We regard the study of history as the chief subject in education for democracy, much as Jefferson and the other founders of the United States did two centuries ago. In revamping the social studies curriculum, we should start with the obvious: History is not the enemy of the social sciences, but is instead their indispensable source of nourishment, order, and perspective. We aim at nothing less than helping students to comprehend what is important, not merely to memorize fact and formula. But it is clearly impossible to reach genuine comprehension of economic, political, social, and cultural questions without examining them in their historical context. To pull "case studies" and "concepts" out of historical narrative, as so many social studies programs do, not only confuses students but is likely to distort the truth of the human condition.

Of all the subjects in the curriculum, history alone affords the perspective that students need to compare themselves realistically with others—in the past and elsewhere on earth—and to think critically, to look behind assertions and appearances, to ask for the "whole story," to judge meaning and value for themselves. History is also the integrative subject, upon which the coherence and usefulness of other subjects depend, especially the social sciences but also much of literature and the arts. Taught in historical context, the formulations and insights of the social sciences take on life, blood, drama, and significance. And, in turn, their

The authors of the American testament had no trouble distinguishing moral education from religious instruction, and neither should we.



organizing concepts and questions can help rescue history from the dry recital of dates and facts so many students have rightly complained about.

WE ARE pleased that several major reform proposals agree on the centrality of history.⁶ Theodore Sizer, in *Horace's Compromise*, makes the joint study of history and ideas one of the four required areas of learning throughout the secondary years. *The Paideia Proposal* puts narrative history and geography at the center of the social studies curriculum, during every grade beyond the elementary. Ernest Boyer's Carnegie report, *High School*, asks for a year of the history of Western Civilization, a year of American history, another of American government, and a term's study of non-Western society. The Council for Basic Education sets an "irreducible minimum" of two years of American history, one year of European, and the study of at least one non-Western society in depth. The state of California now calls for at least two years of high school history.

We also ask for wider reading and study in the humanities. For we are concerned, again, with values, with every citizen's capacity for judging the moral worth of things. In this, courses in "values clarification" do not get us very far. They either feign neutrality or descend to preachiness. Values and moral integrity are better discovered by students in their reading of history, of literature, of philosophy, and biography. Values are not "taught," they are encountered, in school and life.

The humanities in our schools must not be limited, as they often are now, to a few brief samples of Good Things, but should embrace as much as possible of the whole range of the best that has been thought and said and created, from the ancient to the most recent. Otherwise, students have little chance to confront the many varied attempts to answer the great questions of life—or even to be aware that such questions exist. The quest for worth and meaning is indispensable to the democratic citizen. The essence of democracy, its reason for being, is constant choice. We choose what the good life is and how our society—including its schools—may order its priorities so that the good life is possible, according to what we ourselves value most. This is what de Tocqueville meant by the "notions and sentiments" of a people.

Education for democracy, then, must extend to edu-

cation in moral issues, which our eighteenth century founders took very seriously indeed. This is hardly surprising. The basic ideas of liberty, equality, and justice, of civil, political, and economic rights and obligations are all assertions of right and wrong, of moral values. Such principles impel the citizen to make moral choices, repeatedly to decide between right and wrong or, just as often, between one right and another. The authors of the American testament had no trouble distinguishing moral education from religious instruction, and neither should we. The democratic state can take no part in deciding which, if any, church forms its citizens' consciences. But it is absurd to argue that the state, or its schools, cannot be concerned with citizens' ability to tell right from wrong, and to prefer one over the other in all matters that bear upon the common public life. This would be utterly to misunderstand the democratic vision and the moral seriousness of the choices it demands of us.

CONCLUSIONS

In calling for a decisive improvement of education for democracy, we are well aware that this will require a sea-change in the typical curriculum. Specifically, we call for the following:

1. A more substantial, engaging, and demanding social studies curriculum for all of our children—one that helps students to comprehend what is important, not merely to memorize names, dates, and places. The required curriculum should include the history of the United States and of democratic civilization, the study of American government and world geography, and of at least one non-Western society in depth.

2. A reordering of the curriculum around a core of history and geography—with history providing the perspective for considered judgment and geography confronting students with the hard realities that shape so many political, economic, and social decisions. Around this core of history and geography, students should be introduced to the added perspectives offered by economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and political science.

3. More history, chronologically taught and taught in ways that capture the imagination of students. Historical biography, colorful historical narrative, and debate over the central ideas that have brought us here are all appealing to students. And we recommend that a central theme in the study of history be the dramatic struggles of people around the globe and across the centuries to win, preserve, and extend their freedom.

4. More attention to world studies, especially to the realistic and unsentimental study of other nations—both democratic and nondemocratic. Comparative study of politics, ideology, economics, and culture, and especially the efforts of citizens to improve their lot through protest and reform, offers students a healthy perspective on our own problems and a needed window on problems elsewhere.

5. A broader, deeper learning in the humanities, particularly in literature, ideas, and biography, so that students may encounter and comprehend the values upon which democracy depends. Through such study, moral education—not religious education and not neutral

values clarification—can be restored to high standing in our schools.

We understand that such a major reform of the curriculum will require more effective textbooks and auxiliary materials, aimed less at "coverage" than at comprehension of what is most worth learning. It will require continuing collaboration between faculty members from the schools and universities, where both work together as equals to clarify what is most worth teaching in their subjects and to devise ways to convey the material to diverse clienteles. And it requires new approaches to teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, to help teachers present the revamped and strengthened curriculum.

Our proposal asks for great intensity of teaching effort. Students will not reach genuine understanding of ideas, events, and institutions through rote learning from texts, classroom lecture, and recitation followed by short-answer quizzes. We ask for active learning on the part of students—ample time for class discussions, for coaching, for frequent seminars to explore ideas, and for regular writing assignments.

We know that teachers would like nothing better than to work in this way. We also know that they cannot be expected to do so when they are responsible for 150 or more students, coming at them in a kaleidoscopic, five-times-fifty-minute daily lockstep, frequently requiring three or four different preparations. We thus ally ourselves with recent calls to dramatically restructure education. Over time, we must sharply alter the management, the schedules, and the staffing patterns of our schools to afford teachers more authority, a wider latitude of methods and materials, more time to devote to the intellectual lives of fewer students, and more time to devote to their own intellectual growth.

As citizens of a democratic republic, we are part of the noblest political effort in history.



We understand that the dramatic changes we call for—in curriculum and structure—will not come easily. We know also that these changes can be made, and must be.

As citizens of a democratic republic, we are part of the noblest political effort in history. Our children must learn, and we must teach them, the knowledge, values, and habits that will best protect and extend this precious inheritance. Today we ask our schools to make a greater contribution to that effort and we ask all Americans to help them do it. □

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DEMOCRACY'S UNTOLD STORY

How World History Textbooks Shortchange Our Students



BY PAUL GAGNON

Do social studies textbooks give students the knowledge and perspective they need to understand the development of political democracy and to appreciate its worth? To answer this question, the Education for Democracy project asked Professor Paul Gagnon to review the most popular world history, American history, and government textbooks used at the secondary level.

The first part of that study — the review of five world history texts — is now complete. In his lengthy report, which will be released in full later this summer, Mr. Gagnon concludes that, while each of the books "has real strengths," overall they "leave the story of democracy largely untold. Its ideas and principles are left unclear, incomplete. Its origins, adventures, needs, and significance are nowhere systematically presented. Relying on such books alone, teachers cannot teach, and students cannot grasp, the compelling story of peoples' struggles for freedom, self-government, and justice on earth."

In detailing what is missing from these texts, Mr. Gagnon provides an outline of what a richer, fuller presentation would be. The result is not merely a textbook study that will help teachers and others select one text over another — although it will do that. It is a

"short course" on the history of democracy that pulls from the narrative of each period — from ancient Greece to our own time — the lessons vital for democratic citizens. It is packed with ideas that teachers can draw on in constructing lessons and in adapting texts and materials to their own teaching approaches. It is also a valuable resource for teachers who want to prevail upon local and state authorities to strengthen curricular guidelines in this area.

We present below excerpts from the introduction to Mr. Gagnon's study and from two chapters that concern themselves with critical periods in democracy's development: ancient Greece and the American and French revolutions.

—Editor

THIS BOOK is for my fellow teachers, and for students who will become teachers, of history and social studies. It assumes that we agree about three things. First, that teaching about democracy and its adventures is one of the most important of our tasks. Second, that it is difficult to do it well. And third, that one of many obstacles to doing it well is the weakness of our textbooks.

I hope that these pages will help teachers to evaluate

textbooks for themselves and to take an active part in choosing books for their own schools. I hope they will find here useful suggestions for making up syllabi and lessons, for adapting textbooks and materials to their own teaching goals in their own ways. This book is also for others who play a part in the education of citizens: publishers, text authors, state and local school board members, principals and supervisors, college faculty members who prepare future teachers, parents, and students, too. All of us have a stake in the outcome of debates now raging over the quality, and equality, of American education in general and of education for citizenship in particular.

This evaluation of five much-adopted textbooks in world history is not intended as a full review, either of the texts' style or of their scholarship, but as a response to a single question: What do the texts contribute to a student's knowledge of political democracy and to his or her ability to judge it critically, fairly, and accurately?

Do the texts convey clearly the essential ideas and values that underlie democracy? Are the origins and evolution of its basic institutions adequately explained? Are the contrasts between free and unfree governments set forth? Is the story of democracy's evolution made clear? Its present condition in the world? Will students find the facts and explanations needed to comprehend those forces that have nourished democracy? Those that have opposed and frustrated it? On the other hand, are the sources, ideas, and institutions of authoritarian and totalitarian societies, past and present, equally clear? Is the coverage honest and balanced? Are all societies, past and present, put into reasonable perspective, and all — including our own — judged by consistent standards? Are the economic, social, military, religious, cultural, and moral forces that have worked for and against democracy shown in clear relief? And finally, are major themes and questions set forth, and the relevant facts, ideas, and explanations offered in ways likely to engage the student and to facilitate the work of the teacher?

THE CHOICE OF TOPICS

If a text is to adequately answer these questions — if it is to explain the evolution of democracy on earth — what topics must it cover? The topics I have chosen center on the history of Western civilization. Why? Because the ideas and history of democracy, and the vision of democracy, are not intelligible without a prior grasp of the life and ideas of Greece and Rome, Judaism and Christianity, Islam and Christendom in the Middle Ages, feudalism, the Renaissance and the Reformation,

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absolutism, the English Revolution, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the comparative experiences of Europe and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries.

But while the topics center upon the history of Western civilization, they do not plead for Western ways. Nor are they a parade of "treasured heritages" — that was the error of certain courses in the past. The focus is on the West not because it is inherently better than other civilizations but because it has produced liberal democracy and many of the moral values that sustain it. This is not to say that no other civilization was capable of doing so, but it was in fact the West that did it, and we need to know how. And it was also the West and not another civilization that produced from within itself the deadliest enemies of democracy, Bolshevism and Nazism, and we need to know why. We focus on the West because it has fostered unprecedented prosperity and individual liberty that we must sustain, and also because it has generated violence, social oppression and exploitation, cultural and moral degradation that we must confront. In short, the object is to place us in our own reality, the only ground from which we can hope to make sense of ourselves, of others, and of the world.

What of non-Western history and cultures? Does a focus on Western civilization not leave out much of the past for Native Americans, Afro-Americans, and Asian-Americans? The first response is that a well-ordered, junk-free, 12-year curriculum would have plenty of room for the study of non-Western cultures — and securing such a curriculum is a need of the first order and a priority of the Education for Democracy project. It is inarguable that the study of Western civilization is by itself seriously insufficient, given the diversity of our own people and the precarious interdependence of the world community.

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The second, more immediate, response arises from the nature and needs of any society. Whether by past force or recent choice, the people of non-Western origins living in this country are now part of a community whose ideas and institutions, for good and ill, grow out of the Western experience. Whether they seek to enjoy and enrich the society, or to exploit or even overthrow it, all citizens need to know much more about it than

most do now. And there is little hope that mainstream Americans can come to sympathetic understanding of strangers in their midst, or of foreign lands and cultures, without first facing up to the historical record of the best and worst in themselves.

Now, what of the texts? It must be said that each one has real strengths, with explanations of important points that testify to the expertise and good judgment of the authors and of their devotion to the task at hand. But to describe in detail what each text does well would take far more than the space available here.

It will also be evident that most complaints about these texts will not concern errors of commission. Rather, their weakness lies in lost opportunities, in the omission of points or explanations that could have strengthened and clarified those central themes that are vital to political sophistication — points which, for the most part, the authors themselves consider to be important, if we are to judge by their own review questions and exercises.

These omissions are not for lack of space, which could have been made by refusing to “mention” legions of trivial facts. Except in particular cases cited below, the omissions result from failures to select, and to explain in the pages available, the most important facts and ideas about the subject being treated. In turn, these failures arise from the authors’ neglect of major themes or “great questions” around which to organize their materials. The results are curious — and frustrating to both teachers and students. The authors, perfectly adept at finding themes and questions, find all too many of them: Reluctant to leave any out, they bunch them all into end-of-chapter reviews instead of choosing a few beforehand as guides to order their text material. So teachers and students repeatedly confront questions of significance at the end of chapters that contain little of the information needed to answer them, as though “mentioning” the questions were enough.

