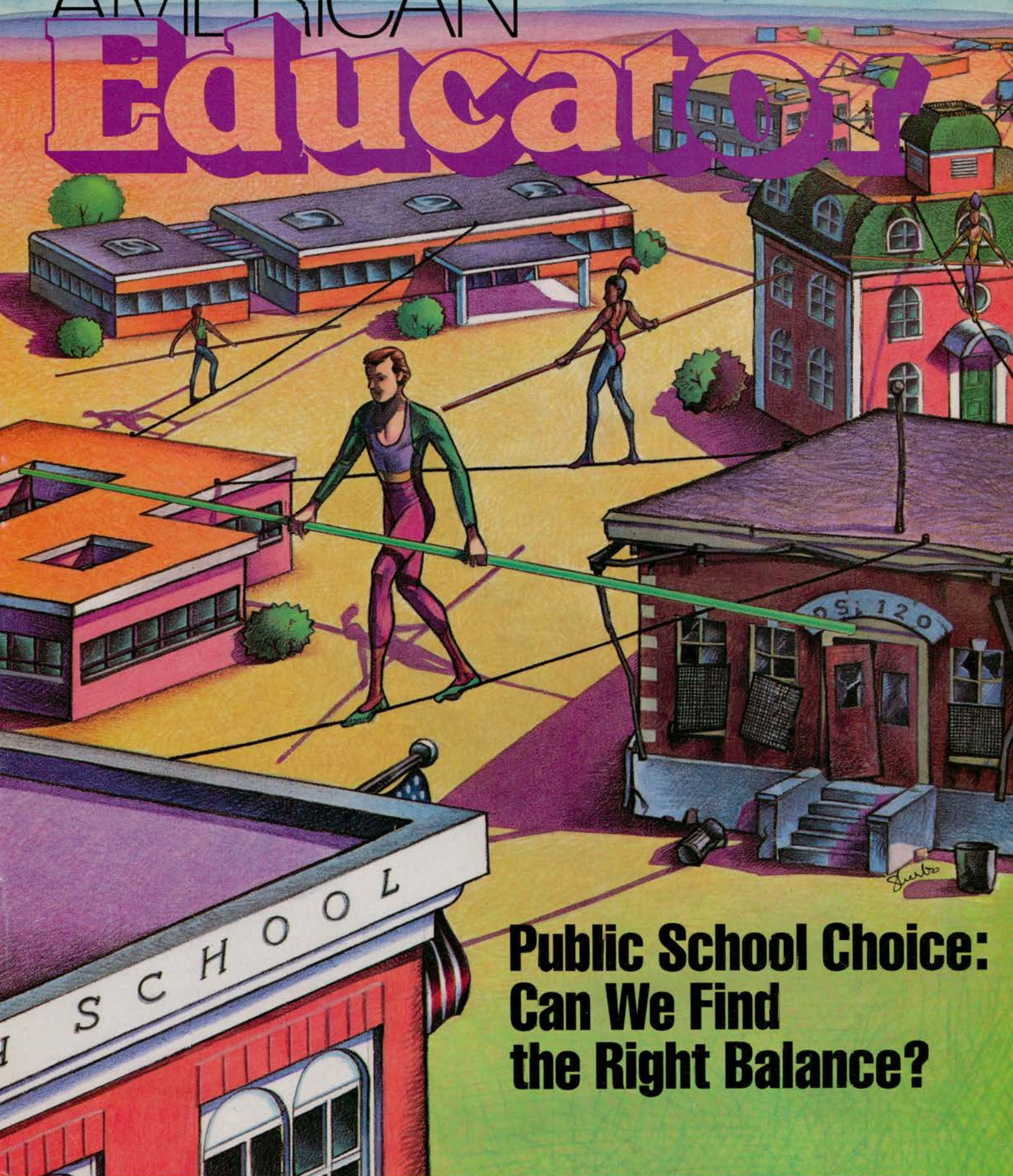


Child Labor ■ Breaking Out of the Recitation Script

AMERICAN

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SUMMER 1989

Educator



**Public School Choice:
Can We Find
the Right Balance?**

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AMERICAN Educator

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: CAN WE FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE?

8

By Bella Rosenberg

Public school choice is probably the hottest issue in education today. But the strong claims made by both advocates and opponents have often obscured the complexities, dilemmas, and tradeoffs involved. If diversity and choice become ends in themselves, if choice is not coupled with fundamental reform and the continuing quest for common excellence, the author concludes, the "choices" offered may be empty ones.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TEAM TEACHING?

15

By Barbara McKenna

A new form of team teaching—more accurately described as teamwork—has emerged as an important part of the middle school concept. Small, interdisciplinary teams of teachers meet regularly to coordinate procedures and to share information and ideas about their teaching and about each of their common students—all in an effort to help ensure the academic success of each child.

ROUSING SCHOOLS TO LIFE

20

By Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore

The "recitation script"—an assigned text or lecture followed by teacher questioning to determine whether the students have mastered the material—has been the predominant mode of instruction in American classrooms for more than one hundred years. It represents a profound misunderstanding of how intellectual growth takes place, say the authors, who call for schools to be re-organized to allow a new definition of teaching.

CHILDREN WHO LABOR:

THE TRAGEDY OF CHILD WORKERS AROUND THE WORLD

26

By Charles D. Gray and Robert A. Senser

In India, children younger than fourteen are responsible for tossing and catching sticks of molten glass. In China, they work fourteen-hour shifts making toys for export. In Thailand, they are leased into a form of indentured servitude. The authors describe the tragedy of child labor and the lack of international attention being paid to it.

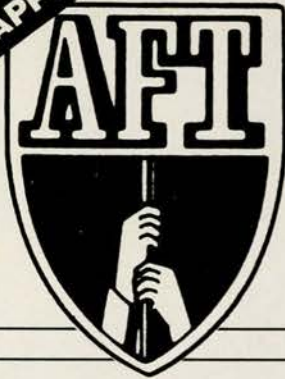
SCHEDULES THAT BIND

35

By Kathleen Cushman

The six- or seven-period day, the forty- or fifty-minute period, the same number of students in each class: These are the fixtures of our school schedules. But do they really make sense? Are there more educationally sound alternatives?

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PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: CAN WE FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE?

BY BELLA ROSENBERG

THE CURRENT American preoccupation with public school choice illustrates yet again that, while there may be nothing new under the sun, there's always something newly hot. Many public school districts and schools have offered some form of choice for many years now. Yet, with the exception of an occasional researcher, no one outside these districts—and frequently even inside these districts—has paid much attention. The only exception to this general indifference has been desegregation-related public school choice plans. But suddenly within the last year, and quite apart from desegregation goals, about half of the states in the nation have either considered or implemented some form of public school choice, and many local districts are doing the same.

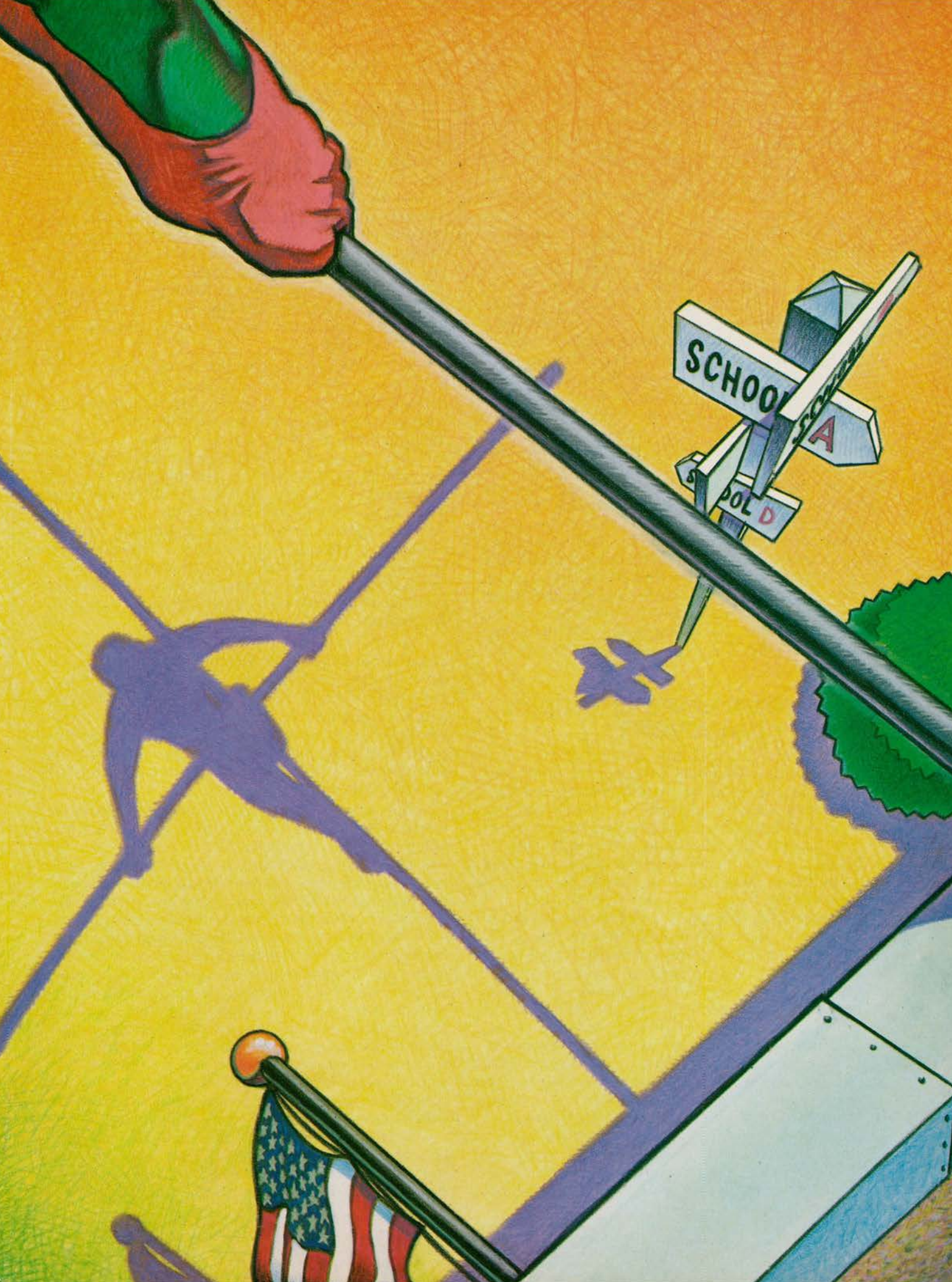
The federal government also has embraced public school choice. Most public school supporters feared that last January's White House Seminar on School Choice would herald the transfer of the tuition-tax-credit-and-vouchers baton from the Reagan to the Bush administration. Instead, public school choice was the rage of the day (quite literally so for school privatization advocates), and President Bush made it one of the main planks of his education platform.