The list of topics I’ve chosen to emphasize carries no claim to completeness, even for the study of democracy. And as any teacher will see, it is not a prescription for world history. It leaves out a good number of vital subjects, even for the study of Western history. It

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assumes that the teacher will wish to pursue one or more additional organizing themes suitable to the course.

THE LEGACY OF THE GREEKS

The birth of democracy took place in Greece, and that is where we begin.

How have people been governed, and how should they be? Each text has something to say about Athenian democracy as a great contribution to Western civilization, about the contrast between direct and representative democracy, and about the severe limits on Athenian citizenship. Their narratives of reform and development from Solon through Pericles are generally clear. But Greek ideas about how people ought to be governed — ideas that have been more influential in the world than the example of Athenian democracy in practice — are not to be found. Rather, they are “mentioned” but neither described nor explained.

The textbook by Kownslar may serve as a first example. Plato is described only as a “famous pupil of Socrates who wrote about the philosophical problems that people have faced for centuries,” including “what kind of government would produce the most good.” But all we read of *The Republic* is that scholars “had the most knowledge and intelligence” and so they would rule. But why? Missing is Plato’s view of human nature, his notion that virtuous behavior depended upon the rarest qualities of intellect. Students are left with a fact to memorize, but nothing to discuss — or to compare with Aristotle, who appears next. The full passage on Aristotle and politics is worth quoting as an example of description without explanation:

He classified governments, for example, according to whether they were headed by one man, by a few men, or by many men, and showed how there were good and bad governments.

Here the authors lose the chance to prepare the students’ political vocabulary. They leave out Aristotle’s famous six forms of government: kingship, aristocracy, and polity — “good” forms because they are exercised

THE TEXTBOOKS REVIEWED

The Gagnon study reviews five of the most frequently adopted high school-level world history textbooks:

■ Scott-Foresman’s *History and Life: The World and its People*, by Walter T. Wallbank, et al. (1982);

■ Holt, Rinehart & Winston’s *People and Our World: A Study of World History*, by Allan O. Kownslar and Terry L. Smart (1981);

■ Prentice-Hall’s *World History: Patterns of World Civilization*, by Burton F. Beers (1983);

■ Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich’s *People and Nations: A World History*, by Anatole G. Mazour, John Peoples and Theodore K. Rabb (1983);

■ Ginn’s *Our Common Heritage: A World History*, by Daniel Roselle (1984).

in the common interest of all the people; tyranny, oligarchy, and “democracy” (rule by the mob) — “bad” forms that occur when rulers govern in their own selfish interests. Without these basic terms, there is nothing even to memorize.

So Kownslar cannot thereafter name Aristotle’s best kind of government, a self-governing polity — what we call democracy — but only confuse the student by suggesting that Aristotle believed “a large middle class” would make for a healthy republic. What are 20th century American students to make of that? Aristotle’s view of human nature — that virtuous behavior most likely arose from secure but modest economic circumstances, small property, farms, businesses, and crafts — is left out. It was not the presence of what we would call today “a large middle class” that would make the polity work, but the absence of extreme wealth on the one hand and large numbers of the very poor on the other, since neither condition bred patient, moderate, unselfish behavior in public affairs.

Students of 9th or 10th grade standing can perfectly well grasp the contrasting notions of Plato and Aristotle at this level and argue them well beyond the class time available, especially if they have read well-chosen excerpts from *The Republic* and *Politics*. Do you behave nicely because you are wise, or because you feel secure? Or are there other possibilities and combinations? Whence decent public conduct and what does that mean for forms of government under different circumstances? It is a continuing theme of central importance, and none of the texts seizes the chance to launch it here, including Mazour, which raises the question in its own introduction. On Aristotle’s political ideas it says only that he “studied the political organization of 150 city-states and put down his conclusions in a book called *Politics*.” “What of it?” we can hear the students ask.

Students of 9th or 10th grade standing can perfectly well grasp the contrasting notions of Plato and Aristotle at this level and argue them well beyond the class time available.

The remaining three texts take the same fragmented approach. Wallbank tells us that Plato’s best-known work is *The Republic*, which “describes an imaginary land in which each person does the work that suits that individual best” and philosophers rule “in the interests of all.” On Aristotle, the following is said:

In his *Politics*, Aristotle wrote about the good and bad features of different kinds of government: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Unlike Plato, he did not describe

an imaginary state, nor did he find a single ideal system. *Politics* serves to point out an important difference between Plato and Aristotle. Plato often appears to deal only with abstract ideas. Aristotle seems more down-to-earth.

Beers notes only that Plato explained his concept of the ideal state in *The Republic*, where he said “the ruler of such a state should be a philosopher-king.” On Aristotle, Beers brushes against the idea of virtue and moral behavior as a “balance between extremes,” adding that he praised “the virtue of self-control and self-reliance.” What kind of society or government might nurture these qualities is left unsaid. The passage closes in the most general terms:

His writings include works on logic, politics, philosophy, biology, botany, and the arts. In each of these fields, Aristotle’s ideas have remained influential.

Roselle, finally, has Plato say that only “the wisest men and women should rule the people.” Aristotle is described as “interested” in many fields, politics among them. Of what he said, we get only a hint: “people should learn to live with each other” and anyone “who is unable to live in society or who has no need to do so must be either a beast or a god.”

A PART FROM failing to introduce here—or, for the most part, anywhere else—the fundamental debates among political ideas and their roots in ideas about human nature, the text authors also lose the chance to dramatize the common humanity of figures like Plato and Aristotle. Nothing is said of what their city of Athens was undergoing at the moment of their struggles to clarify their own ideas of governance, or of why they should distrust democracy as practiced by their fellow citizens.

As noted above, the texts do somewhat better at narrative history. Each recites the evolution from monarchy to democracy in Athens, noting the social and economic forces at work. Each draws the contrast to Sparta. Each is clear on the nature of direct democracy and on its limitations. Women, slaves, and foreigners were excluded. In this regard, the authors resist the temptation to judge Athens by present standards and praise Greek willingness to consult even a substantial minority of the people as an extraordinary step.

Mazour applauds the Greeks as “the first people to experiment successfully with the idea that citizens might govern themselves,” and Roselle calls them the first to “discard the idea that one person or a few persons had the right to rule over all the people.” Wallbank adds that citizens, though a minority, were equal before the law, another reason for calling Athens a model for democracy.

Beers opens the first of two chapters on Greece, and overall the best account, with excerpts from Pericles’ funeral oration, noting that it was recreated by Thucydides:

Our system of government is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law. When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership in a particular class but the actual ability which the man possesses.

Both texts stress the notion that public service was an expected, honorable duty for worthy Greeks to perform and that this, too, was a legacy to the Western world.

Although all the texts suggest in one way or another that the quality of public life did not in actuality live up to Greek statements of ideals, they do not make explicit the terrible failure of Athenian democracy to survive the temptations that accompany victory, power, and wealth.

It is not too much to say that Athenian democracy's failure to resist the lure of empire led to its own destruction. But the texts miss the chance to suggest it.

That Athens was a democracy at home and imperialist abroad is noted, but not made graphic. Each book recited the fall of Athens from her peak of power and prestige at the end of the Persian Wars (c. 479 B.C., the battle of Plataea) to her total, humiliating defeat at the hands of Sparta in 404 B.C. Most of the texts say that the Athenians took advantage of their former allies, and Kownslar remarks that Pericles was a democrat at home yet "very aggressive" abroad. But the degree of arrogance and cruelty toward weaker states is not presented, nor is the rising hubris that was to destroy Athens. No authors describe how demagogues sought public favor—and undermined the democratic system—by their reckless attacks on other Greeks, culminating in the expedition to Syracuse that opened the way to Sparta's victory.

Mazour says only, as Thucydides remarked, that both Athens and Sparta were "full of young men whose inexperience made them eager to take up arms." But Thucydides' great lesson on the ravages of pride is not invoked (as George C. Marshall invoked it as his warning to us shortly after the great American victories of 1945).

In vain had Pericles warned before his death against rushing into action before consequences could be carefully considered. He himself had had to bend before a prideful public opinion. The drama of democracy's birth and some of democracy's vulnerabilities could not be more compelling. It is not too much to say that Athenian democracy's failure to resist the lure of empire led to its own destruction. But the texts miss the chance to suggest it.

FINALLY, THE texts offer material upon which to build a lesson on the relations among education, character, and citizenship. Scattered remarks on Greek education, Greek drama, philosophy, and the Classical tradition appear in all the texts. . . . From these bits and pieces, teachers may well suggest that, for many Greeks,

it was axiomatic that good moral character and good citizenship arose from a healthy well-roundedness. Men who had developed all of their human possibilities to the limit — physical, aesthetic, civic, intellectual — would win dignity, would be at peace with themselves and thereby with others. They would be proud but not arrogant, unafraid, unenvious, self-disciplined, ruled by a code of personal honor and civic duty. This, at least, was the ideal and as such was much admired and sought after by educators ever afterward. It was the civic side of Classicism so much respected by 18th century thinkers and politicians, including the American founders.

At quite another level, the texts' failure to consider the broader meaning of Classicism is a chance lost to introduce students to the great debate with Romanticism. Are music, painting, literature, or dress and public behavior better served by reason or by emotion, by restraint or by exuberance, by form and balance and convention or by spontaneity, fantasy and free subjective innovation? What student would have no opinion on these choices — or could not be brought to appreciate various choices according to various aspects of life? And whatever is said may be usefully related to matters of historical substance, from the Greeks onward, for in both politics and war the rival modes of Classical and Romantic heroism have had striking consequences.

In sum, however, the main failing of these texts is to leave out any coherent account of Greek political ideas: Plato's faith in intellect, reason, and education; Aristotle's vision of democratic polity and its need for public moderation, depending in turn upon a healthy economic and social balance in the community; and their differing views of human nature and of what brings out the best in people. And a good text would also explain how these men's own experiences of public life could have affected their political ideas, most particularly the failure of Athenian democracy to survive its demagogues and the temptations of empire.

THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH REVOLUTIONS

What does one expect of world history textbooks as they relate the American and French revolutions? A very great deal, for the two decades between 1775 and 1795 mark the dawn of contemporary history not only for the West but for the whole world. They launched a triple revolution of expectations that is still working itself out, and its unflagging forces are at the source of most current world unrest. The Americans and the French taught the peoples of the world that three great transformations were not only possible, but right and inevitable. The first was national revolution: the fulfillment of each people's right to their own national independence, their place of equality and dignity among nations. The second was political revolution, the attainment of free democratic self-government and equality of civic rights. And the third was economic and social revolution, the right of all people in every class to economic justice and social decency. Nothing since has been able to shut off the drive of most people on earth to attain these ends. The complicated story of how different peoples have pursued them, of which of the three ends different factions and nations have put first, and at the expense of which others, is the stuff of world history since 1800.

The first thing to expect from history books, then, is a clear view of the significance of the events in America and France in the last quarter of the 18th century. A second is a sensibly complicated picture of the causes for each revolution, the ideas and conditions that prepared a "revolutionary situation." A third requirement is that the texts present and explain, or at least offer the facts necessary to explain, the great differences between the two revolutions. And finally, some analysis of what role each revolution played in the long-term shaping of democratic societies and institutions is in order.

TO TAKE the last first, it is obvious that neither the Americans nor the French achieved a finally settled constitutional system until much later. While we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Constitution, we cannot forget that it was not until 1865, after a civil war bloodier than all the French upheavals put together, that Americans were brought to agree on the meaning of their federal system. From 1775, that adds up to 90 years. In France, a stable constitutional regime was achieved only in 1875, 86 years after the French Revolution. The English Revolution had run from 1603 to 1689, another period of 86 years. When we remember that all these revolutions occurred in relatively prosperous, largely secure societies of substantial political and administrative experience and sophistication, with large, confident middle and lower-middle classes, and widespread ownership of property, the present plight of newly formed nations in underdeveloped areas of the world is put in better perspective.

In neither text is there a word of substance on the Constitution or the Bill of Rights—and there is little on the Revolution's significance for the spread of democracy around Europe.

To help students see the more particular contributions of the American and French revolutions to liberal democracy, texts should present the main features of the basic documents: the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and, in France, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. And beyond the words and principles, what is needed is a candid treatment of the central institutions set up to give them meaning, both those that did not work—like the American confederation or the constitutional monarchies of the French—and those that did.

In the short run, the United States appeared to have achieved a settled constitutional system not long after the victory over the armies of George III. In the short run, the French Revolution plunged into the Reign of

Terror and mass purges, followed by political chaos ended only by Napoleon's dictatorship. Only in 1815 was a moderate compromise achieved between royal and popular power, reflecting the first such compromise in 1791. And three more revolutions were to come before the final republican compromise of 1875. What made the difference? The answers go far to illustrate some of the conditions favorable to the evolution of liberal democracy and conditions hostile to it.

The advantages of the United States were several, and the textbooks ought to make them clear. Ours was a revolution against outside authority, not against compatriots (although the Tories, or American loyalists, suffered more than is generally admitted in our history books). Ours was relatively free of class hatred; we had suffered no privileged aristocracy or clergy; relations between rich and poor, in town and country, were less strained. We enjoyed the advantages of great distance from Britain and of massive, probably decisive, aid from the French. Their Revolution was attacked by several foreign powers across land borders. Our political leaders and legislators had, for the most part, long experience in the daily workings of representative government. Theirs had very little. Religious issues were minor in America. In France the question of the church tore the nation, including the political moderates of the Center, in half. Economic conditions, too, were worse in France. Depression, unemployment, inflation, food shortages, and fear of famine all made the task of peaceful political settlement very much harder. Regional and provincial rivalries were more divisive in France than the American colonies' well-known suspicions and hesitations. All of these factors, those favorable and those hostile, are still active in much of the world where democracy struggles to be born and survive. Our textbooks should make them clear, as they should also deal clearly with the various causes for each revolution.

WHAT DO we find? First of all, that some accounts are very brief, hardly worthy of the two greatest dramas in the history of liberal democracy. Kownslar's Chapter 19, "The American Revolution," is four pages long; Wallbank has less than two pages of print on the American Revolution. In neither is there a word of substance on the Constitution or the Bill of Rights—and there is little on the Revolution's significance for the spread of democracy around Europe.

Both texts are composed apparently on the assumption that any substantive American history belongs in another course. But what sort of perspective on world history can students achieve when America's first and greatest moment of influence on the world is left aside? And how much understanding of liberal democracy is possible when its central ideas, documents, and institutions are barely touched upon, and nothing is said about the character, education, ideas, and works of its leaders?

Kownslar's Chapter 20, "The French Revolution and Napoleon," is 15 pages long, with greater detail, but limited to a chronological recital fit only to memorize. In neither chapter are the ideas of the Enlightenment mentioned. The causes of the French Revolution are presented at the most elementary level. The role, ideas, and interests of the middle classes are ignored, as is the

The forces and conditions making it impossible for the moderates to keep control are not explained, nor is the central problem of all revolutions: the struggle among factions to command the armed forces in the capital.

cost to France of her aid to the American colonies. The complexities of the revolutionary situation — which alone could make it interesting to students — are not to be found.

The forces and conditions making it impossible for the moderates to keep control are not explained, nor is the central problem of all revolutions: the struggle among factions to command the armed forces in the capital, from Paris to Petrograd to Havana to Manila. It is not mentioned that Robespierre and the Terrorists justified their acts by the ideas of Rousseau. But Kownslar does say, rightly, that the Reign of Terror was doomed once the French felt safe from invasion. Since the growing role of the army is not clear, the rise of Napoleon seems to be an accident of genius. The textbook says nothing about the mechanisms of Napoleon's dictatorship: secret police; night arrests; political murder; censorship of mail, press, theater, and literature; control of school texts and church sermons; the denial of equal trial to workers. Instead, the *Code Napoleon* is said to have guaranteed "that all citizens were equal before the law."

In this connection, Kownslar touches upon an important point, though obliquely, by saying that Napoleon "kept the major reforms won by the French Revolution, but he found new ways to use them in establishing his personal dictatorship." The point is that Napoleon was the very first of the modern dictators, precisely because he used the vocabulary and preserved the facade of liberal democracy — elections, referenda, assemblies and constitutions — as a screen for authoritarianism. The greater point is that the American and French revolutions transformed the world's political vocabulary. Afterward, most authorities felt the need to pretend that they respected liberty, equality, and self-government, to use the words of enlightened liberals while pursuing opposite goals. Their hypocrisy has ever since been the homage that political vice pays to democratic virtue. Napoleon was the first in a long line, still thriving.

On the French revolutions, Wallbank is even briefer than Kownslar, devoting only five pages to them, less than is given to a single Chinese dynasty or to the arts and social sciences of the 19th century. No notice is taken of the Enlightenment, not a word of substance is given on the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution or the Bill of Rights, and the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man* is not even mentioned (in Kownslar, it is briefly excerpted).

Still, Wallbank improves on Kownslar's account of

cause by better explaining sources of the government's debt (though leaving out the cost of aid to America). But the other causes are too briefly put to be intelligible, and the role of the middle classes throughout the Revolution is left out, as is any analysis of the many conditions hostile to moderation. Wallbank's account of Napoleon, although too brief to interest students, is better balanced and less misleading than that of Kownslar. In sum, both of these texts fail to put either of the two upheavals in perspective and fail to draw out major lessons critical to anybody's understanding of democracy's adventures.

EACH OF the three other texts is an improvement, with Roselle offering somewhat less than Mazour and Beers. Roselle has only three pages on the American Revolution but is clearer on the issues between the colonists and the British, on the advantages of each side of the war, and on the importance of French aid. But no critical document is included and the impact of the American Revolution is reduced to two points: "It weakened the prestige of monarchical governments" and "It influenced France, a country moving toward revolution." Mazour's account includes the major substantive points of the Declaration of Independence and its relation to Locke and Rousseau, the *Articles of Confederation* and its weakness, and a summary of the Constitution (though not of the Bill of Rights).

Beers' account of the American Revolution is slightly briefer and much less explicit on its larger-world significance than Mazour's. Otherwise, they are much alike. Beers has the slight advantage of adding a short paragraph on the Bill of Rights.

On the French Revolution, Roselle has the advantage of placing the pages on the Enlightenment directly before those on the French Revolution in Chapter 21, "The French Revolution and Napoleon Shake Europe," covering 16 or so printed pages. The causes of the revolution are markedly clearer and more complete, the impact of the Enlightenment and of the American revolution is included, and the central role of the middle class is explained.

The rise, character, and reforms of Napoleon are more adequately treated, but there is very little on his dictatorship. Roselle does provide, finally, a somewhat clearer summary of the impact of revolution and Napoleon on France and the rest of the world, in stirring demands for democracy and national sovereignty. And the fuller narrative affords the teacher more material on which to base discussion.

Mazour's Chapter 17, "Revolution Changed the Course of Western Civilization," covers 21 pages and comes close to fulfilling the promise of its title. The introductory sentences begin it well:

The impact of the American and French revolutions was so great that they continued to inspire people in later generations, even to our own time. The American and French revolutions were the beginning of a revolutionary tradition. . . . The ideas of revolution — that all people have rights that no one can take from them and that the powers of government belong to the people — swept the Western world.

On the causes of the French Revolution, Mazour improves upon Roselle in coverage and in clarifying the
(Continued on page 46)

THE ASIAN ADVANTAGE: THE CASE OF MATHEMATICS

BY HAROLD W. STEVENSON

THE AMERICAN public has been deluged recently with newspaper and magazine articles describing the need to improve mathematics and science education in the United States. As a result, citizens and legislators alike are beginning to acknowledge the importance of mathematics and science for ensuring continued American leadership in world technology. Funds have been appropriated for research and training programs to improve mathematics and science education. The emphasis throughout these discussions, however, has been placed on the high school and college years. There is ample evidence that insufficient attention is being directed to improvement of elementary school training.

Poor performance of American children compared to their peers in other countries does not suddenly appear during the high school years; it is evident as early as kindergarten. In mathematics, for example, Japanese five-year-olds greatly outperform their American peers.

Harold W. Stevenson is professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His most recent book, of which he is the editor, is Child Development and Education in Japan (1986: Freeman). The research referred to in this article has been conducted over the past six years and has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the William T. Grant Foundation. The work has been done in collaboration with many individuals, including Shin-ying Lee, James Stigler, Liu Fan, Chen-chin Hsu, Lian Wen Mao, and Seiro Kitamura.

After kindergarten, the difference becomes even more obvious. Japanese children maintain their superior status throughout elementary school, while American children's scores show a relative decline. The picture is equally distressing when comparing children in the U.S. with Chinese children in Taiwan. Although Chinese five-year-olds perform at about the same level in mathematics as American five-year-olds, they improve in their relative status throughout the elementary school years. The consequence of these disparities is evident in a comparison of the scores of fifth graders attending a representative sample of 20 schools in the Chicago metropolitan area with children attending a total of 31 schools in Taipei (Taiwan), Sendai (Japan), and Beijing (People's Republic of China). Fifth graders in only one of the Chicago schools produced average scores as high as the *lowest* average score of fifth-grade classrooms in the representative Asian schools.

These data can be viewed in another way. The samples we tested consisted of approximately 3,500 first graders and 3,500 fifth graders, equally divided among the schools in the four cities. Among the students in the top fifth percentile at grade one across all four cities, there were only three American children. Over 40 would have been expected if children in each city had performed equally well. The top fifth percentile of fifth graders contained only two American children. Among the worst students in mathematics, those in the bottom fifth percentile, there were 163 American children at grade one and 181 at grade five. It should be pointed out that these conclusions are not restricted to Chicago, for the results parallel those of a previous study in which we compared first and fifth graders in the Minneapolis met-

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ropolitan area — which has a more middle-class school population than Chicago — with their counterparts in Sendai and Taipei. For example, only one Minneapolis fifth grader was among the 100 top scorers from these three cities in a test of mathematics achievement. In both of these studies, care was taken to construct tests based on the textbooks actually used by the children and to obtain representative samples of children in each of the cities visited.

Data such as these raise serious questions about our national priorities. Is it appropriate to give our main emphasis to improving mathematics training at the upper grades? Remediation is an expensive route to improvement. Would not prevention be preferable, by providing better training earlier in the children's schooling? How can parents be drawn into the picture? Poor performance on a test of elementary mathematical concepts given shortly after children enter kindergarten must reflect the effects of both home and school training. What do Japanese and Chinese parents and teachers provide their children that results in such outstanding performance?

We have sought to answer these questions by interviewing children in kindergarten, first grade and fifth grade, as well as their mothers and their teachers, about their satisfactions, expectations, and beliefs and about the children's lives at home and at school. We have interviewed hundreds of individuals in Chicago, Minneapolis, Sendai, Taipei, and Beijing. (We would have liked to have included more cities and to have interviewed fathers, but this was not feasible in terms of available time and funds). The children in each city were given achievement and intelligence tests, and extensive observations were made of the daily conduct of their classrooms. The data cited in this article are based on these studies.

FIRST, THE MYTHS

American conceptions of Asia are often incorrect. There are few comparative studies, and the information they contain is often misinterpreted. It is important, therefore, to begin by clarifying some of these misconceptions.

Are Asians More Intelligent than Americans?

The cover story of a national magazine a few years ago asked whether the Asian advantage in educational achievement and industrial development was not due to the simple fact that Asians are smarter than Americans

Japanese children may learn to play the violin early, but they receive little early instruction in mathematics.

(and presumably other Westerners). Confusion between tests of achievement and tests of intelligence and the results of a study reported by Irish psychologist Richard Lynn led many persons to reach an affirmative answer. In fact, while Japanese and Chinese children lead American children in academic achievement, there is no evidence that they are brighter. What Lynn found was that when the responses of Japanese children on a commonly used test of intelligence were scored on the basis of American norms, the average IQ of the Japanese children was significantly above the American average. This would have been interesting information if it were not for the fact that the Japanese data were derived from samples of urban children selected without consideration of their socioeconomic status, while the American norms were based on a truly representative sample of urban and rural children of all socioeconomic levels. We can disregard this study and other studies in which insufficient attention has been paid to critical issues in sampling.

Moreover, when comparable samples have been used, no difference in intellectual functioning has been found. In one of our studies, we tested large samples of elementary school children on 10 tasks of the types found in intelligence tests. American children actually obtained higher scores than Chinese and Japanese children in kindergarten; by the fifth grade the overall scores of the three groups of children were equivalent.

Do Asian Children Get an Earlier Start?

The assumption is sometimes made that higher achievement among Chinese and Japanese children is due to their receiving formal instruction earlier than American children. This is not the case. Japanese children may learn to play the violin early, but they receive little early instruction in mathematics. In over 300 hours of observation in kindergartens in Taipei, Sendai, and Minneapolis, we found that the greatest percentage of time spent in direct teaching and structured experiences occurred in the American classrooms. American kindergarten teachers spent 90% of their classroom time in such activities, while the Chinese teachers spent only 61% and the Japanese teachers, 65%. Most of the rest of the time was spent in free play and informal types of learning. These approaches to kindergarten education fit the goals of the American and Asian mothers. When asked what they expected their children to acquire during kindergarten, 92% of the Japanese mothers, and only 55% of the American mothers, mentioned social experience. On the other hand, only 3% of the Japanese mothers, and 27% of the American mothers, mentioned educational and cognitive goals. The expressed expectations of Chinese mothers fell between those of their Japanese and American counterparts.

The kindergarten observations are also in line with what the mothers told us about their efforts to teach their kindergarten children. Among American mothers, 88% said they had taught their child the alphabet at home. Only 33% of the Chinese mothers said they had taught their children the symbols used to denote the sounds of Chinese characters, and 31% of the Japanese mothers said they had taught their children the symbols for Japanese syllables. The percentages of mothers

teaching numbers at home were very similar: 90% of the American mothers, 64% of the Chinese mothers, and 36% of the Japanese mothers said they had attempted to teach their children numbers.

Thus, the superiority of Asian children in mathematics would not appear to result from early formal instruction. If anything, our data point to the possibility that young children may benefit more from informal learning situations than from more direct forms of teaching.

The suicide rate of youth in Japan has declined, so that the current rate is approximately the same in both Japan and the United States.

Are After-School Classes a Factor?

Another popular explanation of the Asian advantages is that Chinese and Japanese children excel in academic subjects because they attend after-school classes in *bux-iban* in Taiwan and in *juku* in Japan. Much has been written about the importance of *juku*. What has not been emphasized, however, is that the *juku*'s primary function is to prepare older students for entrance examinations to high schools and universities, not to assist young children in their academic work. *Juku* devoted to academic subjects play little significant role in the education of young children. Attendance during the first six grades is not high and varies with the population of the city in which the child lives. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, attendance at *juku* during the elementary school years comprises around 5% of sixth graders in towns with populations under 8,000 and around 35% of sixth graders in cities with populations larger than 100,000.