Bella Rosenberg is assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Why the sudden fuss? One rather cynical explanation is that public school choice is merely the prelude to choice that includes private and religious schools. Having lost the privatization battle for now and in light of federal and state fiscal crunches, choice advocates have cooked up the half-loaf of public school choice in order to accustom the public's palate to the idea of public-private choice. Then, when budget woes are alleviated or there is even greater distress with public education, it will be easier to serve up the rest of the choice loaf—tuition tax credits and vouchers.

While such a strategy on the part of privatization advocates is not implausible, the newly found fervor for public school choice can neither be so easily explained nor summarily dismissed—especially since so many among the fervent are also strongly opposed to privatization. Rather, what seems to have inspired this movement is a set of claims so powerful and compelling that no champion of children and public education can fail to be moved: Public school choice, its advocates say, promotes educational diversity and quality, student motivation and achievement, and parental involvement and satisfaction. Public school choice, in this view, may be *the* reform that transcends and negates the need for most other education reforms.

To the extent that these claims can be substantiated, public school choice may indeed have powerful



implications for accelerating and achieving education reform. On the other hand, if these claims fail to pass muster, public school choice may end up diverting resources from more promising ideas or, worse, substituting for and thereby derailing education reform.

Where does the evidence point? Unfortunately, in a number of different and frequently contradictory directions. For one, even the arguments over choice fall into diverse categories, and each of them suggests a different course of action. Second, the evidence on choice is thin and is based on relatively few and diverse examples. Third, although people speak of public school choice as if it were a singular policy or phenomenon, it is in fact a rubric for a variety of policies and programs. It may mean intradistrict choice or interdistrict choice. Interdistrict choice, in turn, may mean only contiguous districts or an entire state. It may mean magnet schools or magnet programs operating either in an inter- or intradistrict context. It may mean creating a few magnet schools or programs or a virtually all-magnet system or no magnets at all. And it may mean some combination or permutation of these.

Perhaps the only conclusion one may confidently draw about public school choice at this time is that if it has been the salvation of some, it also has been the damnation of others. As this suggests, working one's way through the evidence does not so much lead to a choice between being for or against public school choice as it does to a series of dilemmas. Dilemmas are discomfiting. But given that the "some" and the "others" are children, teachers, parents, and public schools, this kind of equivocal and vexing research conclusion is not an excuse to read no more, succumb to our biases, and allow only politics to decide. It is, instead, reason to initiate a discussion.

DO WE NEED MORE CHOICE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Since there are many things that people want but don't have or have but could lose, political movements are generally not created around something desirable that is already widely available or safe from threat. The emergence of a public school choice movement would therefore suggest that there is no or very little diversity and choice in public education and that this is a bad thing, or that diversity and choice are under attack. Is this true? No and yes.

We certainly already have a considerable amount of diversity and choice within public schools, especially high schools. As *The Shopping Mall High School* made abundantly clear, most American high schools have adopted just about every fad, fancy, option, or requirement that has been marketed over the past fifteen or twenty years, and students have been free to pick and choose these wares in just about any way they saw fit.

Why take physics if something easier were available and it "counted" as much as physics? Why offer foreign languages when it was hard to find teachers, and students preferred the "Language of Rock"? Why figure out different ways of getting diverse students to be successful in valuable and rigorous subjects when you could help them and yourself to avoid the issue altogether by giving them the choice to substitute ersatz

courses with sexy and "relevant" titles? And who was responsible when students emerged from this choice system uneducated? Everyone, and no one at all.

During the past five to eight years, this kind of diversity and choice has been under attack. Virtually every state has raised its high school graduation requirements and more closely prescribed the courses necessary to meet those requirements. As a result, many electives and courses of study that once were acceptable for high school graduation have disappeared. It is therefore true that diversity and choice have been considerably curtailed. But that is because they have been judged to be a major reason for the ignorance of so many of our high school students and for the shortcomings of our public secondary education system—precisely the conditions that choice proponents claim that more diversity and choice will overcome.

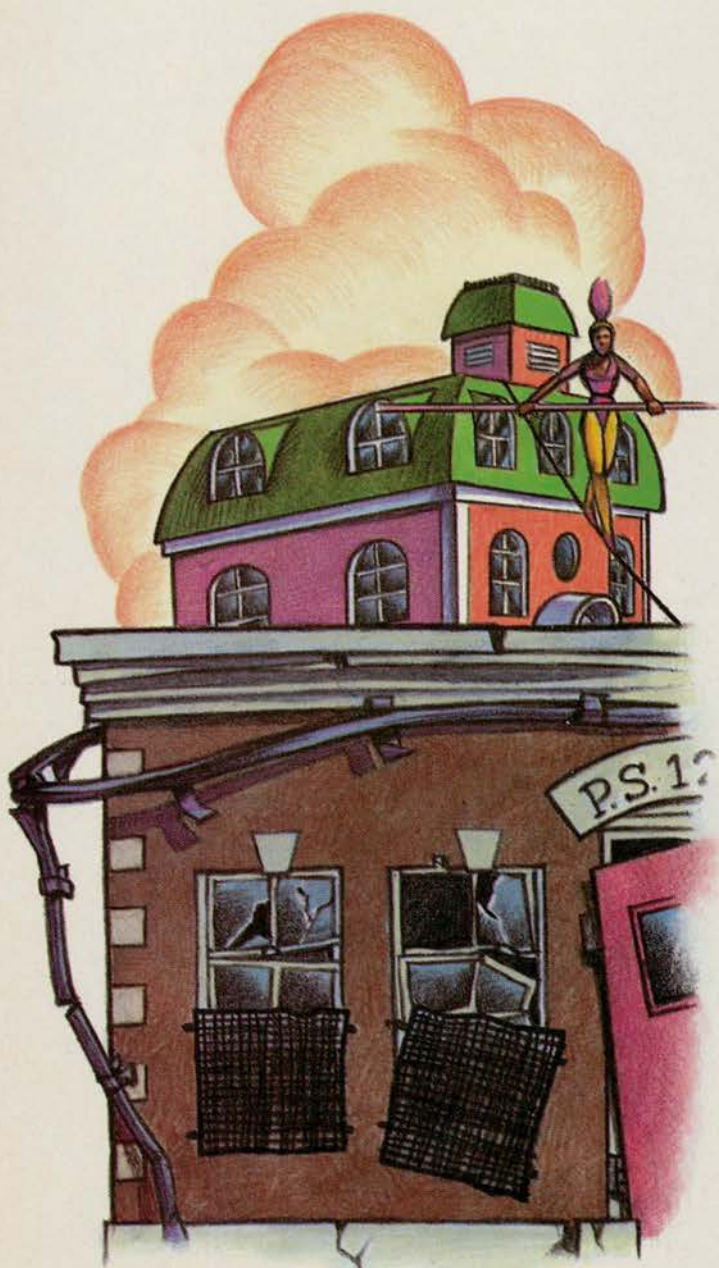
There is no reason to think that public school choice proponents want our educational system to be organized like a shopping mall, where all offerings are equally valid, where survival necessitates schools' pandering as much to the worst as to the best in customers, and where students vote with their feet and society pays for the recalls. But if history is any guide, it is not unreasonable to worry that choice will produce that outcome. Indeed, we already know that not every student is far-sighted enough to want or to be able to judge a quality education, not every district or school is above casting aside professional judgments about quality and standards in order to placate its various and diverse constituents, and not every parent is able or willing to discriminate wisely among schools.

The burden of any responsible choice system, then, is to balance individual freedom with social needs, diversity with commonality, style with substance, and parental and student preference with professional judgment about what constitutes a good education. That's easy to say but hard to do. Doing so also presents a paradox: Maximizing the chances that a public school choice system will improve education may mean regulating and delimiting choice.

Public school choice proponents are therefore wrong in arguing that there is no diversity and choice in American public education. That is certainly not the case with secondary education. And they may be naive in thinking that choice always produces diverse examples of exemplary behavior and good outcomes, for the experience of education and other sectors proves otherwise. Nevertheless, their fundamental argument about the lack of diversity and choice in public education is quite right. While there may be a great deal of it *within* schools, there is little of it between schools and between school districts. There are a great many *differences* between schools and school districts, largely because of enormous differences in their funding and student-body composition. But apart from that important exception, American schools and school districts vary little in their structure and methods, in the ways in which they have organized teaching and learning.

Given that we have more than sixteen thousand public school districts, many times that number of schools, and no national system of education, this degree of standardization is quite astonishing. Most of our school

The burden of any responsible choice system is to balance individual freedom with social needs, diversity with commonality, style with substance, and parental and student preference with professional judgment about what constitutes a good education.



districts admit and discharge students according to the same school calendar and organize their education by semester, usually two and no more than four a school year. The probability that these districts are using one or more of the ten most popular textbook series is very high, and the probability is even higher that their standardized testing system has been purchased from one of the five or six major American testing companies. Now that their curriculums are being realigned to fit these tests, chances are that even their scopes-and-sequences are becoming more similar.

As John Goodlad has pointed out, this similarity also extends to classrooms. Most of them are self-contained, with students sitting in rows facing one teacher at the front. Chalk-and-teacher-talk is still the prime teaching technology, and information processing, drill and practice, and recitation still the predominant mode of organizing learning. Greater variation in the organization of teaching and learning exists in the lower grades; very little in secondary schools, where Carnegie units and forty- or fifty-minute class periods conducted by teacher subject-matter specialists prescribe the routine of the day and week.

Although many of the features of this standardized school system are relatively new, its basic assumptions, structure, and methods have remained relatively intact for more than one hundred years. Reform waves have come and gone, depositing or clearing away the latest educational or social flotsam or jetsam, but the basic characteristics of the system have only become more firmly entrenched, elaborated, and rationalized. Whether this school system has been governed by thirty thousand or sixteen thousand locally elected or appointed boards, been decentralized or centralized, free of regulations or choked by them, the ways and means in which it has educated children has remained fundamentally the same. And little wonder: That is what it has always been asked to do.

Of course, it is not the dispiriting sameness of this school system that is at issue, but its lack of quality and its appalling results. Why does a broad spectrum of Americans who readily understand this nonetheless believe that choice can turn that system and its results around?

THE ARGUMENTS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

The case for public school choice essentially falls into two categories. The first is based on principle, and the arguments here are on solid grounds but infrequently invoked. The second and more instrumental category contains the arguments about the effects of choice, which are weakly grounded but repeatedly and loudly made.

The principled argument for public school choice asserts that a free and democratic society has a transcendent public interest in maintaining a public school system, but there is no similar public interest in requiring children to go to one public school rather than another. Parents therefore should be allowed to choose which public school their children attend, irrespective of the district or neighborhood they happen to live in.

Opponents of public school choice might attack this

argument on bureaucratic and administrative grounds, but they'd be hard pressed to deny the principle. The egalitarian component of this argument is even harder to assail. Public school choice, in this view, would reduce or eliminate the distinctions of wealth and residence in access to quality schooling and thereby equalize educational opportunity. Poor and minority children, especially, would be able to leave poorly funded, failing schools in the impoverished neighborhoods they live in through no fault of their own and attend well-funded, more successful schools in the wealthier neighborhoods that they and their parents can't afford to live in. Public school choice, then, would mean that no child would be trapped in a bad or poor school simply because of the economic or social circumstances of his parents.

The egalitarian argument for public school choice is highly compelling, but it is not without its ironies. For one, the last time public school choice was in the political limelight, during the heyday of desegregation, it was cast as an argument for preserving the right to stay in neighborhood schools and keep nonresidents out.

Second, although the egalitarian argument is now a mainstay among both liberal and conservative proponents of public school choice, neither group has yet addressed in their rhetoric or in their policies how the considerable political, social, practical, and fiscal barriers to creating such a choice system might be overcome. For example, virtually no current interdistrict choice plan requires districts to accept nonresident students; most of them are voluntary and on a space-available basis, and few wealthy districts volunteer and few spaces materialize. In the few instances where suburban districts have been required to accept students from their neighboring cities, they have behaved pretty much like selective private schools.

Of course, this behavior can be stopped—as was recently ordered in Milwaukee's suburbs after a long court battle—or it can be prohibited—as is the case in a number of recent interdistrict choice plans. But so long as public school choice is on a space-available basis, so long as parents from wealthier neighborhoods and schools are permitted to remain in their assigned schools and show no inclination to send their children to poor neighborhoods and schools—and until school finance equalization is also achieved—it is hard to imagine the egalitarian principle of public school choice being realized in practice. It is also hard to envision these conditions being met without bumping into the reality that increasing the freedom and choices of some members of society frequently involves curtailing the freedom and choices of others. This is hardly an unprecedented event, but neither is it one without political, social, and economic controversy and pain—and, frequently, some unintended consequences that undermine the very goals such policies have strived to achieve.

It is therefore not surprising that most organizations representing the interests of poor and minority children have either been negative, skeptical, or conspicuously silent about public school choice. For although choice proponents may genuinely believe that this reform will advance the interests of poor and minority children, so far none of the choice proposals or laws has either

But while the discipline of the market sorts itself out, Westonka's remaining students are likely to be treated to an inferior or partial education.



raised or resolved any of the issues that must be addressed to make others believe in the possibility of this outcome.

THE SECOND set of arguments for public school choice is directly concerned with outcomes. Unlike the principled case for choice, in which choice is an end, a good in and of itself, the instrumental case sees choice as the means to attain educational diversity and quality, student achievement, and parent, student, faculty, and community satisfaction.

The way public school choice will achieve these outcomes, this argument goes, is through competition, which is currently lacking in public education. Competition, in turn, is the means or incentive for increasing educational quality and "consumer" satisfaction, just as in a market economy. Deprived of their more-or-less guaranteed student bodies, schools will have to become more responsive to consumer demand (which is presumed to be for educational rigor and quality) in order to attract customers and the public dollars that come with them. Weak schools will have to improve or lose students and resources and perhaps go under, while good schools will be rewarded with more students and resources. Choice, then, would bring the accountability of the market to bear on public schools, and the result would be a large net gain in educational quality and public satisfaction, if not total improvement.

It is worth exploring what this argument tells us about what a growing number of intelligent people think is responsible for the poor performance of our public education system. Our educational woes, they are telling us, are largely due to the fact that our public education system has a virtual monopoly on schooling. Because we have few competitors and a more-or-less guaranteed supply of customers, if our "products" are not turning out right, then there is little to compel us to improve. There are no rewards and few incentives for improving—indeed, there are many disincentives—and there are no negative consequences for failing to improve. This may not explain why and how the personnel within the system behave, a kinder version of this argument goes, but it does describe the public education system. And a system like that is bound to have an astringent effect on the imagination and energy of the individuals within it and on their inclination to search out and try new ways of doing things when the old ways are failing.

A few quibbles notwithstanding, this is not an inaccurate account of public education. The question is: To what extent can the remedy it suggests work? Will choice in public education bring the principles of a competitive market economy to bear on schools? The answer logically depends on the extent to which schools do or can work like a free or even regulated market. And that is very little or not at all.

As American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker has pointed out:

In the private for-profit sector . . . [t]here is a lot of ingenuity because you can make or lose a lot of money. But that's not what happens in school choice plans. A school district that loses students loses at most only the money it takes to educate

those students. Many large urban districts have been losing thousands of students over the years and, unlike profit-making businesses, have done little to stem the tide. Nor do they expand the school programs that have waiting lists or do something about the schools that are failing and being abandoned.