The most popular subjects for elementary school children attending *juku*? Art, music, dancing, and calligraphy. According to our data, only 5% of the Japanese fifth graders were enrolled in after-school mathematics classes, compared to 3% of the American and 8% of the Chinese fifth graders.

The Influence of the Kyoiku Mama

Another myth is that of the *kyoiku mama*, the Japanese "educational mom." The maternal image often depicted in Western publications is that of a pushy, demanding, home-bound tutor. It is more appropriate to describe the Japanese mother as someone who seeks to provide a nurturant and protected atmosphere for learning. She is ready to assist her child in doing homework if she can, but her major goals are to promote the child's interest and involvement in school and to make sure that the child is progressing appropriately.

In Japanese society it is primarily mothers, and in Chinese society it is all members of the family, who strive to motivate and aid children in their academic work. Through daily supervision of homework and expression of concern and support for their children's

academic activities, an environment is created in Chinese and Japanese homes that fosters educational achievement. At times, this means that children are relieved of all responsibilities for assisting in family activities. One of the Chinese mothers we interviewed, for example, said it would break her heart to have to assign her child chores. This, she explained, would take her child away from much-needed time for study.

But Is It All Rote Learning?

Many Westerners subscribe to the myth that Asian classrooms are characterized by group recitation and rote learning. Neither of these are valid descriptions of the lively interactions that occur. Teachers in Chinese and Japanese classrooms rarely rely on choral responding and group reading. In our observations, we found that less than 2% of the time was spent in choral responding in Japanese and American classrooms, and less than 10% in the Chinese classrooms. Group reading occurred less than 1% of the time in all three settings.

Rather than emphasizing rote learning in mathematics, Asian teachers utilize a variety of approaches that stress applications, problem solving, and abstract representations of problems. The consequences of these efforts is evident in the children's performance. Not only did we find that Chinese and Japanese children surpassed American children in tests of mathematical operations that have been described, but they also received significantly higher scores than American children in tests involving word problems, number concepts, graphs and tables, spatial relations, geometry, visualization, and estimation.

Does High Achievement Exact a Psychological Toll?

A final common misconception about Asian children is that their high achievement is accomplished at great psychological cost. The high suicide rate of youth in Japan is often pointed out as evidence. It is true that Japan's youth suicide rate was nearly three times that of the United States during the 1950s, a time when Japanese youth were presumably depressed about their country's future following its defeat in World War II. Since then, however, the suicide rate in Japan has declined, so that the current rate is approximately the same in both Japan and the United States.

Further, we have failed to discover any signs of special tension in the course of our observations and interviews. Chinese, Japanese, and American elementary school children alike appear to be cheerful, enthusiastic, vigorous, and responsive. Although some of these characteristics may be more vividly expressed in American classrooms, they are readily apparent to the observer who follows Chinese and Japanese children through their school day. In fact, when we initiated a discussion of children's tension patterns with our Chinese colleagues, we found that we were describing types of behavior that were unfamiliar to them. Hyperactivity, hair-twisting, lip-biting, and other indices of tension are rarely observed in Chinese and Japanese classrooms. Perhaps the picture changes in junior high school and high school, but the accomplishments of Asian children during elementary school do not seem to

If children believe they are already doing well—and if their parents agree with them—what is the purpose of studying harder?

be attained at any notable psychic cost.

We must search for other explanations of the Asian advantage in mathematics.

OUR GOOD OPINION OF OURSELVES

If children believe they are already doing well — and if their parents agree with them — what is the purpose of studying harder? Children who have unrealistically high self-evaluations may see little reason to study hard, and this may well be the case with American children. When asked to rate such characteristics as ability in mathematics, brightness, and scholastic performance, American students gave themselves the highest ratings, while Japanese students gave themselves the lowest. American children believed their parents and teachers were more satisfied with their performance and worried less about their own performance in school than did Chinese and Japanese children. When asked how well they would do in mathematics in high school, 58% of American fifth graders said they expected to be above average or among the best students. These percentages were much higher than those of their Chinese and Japanese peers, among whom only 26% and 29%, respectively, were this optimistic.

Perhaps these answers represent in part a tendency toward wishful thinking by American children and excessive modesty by the Asian children. But the evaluations made by the children's mothers followed a similar pattern.

Mothers were asked to rate their children on seven attributes, such as intelligence, attention, motivation, ability to learn, ability to remember, and ability to express themselves verbally. On only one scale — that of persistence — did American mothers fail to give their children higher average ratings than those given by the Chinese and Japanese mothers.

Not only did American mothers generally have the most favorable evaluations of their children, they also were the most satisfied with their child's current academic performance. More American than Japanese and Chinese children believed their mothers were satisfied, and the mothers' ratings were in line with this belief. As can be seen in the bar graph below, many more American mothers than Chinese and Japanese mothers were "very satisfied" with their children's performance. Mothers also were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the schools in educating their children. American mothers were very positive: 91% judged the schools as doing an "excellent" or "good" job. This was more than double the percentage of Chinese mothers (42%) and Japanese mothers (39%) who chose these categories.

Within each culture, the mothers' ratings were related

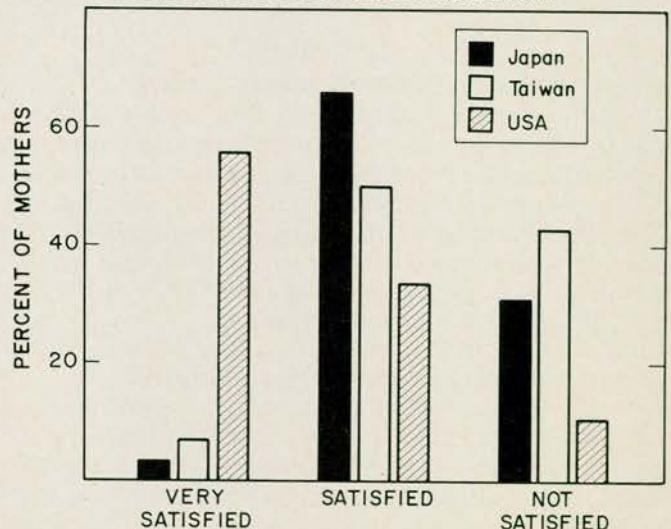
to their children's actual levels of achievement. In each case, the scores of children whose mothers were "very satisfied" differed from those of mothers who were "satisfied," and these in turn differed from those of mothers who were "not satisfied" with their children's achievement. But the levels of performance related to these levels of satisfaction differed greatly among the three cultural groups. On the average, American mothers said they were very satisfied when their children were at around the 70th percentile in achievement in mathematics and reading. Chinese and Japanese mothers who expressed such satisfaction had children whose average score was around the 84th percentile. American children whose mothers said they were not satisfied with their child's performance had an average percentile score of 16, while Chinese and Japanese children had only to be in approximately the 35th percentile for their mothers to be unhappy with their performance.

In summary, American children had to do less well than Chinese and Japanese children for their mothers to be satisfied and much worse before their mothers expressed dissatisfaction with their academic performance. Such high evaluations of ability and achievement by the American children and their mothers cannot be conducive to a child's diligent study.

DIFFICULTY OF CURRICULUM

Why should American children perceive themselves as being good at mathematics, when cross-cultural comparisons show that they perform relatively poorly? One obvious explanation is that the mathematics curriculum in the United States is less difficult than the curriculum in Japan and Taiwan. Children's ratings of how difficult they found mathematics support this interpretation. American children thought mathematics was easy: 58% at grade one and 40% at grade five thought it was "easy" or "very easy." Judgments by Japanese children, on the other hand, were more sober: only 32% at grade one and 30% at grade five thought mathematics was "easy" or "very easy." The opinions of Chinese children

MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



changed greatly between grades one and five; there was a decrease from 64% to 22% in the percentage who thought it was "easy" or "very easy."

These assessments have some basis in reality. We have analyzed the point at which various concepts and skills are introduced in mathematics textbooks used in Taipei, Sendai, and Minneapolis, and determined that Japanese textbooks are more difficult than Chinese or American textbooks. That is, although the Japanese and the American curricula contained approximately equal numbers of concepts and skills, they were introduced earlier in the Japanese curriculum. Japan was first in introducing (or was tied for first for) 68% of the common topics in the textbooks. Taiwan was first, or tied for first, 18% of the time, and the United States, 28% of the time. The earlier appearance of the materials in the Japanese textbooks gives the Japanese children a greater opportunity during the elementary school years to practice these skills and use these concepts than is possible for the American children.

TWO PHILOSOPHIES ON WORKING HARD

The dedication of students, parents, and teachers to children's schooling depends on the degree to which they believe that this devotion will yield important benefits to the children. Such a belief is closely related to theories of human behavior long espoused in Asian philosophies.

The malleability of human behavior has often been described in Chinese writings. Uniformity of human nature is assumed; differences arising among people are believed to be primarily a result of life experiences rather than an expression of innate differences among individuals. Emphasis is placed, therefore, on the virtue of effort as the avenue for improvement and accomplishment. A similar theme is found in Japanese philosophy, where individual differences in potential are de-emphasized and great importance is placed on the role of effort in modifying the course of human development. Effort and self-discipline are considered by Japanese to be essential bases for accomplishment. Lack of achievement, then, is attributed to the failure to work hard, rather than to a lack of ability or to personal or environmental obstacles.

The data we collected mirror these differences in the Asian and American philosophy about achievement. For example, mothers of kindergarteners were asked how far their child would go in school. After they answered this question they were asked what would determine if

There are stunning differences in the amount of time given to academic activities in Chinese, Japanese, and American classrooms.

the child would get that far. Half of the Japanese mothers, 27% of the Chinese mothers, but only 5% of the American mothers said that it depended upon how hard the child worked in school. American mothers were more likely to stress other factors, such as whether the family would have enough money. In our interviews with the children, we asked whether any student can be good in math if he or she works hard enough. Japanese fifth graders agreed with this statement; American fifth graders disagreed. Most Chinese students took a middle-ground position. On the other hand, for a statement about mathematics such as, "The tests you take can show how much or how little natural ability you have," American children showed the greatest degree of agreement.

Parents and children who believe that success depends on ability rather than effort are less likely to emphasize the importance of studying. And, in fact, materials and activities that might aid or support studying are not used with great frequency by American parents. For example, American parents are less likely to purchase extra workbooks for their children. Only 28% of the parents of American fifth graders, but 58% of the Japanese and 56% of the Chinese parents, bought their children extra workbooks in mathematics. We noted that in front of nearly every bookstore in Japan were colorful racks of the latest workbooks for children, organized by grade, semester, and area of study.

An extreme interpretation of this philosophy leads to the conclusion that children of high ability need not work hard to achieve, and that children of low ability will not achieve regardless of how hard they work. The remarkable success of Japanese and Chinese children in elementary school appears to be due in part to the renunciation of this view.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

There are stunning differences in the amount of time given to academic activities in Chinese, Japanese, and American classrooms. We can say this with confidence after analyzing the data obtained in over 1,200 hours of observations of classrooms in each of the cultures. The percentage of time devoted to academic activities was much less in the American fifth-grade classrooms: 64%, compared to 92% in the Chinese classrooms and 87% in the Japanese classrooms. Translated into hours, this means that American fifth graders were averaging 20 hours a week in academic activities, whereas Chinese and Japanese fifth graders spent 40 hours and 33 hours, respectively.

These statistics can be broken down further according to time spent on various academic subjects. American fifth graders spent only 3.4 hours a week in mathematics classes — much less than the 11.4 hours for Taipei students or the 7.6 hours for Sendai students. These large differences become even more extreme when the incidence of irrelevant activities, absences from school, and absences from the classroom — all of which were highest in the American classrooms — are taken into account.

Many educators have looked at the longer school day

(Continued on page 47)

ABILITY GROUPING AND ITS ALTERNATIVES: MUST WE TRACK?

BY ROBERT E. SLAVIN

I FELT good when I was with my (elementary) class, but when they went and separated us — that changed us. That changed our thinking, the way we thought about each other, and turned us into enemies toward each other — because they said I was dumb and they were smart.

When you first go to junior high school you do feel something inside — it's like an ego. You have been from elementary to junior high, you feel great inside. . . . You get this shirt that says Brown Junior High . . . and you are proud of that shirt. But then you go up there and the teacher says, "Well, so and so, you're in the basic section, you can't go with the other kids." The devil with the whole thing — you lose — something in you — like it goes out of you.¹

ONE OF the oldest and most emotional issues in education concerns the problems of grouping students for instruction. On one hand, we know that students differ in knowledge, skills, developmental stage, and learning rate. Grouping students by ability seems to be the logical way to deal with these differences so as to provide instruction appropriate to their various levels of readiness. Yet as educators we feel uncomfortable in making grouping decisions about youngsters that could have far-reaching effects on them, and we can empathize

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with students like the one interviewed above, who was assigned to the basic track when he entered junior high school.

The question of how students should be grouped for instruction has been a point of sharp discussion since the turn of the century. A 1927 dissertation listed 83 "selected references" on the topic. Over this time period, the same essential arguments have been advanced on both sides. Proponents have argued that ability grouping lets high achievers move rapidly and gives low achievers attainable goals and extra help. Opponents have countered that ability grouping is unfair to low achievers, citing problems of poor peer models, low teacher expectations, and slow instructional pace.