Similarly, why would any district want to attract more students if these students bring with them, at most, only the money it will cost to educate them? For the most part, gaining or losing students under choice plans does not result in making profit or losing profit and would therefore not act, as many claim, as a stimulus to improvement.¹

Individual schools are even less like profit-making businesses than school districts. For one, they have very little control over their own budget. Second, they have decreasing discretion over their own programs. Third, they can't respond if there is increased consumer demand by increasing their space, at least not without the permission of central authorities and voters. And finally, they, too, get just enough and, frequently, not enough money to educate their students. Poor districts and schools are therefore hardly in a position to attract students from high-spending districts and schools, while wealthy districts and schools are unlikely to want to attract students who will raise their costs of education.

CONSIDER THE case of Westonka, a small, low- and middle-income community in Minnesota, the first state in the nation to offer statewide public school choice. Seventy percent of Westonka's residents do not have school-age children. The voters recently defeated a property tax increase, which forced the school board to slash \$750,000 from its projected \$12 million budget. Seven teaching positions were eliminated, as well as funds for teacher salary increases and building maintenance. About 117 of the district's twenty-five hundred students have applied for transfers to other school districts. If they leave, Westonka will lose an additional \$350,000 in state funds and be forced to trim its budget and program further.² The result is likely to be further deterioration in the quality of education and further loss of students and funds.

Westonka may be pursuing an economically rational course for itself by downsizing and perhaps phasing out its educational system. And according to the laws of the market, this will be good in the end. But while the discipline of the market sorts itself out, Westonka's remaining students are likely to be treated to an inferior or partial education. And certainly Westonka's schools, which have every incentive to attempt to attract non-resident students and the state dollars they would bring, will be unable to compete.

What of the districts and schools that are attracting Westonka's students? Since they are only receiving the state funds attached to Westonka's students, they must make up the additional costs out of their own pockets. How much longer can they do so or for how many more nonresident students? How much longer will they be willing to do so, considering that the parents of nonresident students don't pay taxes in their districts? And

what if money were no object, but classroom space ran out? Would district A be able to expand its schools to accommodate the students from districts X, Y, and Z as a successful for-profit business could? Would district A be able to take over the school buildings of another district whose schools were being abandoned, much like a successful business could take over a failing firm?

Or consider the case of intradistrict choice, where the funding issues are less complex. Schools A, B, C are desirable, schools X, Y, Z are not. Many parents want their children out of schools X, Y, Z, but few parents wish to transfer their children out of A, B, C, so there are few places to accommodate the excess demand for the desirable schools. Are parents all told that the playing field will be leveled, that is, that they will not be given first preference for their neighborhood school? This will make happy parents unhappy, give unhappy parents some hope, and, ultimately, result in roughly the same number of happy and unhappy parents. Or will desirable schools A, B, C be expanded by adding portable classroom space? That would mean hiring new teachers—from the excess teachers from schools X, Y, Z, the unsuccessful schools, or from some other source? And what happens to schools X, Y, Z, the “leftover” schools? How many students have to leave before it is declared a failure and shuts down? And what about the need for space? Can schools A, B, C take over undesirable and depopulating schools X, Y, Z? Can they successfully replicate their program and run more than one school? Do they inherit the principals and faculties of the unsuccessful schools or hire anew? Or does nothing happen except for the development of a long waiting list for the successful schools? In that case, will the “bad” schools continue to compete to hold on to their students, knowing that the good schools don’t have and can’t get space? How, then, will competition drive out poor quality and promote overall improvement?

None of the problems these questions raise is insurmountable, and none of them constitutes an argument against choice. They do, however, suggest that school systems and schools do not work like free markets. Consequently, choice will not automatically bring the discipline of the market to bear on education, at least not without a host of other changes that choice proponents have not grappled with and society thus far has been disinclined to pursue.

THE OTHER major argument for choice also has its roots in economic thought, but it is less dependent on market analogies. This argument says that when an individual is able to choose a product or a service, the result is a greater commitment to that product or service. Similarly, when an individual chooses to be part of an institution or group and that entity chooses to accept the individual, there is greater mutual commitment and satisfaction. In short, choice is better than coercion, not only for moral reasons but because of its more positive results. Irrespective, then, of competition, incentives, and the other accoutrements of a market, choice proponents argue, if families/students could choose their public schools, then there would be greater mutual commitment between families/students and schools and greater satisfaction. Thus far, the evidence tends to

support that argument.

The final, and unquestionably the premier, argument for public school choice is that it will improve student achievement and lower dropout and absentee rates. No other argument for public school choice has so captured the public imagination, and no other argument has been so oft repeated. Unfortunately, the evidence supporting this claim is highly suspect.

The evidence choice proponents use comes largely from the experience of magnet schools. By and large, magnet schools do tend to achieve average student test scores that are higher than the district average and dropout and absentee rates that are lower than the district average. This, however, is not surprising because the students in magnets and other schools of choice tend to represent a selected student population. Students at the lowest end of the achievement scale are rarely found in magnets, while students at the upper end of the motivation scale are disproportionately present. (Even if the student is not especially motivated, his parents generally are or else they wouldn’t have gone to the trouble of seeking out an alternative to their neighborhood school. Families or students are not, after all, randomly assigned to schools of choice.)

Nor is this the case only with selective magnet schools. Even where magnets have no academic admissions criteria, they tend to tap a selected student population whose motivation is high even if their prior achievement scores do not reflect it. And even when magnets admit a cross-section of the achievement range (high, middle, and low), the resulting student body is still unrepresentative because few neighborhood urban schools today have such an academically mixed student body.

We therefore do not really know if magnet schools are “adding more value” to their students than other schools do because magnet students as a group were generally already above the district or neighborhood school average prior to their coming to the magnet. Indeed, the only way to substantiate the case that choice by itself “adds value” to students is to find or create a control group of students whose characteristics match the magnet students but who do not attend a magnet and then research the outcomes for these two groups. Ideally, too, there would be controls for the different characteristics of the magnet and assigned school, such as different levels of funding. No such work has yet been presented.

SINCE DISTRICT 4 in New York City is perhaps the most commonly used reference for the benefits of public school choice, it is worth exploring how the district achieved its results. District 4, in East Harlem, is one of the city’s poorest districts and once had the lowest achieving schools in the city. About ten years ago, the district adopted a choice plan and implemented schools-within-schools, mostly, but not exclusively, in its junior high schools. Over the years, choice has also spread to elementary schools. And over the years, District 4’s schools have gone from the lowest end of the achievement scale to about midpoint.

Did choice perform a miracle in District 4? There is no question that the district’s schools have improved.

(Continued on page 40)

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TEAM TEACHING?



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

Team teachers at Chinquapin Middle School in Baltimore meet regularly to discuss their work and monitor the progress of their common students.

BY BARBARA MCKENNA

AT CHINQUAPIN Middle School, on the outskirts of Baltimore, five sixth-grade teachers, an assistant principal, and a guidance counselor are sitting down for one of their twice-weekly, hour-long planning meetings. The teachers are members of the Crawley team, one of two interdisciplinary teams that make up the sixth-grade Tunbridge House, a school-within-a-school at the 1,100-student middle school, serving grades six

through eight.

On this day, the team is sitting down with the father of one of its students—a young man who is not applying himself in school: His grades are slipping, he's dozing off in class, not turning in homework assignments, and is generally "playful" when he should be serious.

As the teachers run through a litany of incidents, they add evidence of the boy's proven aptitude; the profile they create is of a student who can do better. They share theories of why he may be having difficulties. The guidance counselor asks the father, is there any reason the boy would be tired? Or otherwise acting out?

Barbara McKenna, former editor of the Educational Record, is a staff writer with the AFT.

Through discussion, it emerges that after school, the boy—whom we'll call John—takes care of his nine-year-old brother until his parents return from work at 5:30 or so. John's brother is handicapped. A teacher suggests that this responsibility may be too much to ask of an eleven year old. They decide to call John in to join the conference.

John's eyes turn into saucers when he sees his father in the room. As the discussion progresses, he sinks slowly in his chair until his head just peeps above the table. The teachers are gentle but firm. Together with John and his father, they work out a new regimen and agree to keep a daily record of his progress for the time being.

When father and son leave the room, the teachers spend the remaining meeting time discussing how the flexible block of time in the next morning's schedule will be broken up between the core classes.

This has been a somewhat typical meeting for the team. During the week, similar meetings take place for the seven other teams that make up the four houses of Chinquapin. The houses, named after the streets surrounding the school, represent grades six, seven, eight, and the special education program. The teams are organized two to a house, and take their names from prominent figures in the city or school's history. (The Crawley team, for example, is named after the late Eugene Crawley, who worked for many years, until his death on the job, as a maintenance man for the school.)

Each teacher team comprises five core teachers—usually from the subject areas of English, social studies, science, math, reading, or physical education. When the teachers are not meeting with parents and modifying schedules, they discuss what is going on in their classes, coordinate homework loads and, when time permits, share information about their lessons. The meetings come in addition to the teachers' daily forty-five-minute individual planning times.

Each core teacher is assigned approximately thirty heterogeneously grouped students, for whom they take primary advisory responsibility. As a team, they are in charge of 150 students. As the year progresses, the teachers come to know the foibles of each of those students well and can regroup them when necessary. They work together to manage the students' academic progress and reinforce skills being developed in each other's classes. And, perhaps more importantly for students of this age group, the teachers work with their team guidance counselor to monitor their students' emotional and social development and to collaborate on consistent strategies to address students' individual discipline problems.

Since 1972, when the school was the first in the city to be reorganized into a middle school with houses and interdisciplinary teams, Chinquapin has been transformed from one of the worst schools in Baltimore to one of the best, according to one city official.

Craig Spilman, the principal who oversaw the school's transition, says that the number of suspensions dropped from over 225 in the last year before the transition to just 35 in the next year. During those same two years, the attendance rates went from the low 80s to 94 percent. Moreover, there is now a strong feeling of community to the place, where teachers collaborate with each other and with administrators to achieve their

goals, where students are not allowed to slip anonymously through the cracks, and where parents show a greater involvement with their children's education than is to be found in more traditional schools.

THE GROWTH OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

The hallmark of Chinquapin and hundreds of other middle schools like it, say experts in middle-grade education, is the interdisciplinary team. In fact, anyone seeking examples of the team-teaching phenomenon that was briefly popular during the knock-down-the-walls liberalization of education in the 1960s is inevitably directed to middle schools. And, while the team teaching of an earlier era—teachers collaborating on coursework and working together in one classroom—still survives, the teaming that most interests educators and policy makers today is that which is being developed and refined in middle schools.

Team teaching "is a phrase that conjures up bad images in teachers' minds," says Paul George, a professor of education at the University of Florida who has been studying middle school organization for many years. "It implies constant work, differentiated staffing, hierarchies of people, skills, and time that people don't have." George believes that this traditional team teaching, with its central office directives and inadequate planning time, is today "almost nonexistent."

Teamwork, on the other hand, is a growing movement, says George. "Teachers working in teams organized on the basis of common students, common locations in parts of a building, and common schedules is the way one-third of the middle schools in this country operate."

The most important ingredient, George maintains, is team planning time. The time may be used for setting common rules and procedures, meeting with specialists, and preparing for and holding parent conferences. "Teachers are skillful at interpersonal communication and will work diligently to get things done if they're given the extra time. When you give teachers this time, parent conferences skyrocket in terms of frequency and duration." But you can't squeeze blood from a stone, George adds, or take the time "out of the hides of teachers." In his opinion, "the money should go to giving teachers more time."

Joyce Epstein is director of the Effective Middle Grades Program of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS). She agrees that interdisciplinary teams are "the keystone of effective middle schools."

CREMS will soon be releasing the results of a survey of 2,400 of the 25,000 schools nationally that contain the seventh grade. Among its findings: 42 percent of students nationwide experience interdisciplinary teams at some time between the grades of five and nine. But Epstein adds this crucial caveat: Only one-third of those principals who report such teaming allow at least two hours per week of team planning time, the amount experts consider a minimum for effective teaming. In other words, only close to 14 percent of students in this age group are ever taught by a team that can depend on



this essential ingredient deemed necessary for success by the research.

While the CREMS survey documents practices, Epstein says there is little hard research on middle school outcomes, "because the concepts are relatively new." One study done by George in 1983, however, looked at 130 "exemplary" middle schools and found that 90 percent used interdisciplinary teams.

Another middle school researcher, Kenneth McEwin of Appalachian State University, has also recently completed a study of middle school and junior high programs and practices. In comparison to twenty years ago, the number of junior high schools organized by grades seven to nine has decreased by 53 percent (from 4,711 in 1970-71 to 2,191 in 1986-87), whereas the number of middle schools including grades six to eight has grown during the same period by 160 percent (from 1,662 to 4,329). Today, middle schools far outnumber junior high schools. His study found that 25 to 33 percent of those schools use interdisciplinary teams.

That data, linked to George's earlier findings on the features of exemplary schools, suggests to McEwin "that the interdisciplinary team idea is catching on because it works so well."

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Interdisciplinary teaming works well for two reasons, say educators. First and foremost, teams of teachers working with the same group of students meet the challenging needs of a difficult age group, preadolescents caught between childhood and adulthood. But a secondary reason for team success is that it allows teachers greater control over decisions affecting their classrooms.

"Preadolescence is a tumultuous time," observes Willie Foster, principal of Chinquapin. Students go through profound physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes comparable only to the rapid developmental changes of infancy. With the added contemporary pressures of drugs, sexual activity, changing family units, and high drop-out rates down the road, young adolescents are particularly at risk of failure.

Preston Shaw, principal of the Shrewsbury Middle School in Massachusetts and a trustee of the National Middle Schools Association, says that the middle grades are the make-or-break point for many high school graduates. "People are looking at the kinds of problems these kids are having and are seeing that dropouts begin in the seventh or eighth grade. This is where we begin to lose them. Teachers working in teams get to know their kids and build their self-esteem. They provide a good balance between academics and socialization. Kids feel there is someone out there who knows them."

In "Caught in the Middle," a 1987 report of the California Superintendent's Middle Grade Task Force, state superintendent for public instruction Bill Honig observes: "For many students, the middle grades represent the last chance to develop a sense of academic purpose and personal commitment to educational goals."

Honig continues, "Perhaps the most critical aspect of these transitional years for students is the change from



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

A team of Chinquapin teachers meets with a student (top) and alone as a group (bottom).

one teacher to many teachers. The faculty and the schedule must be organized so that small groups of teachers share the same students and are enabled to work together collegially. The investment in collegial faculty relationships is the hallmark of the most successful middle schools." Acting on the extensive recommendations of the task force report, California is currently in the midst of a major, statewide middle-grade education reform effort.

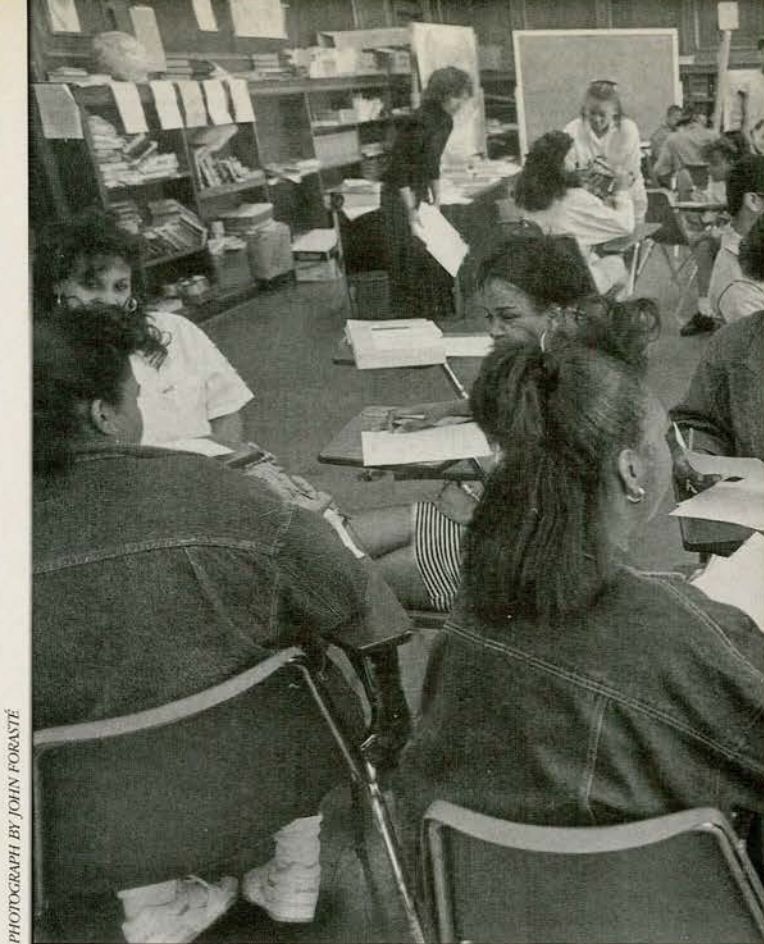
For teachers, interdisciplinary teams break down the isolation of the self-contained classroom. They build a sense of collegiality and help all teachers deal more successfully with the discipline problems that can sidetrack or undermine a teacher's academic goals. The teachers at Chinquapin, who are members of the AFT-affiliated Baltimore Teachers Union, have a greater sense of staff cohesiveness, says eighth-grade social studies teacher Deborah Hamlette. In their classes, they will work to reinforce skills being developed in other disciplines or will make important connections with material being taught in other classes.