Today, ability grouping is still a controversial issue. One reason for a recent resurgence of interest in the issue is a concern about equity in desegregated schools. The most common form of grouping assigns students to ability-homogeneous classes or tracks according to some general measure of ability or achievement. For example, an elementary school might have a high fourth grade, an average fourth grade, and a low fourth grade. A high school might have college preparatory, general, and vocational tracks. This form of ability grouping often creates racially identifiable classes or tracks and has therefore been a major issue in lawsuits in which the plaintiffs argue that tracking is used to resegregate ostensibly desegregated schools. In one recent case in South Carolina, an administrative law judge ruled that since ability-grouped class assignment concentrated black students in low-ability classes and had no educa-



DAVIS.

tional justification, the district was compelled to abandon the practice or lose its federal funds.

What is the evidence concerning the achievement effects of ability-grouped class assignment, and what alternative means of grouping students for instruction might plausibly be used to accommodate student heterogeneity?

Reviewers of research on these questions have usually concluded that the evidence is hopelessly muddled and inconclusive. However, in an exhaustive review of the best evidence available, I found that if the research results are broken down according to the type of ability grouping used, the conclusions become much clearer.² The problem with earlier reviews is that they have often jumbled together ability grouping of classes (ie., tracking) with ability grouping within classes (reading and math groups), ability grouping for just one or two subjects, and special classes for gifted or learning-disabled students. My review considered each of these categories separately and focused on studies of at least one semester's duration that used standardized tests of reading and/or mathematics. This article briefly reviews the research on various forms of ability grouping and alternatives to ability grouping from the standpoint of both instructional effectiveness and potential segregative impact.

THE PRINCIPAL types of grouping arrangements fall into two major categories: between-class and within-class. Between-class plans are school-level arrangements by which students are assigned to classes according to some measure of ability or performance. Within-class grouping arrangements may attempt to reduce the heterogeneity of the larger class, as in the use of within-class ability grouping or mastery learning. Or — as in the case of cooperative learning models — they may try to put the natural heterogeneity of students to good use. The following discussion defines the various grouping plans and briefly presents the research that has been done on each.

In my review of the research on ability grouping in elementary schools, I found that between-class grouping is not a single practice.³ Rather, it takes many fundamentally different forms with different educational as well as psychological effects. The most important types of between-class ability grouping are discussed in the following sections.

Ability-Grouped Class Assignment. In many elementary schools, students are assigned to self-con-

The achievement effects of ability-grouped class assignment are essentially zero at the elementary level and are very slight at the secondary level.

tained classes on the basis of a general achievement or ability measure. At each grade level this might produce a high-achieving class, an average-achieving class, and a low-achieving class, with students assigned to classes according to some combination of a composite achievement measure, IQ scores, and/or teacher judgment. Students remain with the same ability-grouped classes for all academic subjects. In junior high and middle schools, ability-grouped class assignment may take the form of block scheduling, where students are assigned to one class by ability and travel together from subject to subject, or students may be assigned by ability to each subject separately. High school students are usually assigned to tracks, such as college preparatory, general, and vocational.

The achievement effects of ability-grouped class assignment (in comparison to heterogeneous grouping) are essentially zero at the elementary level⁴ and are very slight at the secondary level.⁵ There is some evidence that high achievers may gain from ability grouping at the expense of low achievers, but most studies find no such trend. Overall, the effects of ability grouping cluster closely around zero for students of all achievement levels.

One probable reason that ability-grouped class assignment has little effect on student achievement is that this plan typically has only a limited impact on the heterogeneity of the class. That is, it doesn't result in very pure ability grouping. For example, Goodlad and Anderson estimated that dividing a group of elementary students into two groups on the basis of IQ reduced total variability in each class by only seven percent. With three groups — and elementary schools typically have no more than three classes per grade — heterogeneity was reduced by 17 percent, still not likely to be enough to have a measurable impact.⁶ Even though a student's performance in any one subject is correlated with performance in other subjects, this correlation is far from perfect. This means that grouping students on any one criterion is sure to leave substantial heterogeneity in other skill domains.

While assigning students to "high" and "low" ability classes typically has a minimal impact on class heterogeneity, it may have a stigmatizing effect on low achievers, may evoke low expectations for student achievement and behavior, and may reduce student self-esteem. Thus, this approach to grouping students may be enough to produce psychological drawbacks but does not do enough to reap the potential educational benefits of reducing student heterogeneity.

If ability-grouped class assignment produces few if any learning benefits, is detrimental to self-esteem, and has a segregative impact in desegregated schools, its continued use can hardly be recommended. Yet the problem of student heterogeneity must be addressed in some way. The following sections discuss alternative between- and within-class grouping plans that may be able to adapt instruction to students' needs more effectively and equitably than ability-grouped class assignment.

Regrouping for Reading and/or Mathematics. One commonly used ability grouping arrangement in elementary schools keeps students in heterogeneous classes most of the day but regroupes them for selected

subjects. For example, three fourth-grade classes in a school might have reading scheduled at the same time. At reading time, students might leave their heterogeneous homerooms and go to classes organized according to reading levels. Similarly, junior or senior high school students may be ability grouped for some subjects, such as math or reading, but not for others.

Regrouping for selected subjects has three important advantages over ability-grouped class assignment. First, students remain in a heterogeneous setting most of the day, so they are likely to identify with that group, reducing the labeling effects and racial identifiability of all-day grouping. Second, students are grouped solely on the basis of their achievement in reading or mathematics, not general achievement or ability level, so a meaningful reduction in heterogeneity in the skill being taught is possible. Third, regrouping plans tend to be more flexible than ability-grouped class assignment, because changing students between reading or mathematics classes is less disruptive than changing basic class assignments. For this reason, any errors in assignment can be easily remedied, and any changes in student performance level can be accommodated with a change in grouping.

Research on regrouping plans indicates that they can be instructionally effective if two conditions are fulfilled: Instructional level and pace must be completely adapted to student performance level, and students must be regrouped for only one or two subjects (reading and/or mathematics only) so that they stay in heterogeneous placements most of the day. On the other hand, when students are regrouped without adapting the pace or level of instruction or in more than two subjects, no benefits have been found.

Joplin Plan. One interesting form of regrouping once common in elementary schools is the Joplin Plan, in which students are regrouped for reading without regard for grade levels.⁷ That is, a reading class at the fourth-grade, first-semester level might contain some third, some fourth, and some fifth graders. One important consequence of this plan is that it allows for the reduction or elimination of within-class grouping for reading, as students in each reading class may all be at the same reading level. This allows teachers to spend more time on direct instruction, thus reducing the time during which students must do unsupervised follow-up seatwork.

Achievement effects of the Joplin Plan and closely related forms of nongraded plans have been quite positive overall. For example, Rothrock compared fourth and fifth graders in reading classes organized according to the Joplin Plan to students in regular reading classes that used within-class reading groups. The Joplin classes gained an average of 31% of a grade equivalent more than the traditionally taught classes on a standardized test of reading comprehension and 57% of a grade equivalent more in work-study skills.⁸

The Joplin Plan has two particular advantages with respect to equity issues. One is that by grouping across grade lines, each regrouped reading class is likely to be about as racially integrated as the total school. Second, by reducing or eliminating the use of reading groups within the class, total time for direct instruction is increased and equalized for all students.

The Joplin classes gained an average of 31% of a grade equivalent more than the traditionally taught classes on a standardized test of reading comprehension.

To summarize: Between-class ability grouping plans are beneficial for student achievement when they incorporate the following features:

- Students remain in heterogeneous classes most of the day and are regrouped by performance level only in such subjects as reading and mathematics, in which reducing heterogeneity is particularly important.
- The grouping plan markedly reduces heterogeneity in the *specific skill* being taught.
- Group assignments are flexible and are frequently reassessed.
- Teachers adapt their level and pace of instruction to accommodate students' levels of readiness and learning rates.

The between-class grouping plan that most completely incorporates the four principles listed above is the Joplin Plan. Students remain in heterogeneous classes except for reading, are grouped strictly according to reading level, are constantly re-evaluated, and are taught in a manner that accommodates their achievement levels. In contrast, ability-grouped class assignment does not meet the four criteria. It segregates students all day, groups them on the basis of general ability or achievement rather than skill in a specific subject, and tends to be highly inflexible. Teachers may or may not adjust their level and pace of instruction to adapt to students' needs in this plan.

WITHIN-CLASS ability grouping is the practice of assigning students to homogeneous subgroups for instruction within the class. In general, each subgroup receives instruction at its own level and is allowed to progress at its own rate. Within-class ability grouping is virtually universal in elementary reading instruction and is common in elementary mathematics.

Within-class grouping plans generally conform to the four requirements for effective ability grouping proposed earlier. They involve only reading and/or mathematics, leaving students in relatively heterogeneous classes the rest of the school day. They group students in specific rather than general skills, and, at least in principle, within-class groupings are easy to change. Most teachers do adapt their level and pace of instruction to meet students' needs.

However, within-class ability grouping introduces a problem of its own: management of multiple groups. When the teacher is instructing one reading group, for example, the remaining students must work independently on seatwork activities, which may be of question-

able value. Supervising multiple groups and transitions between them are major classroom management problems.

Methodologically adequate research on within-class ability grouping has unfortunately been limited to the study of mathematics grouping, perhaps because few reading teachers would be willing to participate in an experiment in which they had to teach heterogeneous classes without breaking students into homogeneous subgroups for reading. The research on within-class grouping in mathematics supports this practice. Every one of the eight studies of within-class ability grouping in mathematics identified in my review of the literature favored the grouped treatment. For example, in a Kansas study, eight sixth-grade teachers were randomly assigned to teach arithmetic using within-class ability grouping or whole-class instruction. The grouped classes gained an average of almost 50% of a grade equivalent more on a standardized arithmetic test than the ungrouped classes.⁹ Effects of within-class grouping have been somewhat higher for low achievers than for average and high achievers, and they tended to be more positive when the number of ability groups was two or three rather than four.

Effects of within-class grouping on mathematics achievement cannot be assumed to hold for reading. In mathematics, there is a need for students to work on problems independently, so there is an appropriate place for independent seatwork. A corresponding need for independent seatwork time is less compelling in reading. However, the universality of within-class grouping in reading provides at least some indication that this form of within-class ability grouping is also instructionally necessary.

Cooperative learning views student heterogeneity as a resource to be taken advantage of rather than as a problem to be solved.

Mastery Learning. This instructional strategy takes three principal forms. In group-based mastery learning, students are taught as a whole class and then take a test on the material covered. Those whose test scores exceed a preset mastery criterion (e.g., 80%) then do enrichment activities while those who do not achieve this criterion receive corrective instruction. Group-based forms of mastery learning are by far the most commonly used in elementary and secondary schools. Mastery learning can also be implemented in an individualized, or continuous-progress, form. Finally, the Keller Plan is also a form of mastery learning in which students take as much time as they need to pass a series of tests covering the content of a course, using self-study materials, peer tutoring, and lectures to prepare to take the

tests. The Keller Plan is used almost exclusively at the college level, as it does not fit well within time-driven elementary and secondary programs. Since individualized and Keller Plan forms of mastery learning are rarely seen in elementary and secondary schools, this section only considers research on group-based forms of mastery learning.

I recently completed a review of the research on group-based mastery learning at the elementary and secondary levels.¹⁰ I found that, in studies of at least four weeks' duration that compared mastery learning to control groups, the effects of mastery learning on standardized measures of reading and math achievement were essentially zero. On tests devised specifically for these studies, effects were more positive, but these measures were usually more closely related to the objectives studied by the mastery learning classes than by the control classes. However, mastery learning does tend to reduce the achievement gap between the highest and the lowest achievers, and it provides a means of focusing teachers and students on a well-defined set of objectives. For these reasons, this strategy may be desirable for certain uses. Also, several school district evaluations of mastery learning show promise for the method, although these studies rarely use control groups and confound the use of mastery learning per se with changes in curricula, other teaching methods, promotion policies, and alignment of curriculum with outcome measures.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING refers to various instructional methods in which students work in small, heterogeneous learning groups toward some sort of group goal. This approach differs from within-class ability grouping not only in that cooperative learning groups are small and heterogeneous, but also in that these groups are expected to engage in a great deal of task-focused interaction such as studying together or completing group assignments. In a sense, cooperative learning views student heterogeneity as a resource to be taken advantage of rather than as a problem to be solved; in their cooperative groups, students are expected to share a broad range of perspectives and understandings to help one another master academic content.

Cooperative learning methods vary considerably in their basic structures. Some, such as Jigsaw Teaching¹¹ and Group Investigation,¹² assign students specific tasks within a larger group task. In others, students work together to complete a common group worksheet or other group product.¹³ A third category consists of methods in which students study and are rewarded on the basis of the achievement of all group members.¹⁴ For example, students in Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) are assigned to four-member heterogeneous teams. The teacher presents a lesson and then students study worksheets together in their teams, attempting to make certain that all team members have mastered the material. Finally, the students are individually quizzed, and teams are rewarded with certificates or other recognition on the basis of the average of their members' quiz scores.