Not incidental to teachers' satisfaction with teaming are the host of practices that are intrinsic to a successful team approach. Converting a departmentalized school to a team organization requires plenty of inservice training, says Shaw, who has worked over the past twelve years with over one hundred schools on conversions. "You need time spent on visitations to other schools, workshops [on new teacher roles], and study of the developmental needs of preadolescent kids. Even then, until teachers open their doors and start to do it, they don't always see how it will work." Ideally, he says, it takes two years to effect the conversion. "Shock results when teachers are not well prepared."

Another source of satisfaction is extra planning time and flexible scheduling that lets teachers modify the time they have to meet the needs of their students and the task at hand. Though heterogeneous groupings are the goal, teachers have the freedom to regroup by ability. "Teachers have ownership," says Shrewsbury principal Shaw. "Administrators must give up some of their decision-making power." One teacher who was initially wary of the change told Shaw later, "I feel human, like an adult. I would never go back."

The Filer Middle School in Dade County, Florida, is in its third year of a conversion and is operating under a United Teachers of Dade-negotiated school-based management, shared-decision making plan. Because it is a pilot program, says school counselor and special assistant to the principal Barbara Reark, the school conducted a survey of teacher reactions. Over 95 percent of the teachers felt they had input into the planning, management, and running of the school. This empowerment comes from the system of committees charged with governing the school. But the teachers also note tremendous advantages to the team approach.

"Teachers are taking more responsibility for providing kids with a variety of support and resources," says Reark. "Home-school contacts are better. In lesson planning, flexibility in methodology is encouraged. For example, this year the eighth grade has a student-at-risk program. Those teachers were given carte blanche." Teachers can decide to move students around if they are having a problem in one place, "to get a fresh start."



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN FORASTÉ

TEAMING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

While middle-grade schools have proven to be the most amenable to the concept of interdisciplinary teams, the only barrier to high school teaming is a stronger aversion to breaking out of the traditional departmentalized structure. In fact, says Paul George, interdisciplinary teaming was first advocated for the high school.

In those flagship districts that have undertaken wide-scale reforms, such as Rochester and Dade, teaming and freed-up time in the teacher's schedule for planning are occurring as part of the restructuring effort. The "house plan," which was discussed at length in the Spring issue of this magazine ("Smaller Is Better") features interdisciplinary teams as the high school's primary organizational component. Similarly, the Köln-Holweide School in Cologne, Germany, has attracted great attention in this country for its successful use of teacher teams with one important difference—teachers follow the same group of students from the fifth grade through the tenth.

Hope High School in Providence, Rhode Island, has recently introduced interdisciplinary teams as part of its Coalition for Essential Schools project.* As a case study, Hope Essential High School is interesting for a number of reasons. The conversion of a part of the traditional high school to an Essential School involved the collaboration of the high school teachers and principal, the Providence Teachers Union, the superintendent, and

*The Coalition of Essential Schools is a network of schools, each trying to put into practice the ideas about education developed in *Horace's Compromise*, by TheodoreSizer.



By joining forces, Hope Essential School teachers Kay Scheidler (standing, back, left) and John Zilboorg (front) are able to break from the common routine with different kinds of groupings for different kinds of activities.

the Brown University Coalition. The teams start with ninth graders and follow the students as they proceed through subsequent grades. With the substantial effort of PTU president Marsha Reback, teacher concerns about planning time, the faculty selection process, and other working conditions were resolved by negotiating them into the union's contract.

Hope is entering the third year of its Essential Schools project. Since its inception in 1987, the number of teams operating has grown to three, with four teachers on each team. Inspired by the Köln-Holweide school, the first team of teachers started with the ninth grade and has followed the students as they have progressed through subsequent grades.

According to lead teacher Albin Moser, the teams and proximity of the teachers have created "a greater feeling of community." The teamwork that takes place involves sharing information about students, establishing standard sets of policies and practices within the team or across the program for consistency. As written into the contract, the teachers have a free period each day over and above their regular unassigned period. Two days per week, the team uses this time for joint planning. The other days, they meet with students or parents or come together to plan cross-disciplinary units.

The teaming has given teachers a "total support system," says Moser. "Teachers can rely on each other more than they ever did before because they have students in common. The typical bane of teachers' existence is discipline problems. One teacher working alone can make a dent in an individual class, but the problem student may act up in another. With a team, four people working together can get the student to control his or

her behavior."

The initial challenge for the teachers, says Moser, was giving up some autonomy. "The traditional high school teacher is lord within the classroom. When you join a teaching team, you are making a commitment that you will adopt a policy that the team decides will work best. Yet the teachers opt to do it. They are ready to make a change and they are flexible people."

Two teachers on the original team have chosen to use their time to design curriculum units that they co-teach together in the traditional team teaching model. Kay Scheidler has taught high school English for twenty years. Her colleague, John Zilboorg, has been teaching history for almost as long. Their decision two years ago to co-teach a literature and history unit has charged up their work and that of their students.

"Last year, we taught Western Civilization to ninth graders," says Zilboorg. "When I was teaching Greece and Rome, Kay had them reading mythology. For the Middle Ages, they wrote Medieval romances. The kids were making associations all the time. They delve more deeply because they're studying double the amount of time."

"And because we reinforce the same skills," adds Scheidler, "our kids are good, powerful writers. We emphasize reading, analysis, discussion, and writing. We hadn't planned it, but that's what's happening. Our kids are superb at discussion and contextual analysis."

Though the teachers bring the classes together a number of times, the real teaming comes in preparing course material and coordinating content. Between planning meetings, they send notes back and forth between their adjacent classrooms.

As rewarding as their collaboration has been, the two say it is hard to separate it from the interdisciplinary team organization, which allows the team teaching to happen. Next year, they are planning a unit on nuclear war to be co-taught with the science teacher.

THE SEEDS OF REFORM

In the past few years, middle schools have come to the fore as policy-making groups, such as the National Governor's Association and the Children's Defense Fund, have identified preadolescent education as the point of intervention for addressing the later dropout problems. Recently, not only California but also Maryland and Virginia have mandated statewide conversions of all middle-grade schools into a middle school configuration. This June, a task force report by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development is expected to call for a major initiative to transform middle-grade education nationwide.

In the context of that interest, interdisciplinary team organization merits additional attention from school districts contemplating restructuring—many of which already have the seeds of effective team organization planted in their midst. The principles that are proving effective for preadolescents may also apply to high school students—especially those at risk. And, as a corollary to better serving youth's needs, the needs of teachers for greater professionalization and control of their working environment may also be served by expanding the opportunities for teaming. □

ROUSING SCHOOLS TO LIFE

BY ROLAND G. THARP AND RONALD GALLIMORE

Go back in memory, to the school of your childhood. Go farther, if you can—travel back in time, to the North American classrooms of your great, great grandmothers. Go back a century. The trick would be to keep your eyes closed. Of course there are fewer jeans, and the skirts are different. Textbooks are less brightly colored. But just listening to the teachers and students, you might not notice the time warp.

Before the Civil War:

Young teachers are very apt to confound rapid questioning and answers with sure and effective teaching. (Morrison, 1860, p.303; quoted in Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969, p. 153.)

At the Turn of the Century:

Sara Burstall, an Englishwoman, visited American schools in 1908 and was struck by the ubiquity of the "time-honoured" question-answer

recitation In the European schools the teacher was at the center of the learning process; he lectured, questioned the pupils, and "buil[t] up new knowledge in class." In contrast, in the American classroom, "clearly . . . the master is the textbook." The teacher does not really teach but "acts rather as chairman of a meeting, the object of which is to ascertain whether [the students] have studied for themselves in a textbook." (Burstall, 1909, pp. 156-58; quoted in Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969, p. 150.)

And Today:

The writer is William Bennett, former Secretary of Education:

In three major studies, the National Science Foundation found that most science education follows the traditional practice: "At all grade levels, the predominant method of teaching was recitation (discussion) with the teacher in control, supplementing the lesson with new information (lecturing). The key to the information and basis for reading assignments was the textbook" (Smith, 1980, p.166). If science is presented like this, is it any wonder that children's natural curiosity about their physical world turns into boredom by the time they leave grade school—and into dangerous ignorance later on? (Bennett, 1986, p.26.)

"Recitation." Everywhere in North American schools. "Recitation." The most frequently reported form of interactive teaching. "Recitation" has been described in the educational literature for over ninety years and continues today as a major portion of all student and teacher interactions.

What is this ubiquitous "recitation"? It consists of the teacher assigning a "text" (in the form of a textbook or a lecture), followed by a series of teacher questions that

Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore are authors of Rousing Minds to Life (Cambridge University Press, 1989), from which the ideas of this article have been drawn. Both were long associated with "KEEP"—the Kamehameha Elementary Education Project—and have published extensively on issues of multicultural and effective education, as well as theoretical issues of child and cognitive development. Tharp is dean designate of the School of Human Behavior at United States International University, San Diego, and professor of psychology at the University of Hawaii, where he teaches in the preservice teacher education and community psychology program. Gallimore is professor of psychology, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, and a professor at the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, where he teaches educational and developmental psychology and the role of culture in socialization and behavioral change.



require the students to display their mastery of the material through convergent factual answers. Recitation questioning seeks predictable, correct answers. It includes up to 20 percent "yes/no" questions. Only rarely in recitation are teacher questions responsive to student productions. Only rarely are they used to assist students to develop more complete or elaborate ideas.

This dismal portrait does not describe only schools of time past, nor some few unlucky or deprived communities of the present. Goodlad (1984) reported a similar picture in his broadly based survey of thirty-eight American schools, in thirteen communities, and seven regions of the United States. Teachers emphasized rote learning and immediate responses, a pattern rather like television game shows. On the average, only seven of 150 minutes of the school day involved a teacher responding to a student's work. Most of the time, teachers talked. Almost never were there opportunities for give and take between a challenging teacher and learning students. The student role was passive, and few teachers made any effort to adapt instruction to individual differences.

Even the contemporary enthusiasm for effective teaching "scripts" has not changed the nature of student-teacher interaction. In its worst forms, scripted teaching is little more than the recitation script of earlier eras. It emphasizes rote learning and student passivity, facts and low-level questions, and low-level cognitive functions. It does little to promote intellectual development, cultural literacy, and thoughtful citizenship of the kinds that *A Nation at Risk* identified as crucial. Are recitation and scripted teaching the best we can do?

No.

A NEW DEFINITION OF TEACHING

The human sciences of the last half-century have made it possible to define another kind of teaching and to help teachers do it. What has galvanized research on teaching in the past few years are some linchpin concepts from recently translated works of a Russian psychologist who ran afoul of Stalinist repression and who died more than fifty years ago. L. S. Vygotsky's ideas are profoundly affecting our understanding of teaching, learning, and cognitive development through the work of many "neoVygotskian" researchers in various nations who now elaborate, correct, and develop this body of work.*

Much of this work has focused on "natural teaching" of home and community. It is now clear that long before they enter school, children are being "taught" higher-order cognitive and linguistic skills. Their teaching takes place in the everyday interactions of domestic life. Within these goal-directed activities, the teaching consists of more-capable family and friends assisting children to do things the children cannot do alone. In such teaching, the subject of direct instruction are the tasks themselves, not communication or thinking skills *per se*. Yet the pleasures of the social interaction seem suffi-

*See Tharp and Gallimore (1989) *Rousing Minds to Life: Teaching, Learning, and Schooling in Social Context*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Vygotsky's insights have the most profound implications for how we think of teaching.



cient to lure a child into learning the language and cognition of the caregiver.

Vygotsky's insights have the most profound implications for how we think of teaching. In his theory, the developmental level of a child is identified by what the child can do alone. What the child can do with the assistance of another defines what he called the *zone of proximal development*. Distinguishing the proximal zone from the developmental level by contrasting assisted versus unassisted performance has profound implications for educational practice. It is in the proximal zone that teaching may be defined. In Vygotskian terms, teaching is good only when it "*awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development*" (Vygotsky, 1956, p.278, quoted in Wertsch and Stone, 1985, italics original).

We can, therefore, derive this general definition of teaching: Teaching consists of assisting performance through the zone of proximal development. Teaching can be said to occur when assistance is offered at points in the ZPD at which performance requires assistance. *Teaching must be redefined as assisted performance. Teaching consists of assisting performance. Teaching is occurring when performance is achieved with assistance.*

Teaching is not only assessing learners, it is assisting them.

From Natural Teaching to Instructional Conversation

There are many ways to assist performance. Behavioral and cognitive science have studied several in detail: modeling, contingency management, feeding back, directing, questioning, and explaining. Many properly conducted classroom activities provide assistance: lectures, demonstrations, cooperative learning groups, and textbook reading can all assist learning, and even the judicious use of recitation and assessment are necessary elements of the assisting classroom. But for the development of thinking skills, in particular the abilities to form, express, and exchange ideas in speech and writing, the critical form of assisting learners is through dialogue, through the questioning and sharing of ideas and knowledge that happen in conversation.

Conversation that assists performance appears in several guises. In successful students' homes, it appears as storybook and story telling, as helping mother or father with the accounts, or older sister or brother with the grocery lists. It is the way that parents teach their children language and letters. In the workplace or the athletic field, it is disguised as the chatter that accompanies action. It appears as the "natural conversational" method of language instruction advocated by many language specialists. It can wear the mask of a third-grade reading lesson or a graduate seminar. It can be the medium for teacher training. Its generic name is the

SETTINGS THAT GIVE LEARNING A CHANCE

ASSISTANCE OF child learning is accomplished by creating activity settings in the classroom that maximize opportunities for co-participation and instructional conversation with the teacher, and frequently with peers.

Although activity settings can be subject to abstract theoretical analysis, they are as homely and familiar as old shoes and the front porch. They are the social furniture of our family, community, and work lives. They are the events and people of our work and relations to one another. They are the who, what, when, where, and why, the small recurrent dramas of everyday life, played on the stages of home, school, community, and workplace—the father and daughter collaborating to find lost shoes, the preschooler recounting a folk tale with sensitive questioning by an adult, the child who plays a board game through the help of a patient

Excerpted with permission from Rousing Minds to Life.

brother, the Navajo girl who assists her mother's weaving and who eventually becomes a master weaver herself. We can plot our lives as traces of the things we do, in dissolving and recombining social groups and energy knots. Those are activity settings.

Like all institutions, schools are constituted of activity settings: The classroom, playground, cafeteria, nurse's office, and auditorium evoke, even in aging graduates, images of place and event. These shared memories reflect school activity settings that have been as stable as a rock and have been sources of dismay to succeeding generations of reformers. To secure change requires that the school's activity settings be understood and altered so they will give rise to the desired assistance of performance.

The criterion for activity settings is that they should allow a maximum of assistance by the members in the performance of the tasks at hand. They must be designed to allow teachers to assist children

through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) toward the goal of developing higher-order mental processes. These settings engage children in goal-oriented activities in which the teacher can participate as an assistor and/or co-participant as the need arises. The purpose of these settings is principally to assist the child through the stages from other-regulation to self-regulation and thence to internalization and full development. Other activity settings allow assistance from child to child.

When teachers are engaged with their students in this way, they are aware of the students' ever-changing relationships to the material. They can assist because, while the learning process is alive and unfolding, they see and feel the child's progression through the zone, as well as the stumbles and errors that call for support. Schools must be re-organized to allow more activity settings with fewer children, more interaction, more conversation, more joint activity. □

instructional conversation.

The concept itself is a paradox: "Instruction" and "conversation" appear contrary, the one implying authority and planning, the other equality and responsiveness. The task of teaching is to resolve this paradox. To most truly teach, one must converse; to truly converse is to teach.

In the instructional conversation, there is a fundamentally different assumption from that of traditional recitation lessons. Parents and teachers who engage in conversation are assuming that the child may have something to say beyond the "known answers" in the head of the adult. They occasionally extract from the child a "correct" answer, but to grasp the commu-

WHY DOES THE RECITATION SCRIPT PERSIST?

AS COMMON as assisted performance is in the interactions of parents and children, it is uncommon in those of teachers and students. Study after study has documented the absence in classrooms of this fundamental tool for the teaching of children.

The absence of assisted performance in schools is all the more remarkable because most teachers are members of the literate middle class, where researchers have most often found such interactions. Why is it that this adult-child pattern—no doubt a product of historical, evolutionary processes—is so seldom observed in the very setting where it would seem most appropriate? Such interactions can be found in every society, in the introduction of children to any task. But this basic method of human socialization has not generally diffused into schools. Why?

There are two basic reasons. First, to provide assistance in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the assistor must be in close touch with the learner's relationship to the task. Sensitive and accurate assistance that challenges but does not dismay the learner cannot be achieved in the absence of information. Opportunities for this knowledge, conditions in which the teacher can be sufficiently aware of the child's actual, in-flight performing, simply are not available in classrooms organized, equipped, and staffed in the typical American pattern. There are too many children for each teacher. And even if there is time to assess each child's ZPD for each task, more time is needed—time for interaction, for conversation, for joint activity between teachers and

children. Occasionally, now and through history, these opportunities have existed: the classical Greek academies, Oxford and Cambridge, the individual tutorial, the private American school with classes of seven or less. But all involve a pupil-teacher ratio that exceeds the politicians' judgment of the taxpayers' purse. Public education is not likely to reorganize into classrooms of seven pupils each.

This does not make the case hopeless. Emerging instructional practices do offer some hope of increased opportunities for assisted performance: the increased use of small groups, maintenance of a positive classroom atmosphere that will increase independent task involvement of students, new materials and technology with which students can interact independent of the teacher. Later in this book, we describe one system of classroom organization (by no means the only one possible) that does allow for a sharply increased rate of assisted performance by teachers and peers.