The idea behind cooperative learning is that if stu-

(Continued on page 47)

HOW TO TALK SO STUDENTS WILL LISTEN AND LISTEN SO STUDENTS WILL TALK

BY ADELE FABER AND ELAINE MAZLISH

TEACHING TODAY is harder than ever before."

That's what we hear again and again as we give our workshops on communication skills to teachers throughout the country. The theme has many variations:

"The kids are wilder, ruder, more out of control."

"Their skills are worse than ever, and they don't know how to work. They're used to getting information from a TV set that makes no demands upon them."

"More and more children are coming from homes where there's violence, drug or alcohol abuse, divorce or separation.

Many of them are so anxious and insecure they're unable to concentrate."

"To make matters worse, we teachers are being asked to fit even more into the curriculum and to raise academic standards. The pressure is intense. If the kids do poorly, they feel like failures and we feel like failures."

With teachers and students under such stress, how can an emotional climate be created in the classroom where learning can take place? We know that most of the methods typically used in our culture to make children "settle down and get to work" are self-defeating. Having been students ourselves, we're all aware that lectures



ILLUSTRATED BY KIMBERLY ANN COE

and moralizing can cause kids to tune out and turn off, that commands can lead to resentful compliance, that sarcasm humiliates, that threats engender fear or defiance, that punishment often invites thoughts of revenge. Although any of these approaches might "work" temporarily, they fail in the long run to foster the self-discipline and autonomy that are essential to a successful learning environment. Rather, all these methods tend to diminish students' self-esteem and to leave them more angry, more hostile, more resistant to learning.

What are our alternatives? Are there ways to engage our students' cooperation without leaving them with a backwash of bad feelings? Are there ways that decrease tension and free students to concentrate upon their school work? What follows are the communication skills we've shared with teachers that they have found help to make learning possible and teaching gratifying. Not every one of them will work with every child. Not every skill will suit your personality. Nor will any one of them be effective all the time. What these skills do, however, is create a climate of respect in which the spirit of cooperation can begin to grow.

ACKNOWLEDGE CHILDREN'S FEELINGS

When we ignore or deny our students' feelings, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to hear what we have to say. Therefore, the first and most important step in getting through to children is to begin by acknowledging their inner experience. Does it sound easy? It isn't, especially when a youngster expresses a feeling that makes us anxious or uncomfortable:

"I'm dumb in arithmetic!"

"My picture is ugly."

"I'm *not* sitting next to Michael any more."

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish are the authors of Liberated Parents/Liberated Children and How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk. Their audio cassette programs on communication skills, published by the Negotiation Institute in New York, are being used by over 10,000 groups in the United States. Ms. Faber has taught in the New York City high schools; Ms. Mazlish, in settlement houses. Both authors studied with the late child psychologist, Dr. Haim Ginott. Their new book, Siblings Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too, has just been published by W. W. Norton & Company.

Our immediate tendency is to react with the kind of talk that most of us heard as we were growing up:

"You're not dumb. You just don't study."

"Nonsense! That's a beautiful picture."

"You will sit in the seat that was assigned to you, young man . . . or else!"

Instead of dismissing negative feelings or making light of them, we need to acknowledge them with respect:

"Something about that long-division problem is frustrating you."

"Oh, you're not satisfied with the way your drawing turned out."

"You sound angry at Michael. He did something that upset you."

Any of the above responses would lead to discussion of the problem and a possible resolution.

A kindergarten teacher wrote to tell us of her first chaotic day with her oversized class:

The noise level in the room was high. One little boy was crying. His tears were splashing over the outline of an apple that I had asked him to color. Normally, I would have said, "There's nothing to cry about. I'm sure you can color a very nice picture." But I stopped myself and sat down beside him and tried to think about how he must be feeling. Then I said, "It must be hard to be in this classroom. There's so much noise and so many children and everything is so new. You probably wish you were home right now in your own kitchen with your own mother."

He stared at me and stopped crying. Then he picked up his red crayon and made a faint line. I said, "I see an apple starting to get ripe."

He made another line, and then I left to attend to the other children. A few minutes later I felt a gentle tap on my back. There was the little boy. He was holding out his paper to me with his apple all filled in. Very earnestly he said, "Please, teacher, I need more work to do."

What happened? What mysterious process took place? By acknowledging her student's distress, by putting his confusion and unhappiness into words, the teacher enabled the boy to deal with his bad feelings and to let go of them. When we accept our students' feelings, we free them to think and to work.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM

When children aren't doing what we think they should be doing, our first impulse is to *make* them behave. Often the more actively we insist, the more actively they resist. But when we describe the problem in a nonjudgmental tone, children can begin to respond. Contrast the reactions that might arise from the following statements:

Accusing/Commanding

"You're a fine pet monitor! You forgot to give that poor hamster water. Do it now!!"

"Stop daydreaming. You're only halfway through the test. At this rate you're going to fail."

"You have no control over that mouth of yours! How many times do I have to remind you *not* to call out?"

Describe the Problem

"The hamster is sucking at his empty water bottle."

"You've finished half the test already. You have only three more examples to go."

"I hear an answer, but I don't see a hand."

In each case our accusations and commands reinforce resistance. When we describe the problem, we encourage children to tell *themselves* what to do.

GIVE INFORMATION (WITHOUT INSULT)

When a student behaves inappropriately, we have a golden opportunity to give him information he might not have known before. It is important, however, to make the statement brief and impersonal.

Recently, an elementary school teacher wrote to tell us how useful this new way of thinking was to her. She said that in the course of a single day she found herself "giving information" over and over again.

Instead of scolding the children for bending back the covers of their new books, I said, "Children, when the covers of a book are bent all the way back, the spine can break."

Instead of Lengthy Reminders . . .



Say It in a Word



Instead of accusing David of always leaving the jar of paste open after he used it, I said, "David, paste gets dry and hard when it isn't covered."

Instead of threatening to send Jimmy to the office if he poked Jennifer again with his ruler, I said, "Rulers are not for poking people! Rulers are for measuring."

In each case instead of the usual sullen response, I got a nondefensive, "Oh," or "Okay."

OFFER A CHOICE

The number of choices we can offer our students about the content of the curriculum is limited. Sometimes, however, we can offer the children a choice as to the manner of their learning. Each time we do, we give them a better understanding and control of their own learning process.

An English teacher asked his students how they would like to prepare for their vocabulary test on Friday: "Would you rather study a list of eight new words on Monday or would you prefer to learn two new words each day?"

A math teacher announced to her class: "We're going to be doing a 15-minute 'warm-up' drill this morning. Those of you who feel you need practice with fractions can open to page 10 of your workbook. Those of you who feel you need to work on decimals can turn to page 40."

A remedial reading teacher told us, "I was concerned about what happened whenever Billy read aloud to the group. The minute he'd stumble or hesitate, the other children would shout out the word. Sometimes he was glad to be rescued by them, but more often than not, he would become angry or close to tears. He wanted a chance to figure out the word for himself.

"When I told the class that they were *never* to call out an answer, they lost all interest in listening or participating. Finally I decided to put Billy in charge. I said, 'Billy, when you decide you want help, put your thumb up. That will be your signal to us.'

"It's been working beautifully. The class waits patiently now as Billy struggles to sound out the word on his own, but the minute his thumb goes up, they eagerly supply the answer."

SAY IT IN A WORD

The idea of reducing a long thought to a single word ("the paste," . . . "the ruler") is a favorite skill among teachers because it saves them time, breath, and energy. Consider the difference between:

"Betsy, this is the third time you're walking out the door without your schoolbag. You're so busy jabbering to your friends you don't think about what you're doing. You'd forget your head if it weren't attached to your shoulders!"

and

"Betsy, your schoolbag."

Betsy benefits as well. Instead of a long harangue, she gets a chance to think, "Schoolbag? . . . What about my schoolbag? . . . Oh, I left it under my desk . . . I guess I'd better go get it." Once again, the child has been encouraged to focus on the problem and tell herself what to do.

CATCH A CHILD DOING SOMETHING RIGHT AND DESCRIBE IT

In our efforts to drive our students on to greater achievement, we often find ourselves fretting about what's still wrong with them:

"Matthew still doesn't know the multiplication table."

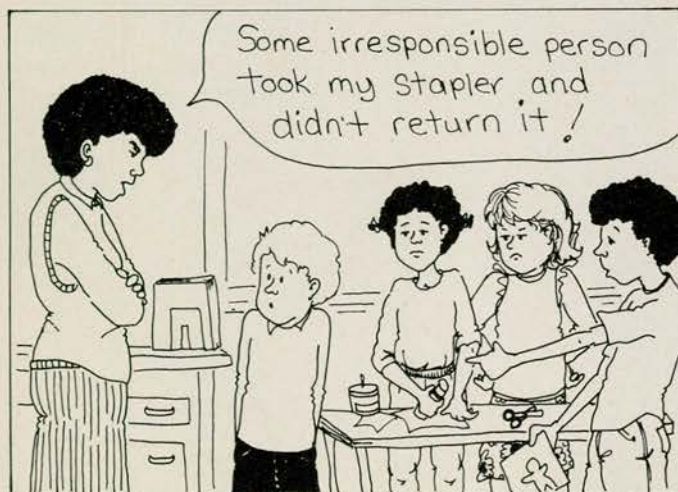
"Lisa is in junior high and her handwriting is still illegible. You can't tell a 't' from an 'e.'"

It requires a deliberate inner decision on our part to reflect to our students what is "right" about them now, in their less-than-perfect state. Yet when we do, we often see a youngster bloom before our very eyes. One statement such as "Lisa, this 't' right here is a pleasure to look at. It's almost tall enough and you remembered to cross it at the top," often leads to all the "t's" being lengthened and crossed.

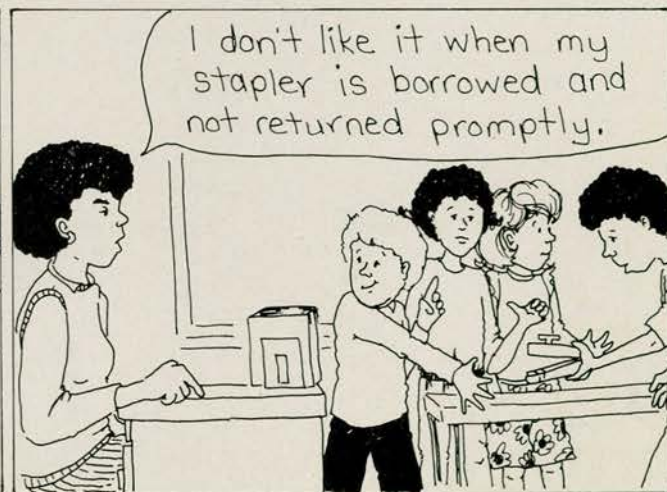
"Matthew, you've memorized half of the five times table already," gives Matthew the confidence he needs to go on to master the other half.

Notice how both compliments were phrased. Though evaluative praise, like "good" . . . "very good" . . . "excellent" may provide a quick shot of encouragement, nothing spurs children on to greater effort than an

Instead of Blaming or Accusing . . .



Describe What You Feel



appreciative *description* of what they have just accomplished.

A third-grade teacher reported her delight at this discovery. She told us how one of her "acting out" pupils had made a special effort to behave and how, at the end of the day, he had stood at her desk and asked, "Was I good today?" She was tempted to respond with an enthusiastic "Very good" but stopped herself. Instead she said, "You helped clean up the room after we finished our science project. You finished three pages of your phonics book. You added a lot of interesting thoughts to our class discussion."

The boy beamed with pleasure and said, "I was good!"

When we describe to a child his achievements, no matter how small, we enable him to praise himself and gather the courage to forge ahead.

DESCRIBE WHAT YOU FEEL

In the same way that we urge teachers to be respectful of their students' feelings, we urge them to be equally respectful of their own feelings. This isn't as simple as it appears. Most of us have been taught to sit on our feelings, particularly our angry feelings. We've been

indoctrinated to believe that a good teacher has an unending supply of patience. And so we either suppress our irritation or ignore it and sometimes, to our great dismay, find ourselves exploding with a sudden, angry attack.

There is a more satisfying alternative: *Describe what you feel*. When we describe what we feel, we accomplish several important objectives. We afford ourselves the relief of being genuine. We model a way to be angry without being hurtful. We make it possible for our students to begin to hear us. Consider the following contrasting statements:

Attacking: "You are so rude; you always interrupt!"

Describing: "It frustrates me when I start to say something and can't finish!"

Attacking: "What is wrong with this class? Why does it take you forever to open your notebooks? How do you expect to learn if you take up half the morning fooling around?"

Describing: "I get impatient when we don't get to work promptly. I like to see all notebooks opened and everyone ready to begin when the bell rings."

Instead of Ignoring Negative Feelings . . .



Put the Feelings Into Words



Attacking: "How can you all be so mean? That is a cruel thing to do, to make fun of someone who stutters!"

Describing: "It upsets me to see anyone being made fun of. I expect the people in this class to treat each other with respect."

When students are blamed or accused, they lose all desire to cooperate. When a teacher describes his or her feelings, without attacking, children can listen and respond appropriately.

PUT IT IN WRITING

Very often the written word can accomplish what volumes of talk cannot.

A social studies teacher told us of having a student who continued to shout out the answer in class before anyone else had a chance to think. Repeated admonitions to "Wait until I call on you" seemed to have no effect. One day the teacher walked over to the boy, smiled, and dropped a folded note onto his desk. The boy opened the note, read it, and grinned. For the rest of the period he was a model of cooperation. The note read:

When you want to show
You understand
Don't call out
Just raise your hand.

A science teacher became exasperated with a girl who frequently came to school with elaborate excuses for not having done her homework. Finally he sent a letter to her at her home address. It said:

Dear Rachel,

The following assignments are still due:

April 15, 16, and 21.

Please let me know when I can expect them to be handed in.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Mr. J.

Within the week Rachel turned in her overdue assignments and thanked the teacher for writing to her and not to her mother.

An elementary school teacher told us about feeling guilty because in the rush of the day's events, he often found himself ignoring the children's concerns. A little girl had told him sadly, "My dog died," and he had given her the most perfunctory response.

Later at home he wrote a brief note expressing his condolences. The girl was thrilled to receive it and deeply comforted. The rest of the class was intrigued. They decided that it would be a good idea to establish a "post office" where they could leave notes for each other and the teacher, too, if they had something important to tell him. Writing improved and so did morale.

SOOLVE THE PROBLEM TOGETHER

There are some classroom problems that are so knotty and so upsetting that they cannot be resolved by a single statement, word, or note. For these more complex situations, we need a more complex set of skills. Problem solving provides us with a step-by-step pro-

cedure for taking everyone's needs into consideration. Briefly, problem solving with a single student or a whole class is a matter of hearing the children's feelings, expressing your feelings, and then working together to find a mutually agreeable solution.

A special education teacher in a Harlem elementary school challenged us directly. He said, "This sounds like the kind of approach that might be perfect for middle-class children, but you don't know my population. Many of them are products of physical and emotional abuse. They come to school like firecrackers ready to explode. I can't get through a period without a fight erupting. One will say, 'You're stupid' or 'Your mother' or kick someone under the table and there goes my lesson. If I want to accomplish anything I have to be a policeman."

Despite his doubts, he decided to try problem solving to see what would happen. Here are excerpts from the written report he sent us:

"I decided that if the first step of problem solving was to find out how the kids really felt about fighting, I should start by asking them what was good about fighting. Here's the list we developed:

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT FIGHTING

1. Getting back!! (This was definitely the most popular.)
2. Getting someone in trouble.
3. Getting someone to chase you.
4. Snapping (insulting) is funny.
5. They won't mess with you again.
6. You feel like it.
7. They start up first.
8. Class is boring. (teacher's contribution)
9. Getting someone mad.
10. It's fun to play rough.

They were pretty rambunctious as we were working out the list. Then I asked, 'What's bad about fighting?' and they became very solemn. Here's what they said:

WHAT'S BAD ABOUT FIGHTING

1. After you fight, you feel bad if it's your friend.
2. You can get into trouble - with mother, teacher, principal.
3. It puts your teacher in a bad mood. (teacher's contribution)
4. You can hurt somebody.
5. You can get suspended.
6. You don't get to learn. (teacher's contribution)
7. It could start a worse fight.
8. You could get hurt — beaten up, scratched, bitten, black eye.

Then we went to work on trying to think of solutions. I was reluctant to write down some of their suggestions, but I remember you telling us to 'write down *all* ideas without evaluating.'

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. Ask to go out and let off steam.
2. Hit him.
3. Walk away.
4. Pound the clay.
5. Squeeze hand grippers.
6. Break a stick.
7. Call his mother.

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8. Let them fight it out in the gym with no crowd.
9. Tell the teacher.
10. Change your seat.
11. Tell him to leave you alone.
12. Send him to the office.
13. Make him write a hundred times!
14. Make him lick the floor.
15. Everybody hit him once.
16. Give stickers to the ones who follow the rules.
17. Write something mean to him.
18. Say something nice back to him to make him embarrassed.

After we had all 18 items listed, I commented on some of them. For example, I told them I couldn't allow them to fight it out, because I couldn't allow them to hurt each other. Also, licking the floor didn't seem very sanitary to me. They all had strong opinions about the rest of the list, each preferring different solutions. Finally, I suggested that each student copy into his notebook the solutions that made the most sense to him. They liked that idea.

At the end of the period we wrote on the blackboard the rules we could all agree to:

1. NO INSULTS.
2. NO CURSES.
3. DON'T TELL ON ANYONE UNLESS THEY ARE BOTHERING YOU.
4. NO HITTING OR THROWING.
5. USE YOUR OWN SOLUTIONS!!

Here are the results of that day:

1. Luis, who has the shortest fuse, walks out of the room several times a week. He stands in the doorway so he won't miss anything. After a while he comes in and sits at the back of the room. After a few minutes more, he joins the class.
2. Every once in a while one student will pop up and say, 'Carlos, change with me!' and change his seat. (Carlos is pretty good natured about changing.)
3. Twice a student pounded the clay.
4. Once Darren said, 'Give him the clay to pound!'
5. When one student insults another, the class calls out, 'Rule number one!' or, 'Rule number two!' They will also say, 'Make him read the rule!' and the 'offender' will read the rule.
6. They also decided that they would not even insult the garbage can. (Once Darren said, 'Your mother' to the garbage can, and Luis thought Darren was saying it to him, and it started a fight, so the class added a new rule about not cursing 'things'.)

We were deeply moved by this teacher's experience. It would be so easy to write these children off as "incorrigible" or "hopeless." Yet he dared to believe in them. As a result they dared to believe in themselves and they took responsibility for their own behavior.

The final lines of this teacher's letter sum up his thinking and ours:

"I wish I could say that putting this whole approach into action comes naturally to me. It doesn't. It takes thought, effort, commitment, and practice. But what I'm beginning to see is that if I want my kids to be caring with each other, I have to use caring ways with them. If I want them to learn, if I want to reach their minds, then I first have to reach their hearts. It seems that only when children feel right can they think right or act right." □

CENSORING THE SOURCES

BY BARBARA COHEN



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BARKIN

"It was religion that gave birth to the English colonies in America. One must never forget that," Alexis de Tocqueville wrote more than 100 years ago in an effort to convey the importance of religion to the politics and culture of the young nation he was describing.

But according to several recent studies, if de Tocqueville were to read today's school textbooks, he would search in vain for an adequate presentation of the role religion played and continues to play in American life. Apparently fearful of saying anything that anyone might conceivably object to ("When in

doubt, leave it out," is how Diane Ravitch describes the process) and unwilling to insist upon fulfilling their responsibility to present the facts about religion and its influence, textbook authors and publishers have managed to practically erase religion from our national experience.

Given how intimately intertwined religion is with our history and politics, this can get tricky. Anthony Podesta, president of People For The American Way, has pointed out some of the strange explanations students are left with when religion is not allowed to be mentioned as a factor. "One of the most popular

textbook series used in grade schools nationwide, for example, teaches our kids that 'the Pilgrims were people who made long trips' and that the first Thanksgiving in Massachusetts was little more than a potluck spread with all the thanks going to the local Indians Another passage defines Christmas as 'a warm time for special foods.' In yet another example of poor coverage of religion," Podesta continues, "many textbooks fail to explain that Dr. Martin Luther King was a minister who drew strength from his Baptist congregation and that organized Christians were a driving force in the abolition of slavery."

The chronicle of events recalled in the article that follows — which describes how the most innocent of religious references were expunged from the textbook version of a children's book — tells perhaps more poignantly than can any study the absurd lengths to which this removal of anything religious has gone.

—EDITOR

SINCE ITS publication in 1983, *Molly's Pilgrim* has had some curious adventures. An account of one such adventure follows.

A DIARY OF EVENTS

October 3, 1985: A photocopy of *Molly's Pilgrim* arrives from my agent, Dorothy Markinko. It was forwarded to her by the permissions person at Morrow for my approval. It is the version Harcourt Brace Jovanovich wants to use in a third grade reader. Entire pages are crossed out. The first half of the story has been ditched entirely. I'm used to that. They usually cut drastically for textbooks. But I've allowed some of my other stories to appear in textbooks anyway, for the sake of the exposure. It's tempting to think that a story which might, if you're lucky, sell 10,000 copies will instead be seen by perhaps half a million kids. And they'll all see your name, too. In this case the story isn't merely cut. Its maimed. All mention of Jews, Sukkos, God, and the Bible has been excised. I return the copy to my agent with a note denying permission for its use.

December 18 (10:03 A.M.): My agent calls. The textbook editor has phoned and again asked for my permission to use the story. I repeat myself. Nothing doing. Dorothy says she'll call the textbook editor and inform her of that fact immediately.

December 18 (10:45 A.M.): Dorothy Markinko calls again. She has spoken to the textbook editor. "When I said they couldn't use the story, she gasped."

"Listen," I say, "for fifteen hundred dollars, I won't sell my soul. For nine million, maybe I'll sell it."

"Don't let the devil hear you," she responds.

December 18 (11:27 A.M.): The phone rings. The

Barbara Cohen is a former high school English teacher and author of 25 books for young people. This article is reprinted with permission from the March 1986 issue of the School Library Journal.

Molly's Pilgrim, published in 1983 by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books (div. William Morrow & Co., Inc.), is available through local bookstores. The film version of the book was the recipient of the 1986 Academy Award for Best Live Action Short.

caller identifies herself as a professor of children's literature at New York University. "It is I," she says, "who recommended *Molly's Pilgrim* to the textbook publisher. I am working as a consultant trying to get these publishers to use good literature in reading books. Your story is so wonderful. They want to use it so badly."

"I'm not sure *Molly's Pilgrim* is literature," I reply. "I'm flattered that you and the textbook editor think so. But if what they're looking for is literature, why are they cutting everything out of the story that makes it distinctive? Literature isn't cream of wheat."

"If we mention the Bible, someone will want to know why we don't give equal time to the Koran."

"I know that," she says. "But they operate under so many constraints. I admire your work a great deal." She mentions serving on a committee that awarded one of my books a prize. I thank her. "Now this story is so universal . . ." she continues.

"Only because it's specific," I interrupt. "Look, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich has an agenda, but I have an agenda too. They like the story because it universalizes Thanksgiving. I like it because it's specific. The fact that Molly is Jewish is important to me. The fact that Sukkos is mentioned is important to me. It gripes me that the only Jewish holiday most non-Jews have heard of is a minor one, Chanukah. That holiday has been blown up out of all proportion to its traditional significance because it happens to fall at Christmas time. I want non-Jewish kids to know about other Jewish holidays too. That's why Sukkos is in there. I won't have it removed."

"O.K.," she said. "I understand. I sympathize. I'll tell them."

We say goodbye and hang up. Immediately I call my agent to report the conversation. She's busy on another line. I hang up. She calls me. She says she supports my position entirely.

December 18 (2:55 P.M.): The phone rings. It's the Harcourt Brace editor calling from Orlando. We discuss HBJ's move south. Does she like Florida? The weather is nice, but she's working so hard she scarcely knows where she is. Then she gets down to business. "We love your story," she says. "Please let us use it."

"Not in the version you sent me," I say.

"Try to understand. We have a lot of problems. If we mention God, some atheist will object. If we mention the Bible, someone will want to know why we don't give equal time to the Koran. Every time that happens, we lose sales."

"But the Pilgrims did read the Bible," I reply. "That's an historical fact."

"You know that," says she. "I know that. But the textbook won't be purchased if it has things in it that people object to, no matter how unreasonable their objections. That's the reality out there. I don't like it anymore than you do. But that's the way it is."

"O.K.," I say. "I understand you operate under constraints. But your constraints are not my constraints. I don't need my story to appear in your book. Just don't use it. Forget it."

She tries flattery. "But we love it. It's such a wonderful story. It has so much to say to kids. Don't you want them to hear it?"

"One of the things it has to say is that this little girl is Jewish," I reply. "For me, that's as important as anything else in the story."

"We can leave that in," she returns. "We can leave Jewish in. We can leave Sukkos in. We'll explain it in the teacher's edition. We have to take out 'Tabernacles.' That word is too hard for third graders. But we can leave Sukkos in."

"Well, I don't know . . ." I hesitate. Sukkos. Half a million third graders hearing the word Sukkos. Their teachers read the notes in the teacher's edition and explain the holiday. Jews aren't just Chanukah. They're Sukkos too, and Sukkos is one source of a holiday we all celebrate, Thanksgiving. I feel myself weakening.

She seizes upon my hesitation. "I'll send you the new version. See what you think of it."

I hang up and call my agent to report on the latest development. In addition to doing almost no work this day, I have spent a fortune in phone calls. They are, however, deductible.

December 19 (10:45 A.M.): The doorbell rings. I leave my machine and run downstairs to open it. A delivery man stands before me with a packet in his hand. I sign for it, take it in, open it up. It contains the version

of *Molly's Pilgrim* promised me only half a day ago. Express mail, a wonder of the modern world. I read the manuscript. Molly's Jewishness is mentioned in the summary with which the editor plans to replace the first half of the story. But the sentence near the end of the book reading, "The Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving from Jews like Molly and her mama," is cut out. "She came here, just like the Pilgrims long ago, so she could worship God in her own way," is in, but with the word "God" eliminated. "They read in the Bible about the Jewish harvest holiday of Tabernacles," has been changed to "They read about the Jewish harvest holiday."

I compose the following letter to the editor:

Thanks for sending me so promptly the version of *Molly's Pilgrim* you wish to use in a Harcourt Brace Jovanovich textbook.

You have numbered the pages. In the copy you sent me, the page numbered "19" should be "20," and the page numbered "20" should be "19." I'm sure this was just an error made in haste, but I thought I'd better mention it.

I can live with all the changes you made except the ones on page 25. I will accept the elimination of the word "God" from the sixth line, but I will not accept any of the other omissions on that page. Your changes leave a paragraph which makes no sense. Where did the Pilgrims and Miss Stickley read about Tabernacles if not in the Bible? They weren't perusing anthropological studies. And what's wrong with saying "The Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving from Jews like Molly and her mama." For me, that's one of the main points of the book. And if you can leave in "Sukkos" and explain it in the teacher's notes, you can do the same with "Tabernacles." Miss Stickley would not have

THE DISPUTED PASSAGE FROM *MOLLY'S PILGRIM*

Miss Stickley marched up to the front of the room. She turned and faced the class. "Listen to me, Elizabeth," she said in a loud voice. "Listen to me, all of you. Molly's mother *is* a Pilgrim. She's a modern Pilgrim. She came here, just like the Pilgrims long ago, so she could worship God in her own way, in peace and freedom." Miss Stickley stared at Elizabeth. "Elizabeth, do you know where the Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving?"

"They just thought it up, Miss Stickley," Elizabeth said.

"No, Elizabeth," Miss Stickley replied. "They read in the Bible about the Jewish harvest holiday of Tabernacles." I knew that holiday. We called it Sukkos.

Miss Stickley was still talking. "The Pilgrims got the idea for Thanksgiving from Jews like Molly and her mama." She marched down the aisle to my desk again. "May I have your doll for a while, Molly?"

"Sure," I said.

"I'm going to put this beautiful doll on my desk," Miss Stickley announced, "where everyone can see it all the time. It will remind us all that Pilgrims are still coming to America."

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known the word "Sukkos." In that classroom, only Molly would know that word.

I understand that you have certain constraints which may make it impossible for you to leave in the words to the excision of which I object. But those constraints are not my constraints. You do not have to use the story. I am flattered that you like it and want to use it, but I will understand perfectly if, given my objections to your version, you decide you cannot.

Thank you for all the trouble you have taken in this matter.

Very truly yours,
Barbara Cohen

cc: Dorothy Markinko

I placed the letter in the mailbox outside my house. That's the end of the matter, I'm sure. I forget about it and return to work.

December 20 (9:50 A.M.): The phone rings. It's the textbook editor. She sounds as if she's fifteen years old and is convinced she's speaking to Louisa May Alcott's ghost. "What do you think of the packet I sent you yesterday?" she whispers.

"I wrote you about that," I reply briskly. I summarize the contents of my letter. "Oh," she says. She hangs up.

I inform my agent of the conversation. I am convinced this is *really* the end of the matter. I go back to work.

December 20 (11:05 A.M.): The phone rings. Once again, it's the Harcourt Brace editor. I'm beginning to understand what's going on. So convinced were they that permission would be granted to use this story that it's too late now to go look for something with which to replace it. This editor does not whisper. She knows I'm not Louisa May Alcott. "Half a million kids," she reminds me, "here's your chance to have half a million kids learn about Sukkos. Are you going to let it go?"

"God and the Bible have to go too?" I ask.

"Yes. But Sukkos can stay in."

"How about the sentence that says the Pilgrims learned about Thanksgiving from Jews like Molly and her mother. Can that stay in?"

"Yes, that can stay in." So, if we're pressed, we can retain the Jews. It's only God and the Bible which remain eternally unacceptable.

"Since you leave in the verb 'worship,' I can live without 'God,'" I admit. "Everyone will understand 'God' as the object of worship, even those third graders whom you're so sure can't grasp 'Tabernacles.' But I'll let Tabernacles go too, because you leave in 'Jewish harvest holiday.' But how can you cut out the word 'Bible'?" The sentence makes no sense without the word 'Bible.'"

"We can't mention the Bible. We'll get into terrible trouble if we mention the Bible."

I had an idea. "All right," I said. "then make the sentence read, 'The Pilgrims *knew* about the Jewish harvest holiday.' That makes a little more sense than their reading about it in no book that was ever written."

"You're wonderful" she exclaims. "I love you."

"Yeah," I mumble. "I'm wonderful."

And so I let them have the story. Did I do the right thing? I don't know.

But I found out something. Censorship in this country is widespread, subtle, and surprising. It is not inflicted on us by the government. It doesn't need to be. We inflict it on ourselves. □

DEMOCRACY'S UNTOLD STORY

(Continued from page 25)

grievances, interests, and aspirations of each class, and in explaining how the ideas from the Enlightenment meant different things to different people — setting the stage for trouble once the Old Regime disappeared. The sources of the French debt and Louis XVI's failed attempts to reform the tax system are made clear. There is a good account of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and its English and American sources (in a special box, it is suggested that students compare it with our own Bill of Rights, but the texts are not provided).

Mazour describes the three main contending groups — conservatives, moderates, and radicals — and explains the origin of the terms Right and Left from the seating arrangements of the Legislative Assembly of 1791. But the social composition, interests, and programs of each group are not added, so it is difficult to grasp the reasons for the failure of the moderates and the resort to Terror. The radical ideology of the Reign of Terror is not cited, nor is it clear that it was overthrown when national security seemed once more assured. Like the other authors, Mazour is better on Napoleon as reformer than as modern dictator; dictatorship is mentioned, not explicated.

BEEER'S ACCOUNT of the French Revolution and Napoleon is very close to that of Mazour, with similar improvements over the other three texts in describing the roles of the various social classes, of economic problems, of Louis' attempts at tax reform. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man* is more fully excerpted, in a separate box. Beers also explains "Right" and "Left" but also fails to probe for the classes, interests, and programs behind the labels. In the Reign of Terror, Robespierre's ruthlessness, but not his ideology, is made clear. The treatment of Napoleon and of the overall impact of the Revolution and imperial conquest are much like Mazour's. On balance, Mazour's presentation of the two revolutions and their consequences is superior to the rest, being more insistent on the lasting change they wrought in people's expectations down to the present.

No text does what one would wish in comparing and contrasting the two revolutions, a useful preparation for later comparisons with revolutions in Russia and elsewhere. It follows that none concentrates sufficiently on the plight of the moderates, caught between extremes of Left and Right in France, or on the dynamics that moved the French Revolution from stage to stage, at first leftward toward radicalism and afterward back to military dictatorship.

In sum, these books do not clarify those conditions that were helpful, or that were hostile, to the emergence of stable representative institutions at the end of the 18th century. And essential to this would be a much sharper picture than any text provides of the economic and social classes, their fears and hopes, throughout the western world at the time. □

This study is being funded, in part, by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the California Department of Public Education, and a number of private foundations.

THE ASIAN ADVANTAGE

(Continued from page 31)

and the longer school year in Asian classrooms and have recommended lengthening the time American children spend in school. Such changes are likely to be ineffective in increasing mathematics scores unless there are basic changes in the organization and conduct of mathematics classes. Increasing the percentage of time spent on mathematics, reducing irrelevant activities, and increasing children's opportunities to learn from their teachers would seem more likely to lead to improvement.

The observer of Asian classrooms is impressed by another factor: the zest and enthusiasm of Asian teachers. Lessons are conducted in a spirited fashion and the teachers are successful in engaging the attention of the children in their large classes — often up to 50 children in Taiwan and up to 40 children in Japan. It takes a great deal of energy to do this, even with well-disciplined children. Teachers are able to summon this amount of energy for teaching because they spend fewer hours being directly in charge of the classroom than do American teachers. Asian teachers are incredulous, in fact, when told that American teachers are typically responsible for their pupils throughout the school day. Although Chinese and Japanese teachers spend as much time at school as American teachers, they have much more time available during the day for preparing lessons, working with individual children, and conducting other class-related activities outside the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

Information about education in other countries does not yield ready solutions to our own problems, for practices and beliefs are deeply embedded in each culture. Nevertheless, cross-cultural studies offer fresh insights into the American situation. In contrast to our country's good opinion of how its students are doing, our studies demonstrate how early and how markedly American children are falling behind those of other countries in basic knowledge and skills in mathematics. Our research also points to some rather obvious reasons why: dramatic differences in the amount of time spent in mathematics classes, later introduction of mathematical concepts in the American curriculum, complacency resulting from unrealistic appraisals of American children's levels of achievement, differences in the emphasis on the importance of hard work and effort, and the greater time available to Chinese and Japanese teachers for lesson preparation and work with individual children.

This discussion has been concerned with mathematics, but other cross-cultural studies demonstrate the inadequacies of American children in other areas, such as reading and science. We produce some extraordinarily well-educated individuals, but the technological society of the coming decades will require more than outstanding scientists and engineers. It will require well-educated and highly motivated common citizens. □

ABILITY GROUPING AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

(Continued from page 36)

Students are rewarded based on the performance of a group or team, they will be motivated to help and encourage one another to achieve. In a heterogeneous learning group, it is expected that, working among themselves, students will be able to solve problems or organize material presented by the teacher and to transmit the group's understanding to each individual.

Research on cooperative-learning in elementary and secondary schools has shown that the success of this grouping strategy depends on how it is organized. Instructionally effective cooperative-learning methods provide group rewards based on the individual learning of all group members. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions, Teams-Games-Tournaments, Team Assisted Individualization, Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition, and related methods all provide group rewards based on the sum or average of individual student learning performances.¹⁵ This means that if students wish to succeed as a group, they must focus their efforts on ensuring that every group member has mastered the material being studied. Research has consistently found that these methods increase student achievement in a variety of subjects and grade levels from 3 to 12. In contrast, methodologically adequate studies of cooperative learning methods in which students complete a single group worksheet or other group product have not found positive achievement effects. In addition to their impact on academic achievement, cooperative learning methods have produced several important noncognitive outcomes, including improvements in race relations and self-esteem.

Combining Cooperative Learning and Within-Class Ability Grouping. The most effective forms of cooperative learning for enhancing students' basic skills are two complex methods that combine cooperative learning with within-class ability grouping. These are Team Assisted Individualization (TAI) in mathematics and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) in reading, writing, and language arts.¹⁶ In TAI, students work in mixed-ability teams on material appropriate to their levels of math skills. Teammates check one another's work and help one another with problems. In the meantime, the teacher calls up groups of students from among the various teams who are working at the same point in the curriculum. For example, the teacher might call up a decimals group for a lesson on that subject. These students would leave their teams while their teammates continue working on self-instructional material back at the team table. Following the lesson, the students would return to their team areas, and the teacher might call up a fractions group for a lesson, and so on.

The achievement effects of TAI have been extraordinary: In six evaluations, TAI students have gained an average of twice as many grade equivalents as control students in mathematics computations. For example, in one study in inner-city Wilmington, Delaware, intermediate schools, TAI students gained an average of 1.65 grade equivalents in 18 weeks, while control students gained 0.61. Team Assisted Individualization has also been found to have a positive impact on race relations

and on attitudes toward mainstreamed peers.

Effects of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition method have been equally favorable. In CIRC, students work in mixed-ability teams on a series of reading activities, including reading aloud to one another and completing activities relating to story structure, reading comprehension, decoding, vocabulary, and spelling. In writing, they engage in peer-response groups in a writing-process model. Achievement gains from the CIRC model have been demonstrated on standardized tests of reading comprehension, language expression, and language mechanics. In a 24-week study, CIRC students gained 64% of a grade equivalent more than control students on these variables. Further, significant improvements were found on oral-reading measures and on ratings of writing samples. Positive effects were found not only for the samples as a whole, but also specifically for students receiving remedial reading (e.g., Chapter I) and special education services.

MUCH OF the debate about ability grouping over the past half century has revolved around the question of whether instruction must be adapted to students' individual needs. Proponents of ability grouping have always justified this practice on the basis that it gives all students instruction appropriate to their level of readiness. Yet accepting the idea that students need to have material taught at their level does not force us to any particular form of instructional grouping. There are many means of accommodating student differences. The most common of these, ability-grouped class assignment, has been repeatedly found to be ineffective for increasing student achievement, while having the most serious drawbacks of all grouping plans. There are several alternative means of grouping students for instruction that have considerably better evidence of effectiveness, little or no psychological damage, and less segregative potential. These grouping plans include the Joplin Plan, within-class ability grouping, and cooperative learning. Cooperative-learning methods in particular have an integrative effect on students of different ethnic backgrounds working together cooperatively on a routine basis. Studies of cooperative learning in desegregated schools regularly indicate improvement in intergroup relations.

The conclusions drawn in this article will be discomfiting both to those who believe that ability grouping is always appropriate and to those who believe that it is never appropriate. Yet the "always-never" debate has been in progress for decades, and most schools today

Most schools today are using the most potentially harmful form of ability grouping—ability-grouped class assignment.

are using the most potentially harmful form of ability grouping — ability-grouped class assignment. I hope this article will point the way to broader use of grouping strategies that maintain heterogeneous classes but group for specific purposes and brief periods, toward broader use of grouping strategies with little or no potential segregative impact, and toward broader use of cooperative learning methods that view student heterogeneity as a resource rather than a liability. □

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- For more on Teams-Games-Tournaments, see DeVries, D.L., and Slavin, R.E., in note 14 above.
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- For more on related methods of cooperative learning, see Slavin, R.E. (in press). Team Assisted Individualization: Combining cooperative learning and individualized instruction. *Arithmetic Teacher*.
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