THERE IS a second reason that assisted performance has not diffused into the schools. Briefly stated, it is simply because teachers have not been trained to do anything but the traditional recitation script. Even when instructional practices allow for increased use of assisted performance, it will not necessarily appear as a regular feature of a teacher's activity. It may not be practiced even by those teachers who are from homes and communities where, outside of school, such interactions are commonplace. It will not necessarily be forthcoming from teachers who themselves provide assisted performance for their own children. Even

with the benefits of modern instructional practice, there is still too large a gap between the conditions of home and school. Most parents do not need to be trained to assist performance; most teachers do.

By "training," we mean that teachers cannot rely on lay skills that are sufficient for parental socialization of offspring. Lay or parental skills provide a foundation, but they are not enough. Teachers need a more elaborate set of skills in assistance, and they need to be more conscious of their application.

For pedagogical skills to be acquired, there must be training and development experiences that few teachers encounter—opportunity to observe effective examples and effective practitioners of assisted performance, and opportunities to practice nascent skills, to receive video and audio feedback, and to have the gentle, competent "coaching" of a skilled consultant.

If the recitation script is to be changed to responsive teaching, we must construct activity settings that will assist teachers to perform the new script—to adopt a role in which teachers assist students in the ZPD.

Current means of staff development cannot provide for the development of teaching skills required to meet this criterion of assisting performance in the ZPD. The major barrier to change in teaching practices is the absence of activity settings in public schools that would provide for assisted performance of those acts that must be employed in the classroom in the presence of students. Teachers, like their students, have ZPDs; they, too, require assisted performance. □

Excerpted with permission from Rousing Minds to Life.

Parents and teachers who engage in conversation are assuming that the child may have something to say beyond the "known answers" in the head of the adult.



nicative intent of the child requires the adult to listen carefully, to make guesses about the meaning of the intended communication (based on the context and on knowledge of the child's interests and experiences), and to adjust their responses to assist the child's efforts—in other words, to engage in conversation.

Teachers, of course, should not act like parents in all ways. The large numbers of pupils, the restricted and technical curriculum, the complexity of institutional restraints of schooling require that teaching be highly deliberate, carefully structured, and planned. Assisting performance through conversation requires a quite deliberate and self-controlled agenda in the mind of the teacher, who has specific curricular, cognitive, and conceptual goals. This requires highly developed professional competencies, of which there are many kinds: positive and efficient classroom and behavior management, provision of effective and varied activities, orderly monitoring and assessment of progress.

So the skills of parenting are not enough to bring to the task of teaching. We are not advocating the casual "spontaneous" chat that is pleasant and appropriate in the home. While good instructional conversations often appear to be "spontaneous," they are not—even though young students may never realize it. The instructional conversation is pointed toward a learning objective by the teachers' intention; and even the most sophisticated learners may lose consciousness of the guiding goal as they become absorbed in joint activity with the mentor.

In American schools, assisted performance through instructional conversation is rare indeed. Durkin (1978-1979) observed 18,000 minutes of reading comprehension instruction and found less than 1 percent dealt with units of meaning larger than a word. But if we take Vygotsky's insights seriously, a major task of schooling is creating and supporting instructional conversation, among students, teachers, administrators, program developers, and researchers. It is through the instructional conversation that babies learn to speak, children to read, teachers to teach, researchers to discover, and all to become literate. All intellectual growth relies heavily on conversation as a form of assisted performance in the zone of proximal development.

Let us watch one teacher learn to conduct instructional conversations. This example illustrates not only the nature of such conversations but shows how teachers, students, and all of us learn and develop through assisted performance.

GRACE AND STEPHANIE: A CASE STUDY

This is the case of two teachers working together in a mentoring relationship. Both were working in a research and demonstration school operated by the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP). The students enrolled in the school were minority, at-risk children, largely of Native Hawaiian origin. Grace was a first-grade teacher in her first year. She had completed a workshop phase of training and had worked in the classroom for a few months when the initial consultation sessions began. Her assigned mentor, Stephanie, had worked as a teacher in the same elementary

(Continued on page 46)

CHILDREN WHO LABOR

*The Tragedy of Child Workers
Around the World*

BY CHARLES D. GRAY AND ROBERT A. SENSER

SPEAKER AFTER speaker in the Pittsburgh hall rose to denounce the spread of child labor in the United States. One delegate, a New Yorker, described his visit to tenement house cigar factories where he found conditions that "sickened" him:

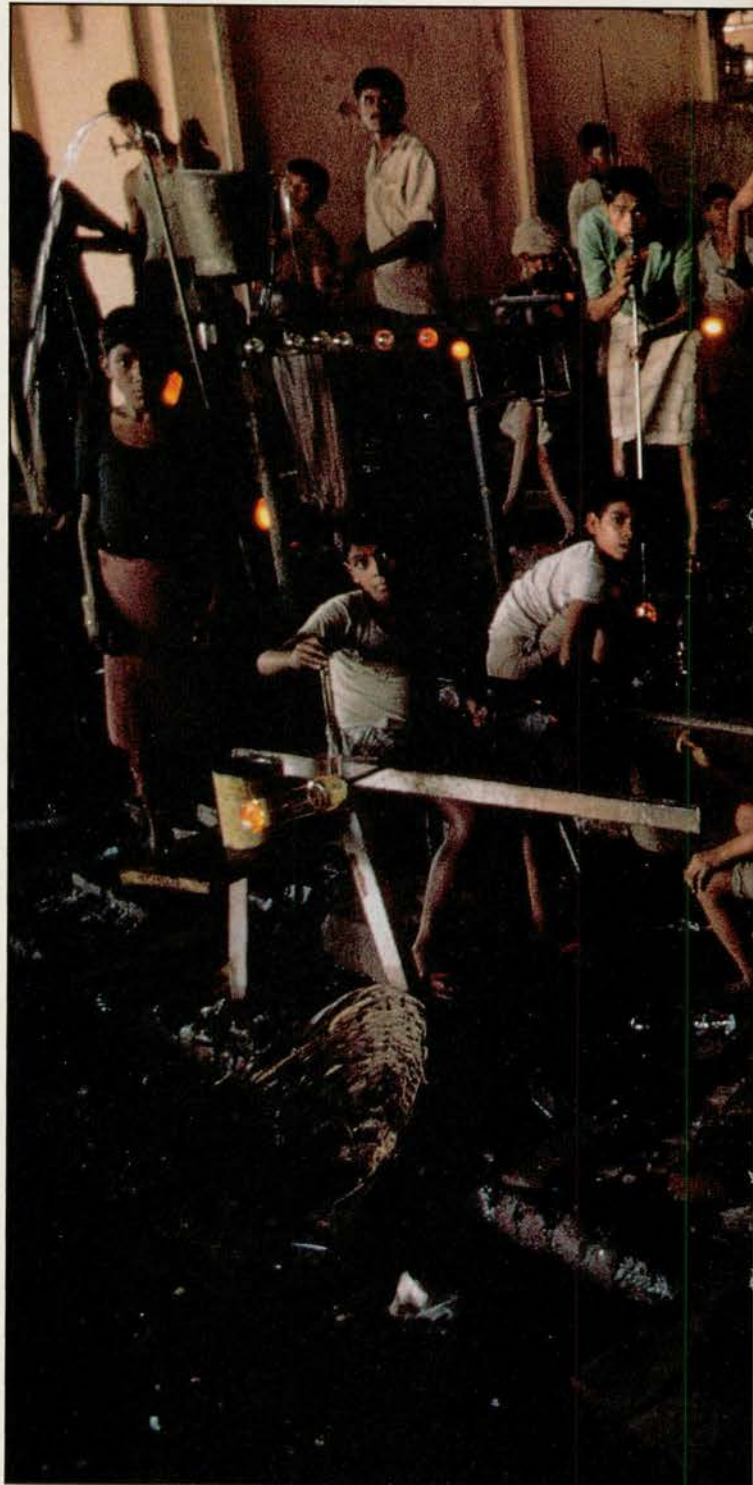
"I saw little children, six and seven and eight years of age, seated in the middle of a room on the floor, in all the dirt and dust, stripping tobacco. Little pale-faced children, with a look of care upon their faces, toiling with their tiny hands from dawn till dark, aye, and late into the night . . . Often they would be overcome with weariness and want of sleep and fall over upon the tobacco heap.

"Shame upon such crimes! Shame upon us if we do not raise our voices against them!"

The man who cried shame was Samuel Gompers, later to become the first president of the American Federation of Labor. The meeting at which he spoke was the founding convention of the AFL's forerunner, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, which convened in Pittsburgh in November 1881.

A reporter, summarizing that session, wrote in the

Charles D. Gray is executive director of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, an AFL-CIO-sponsored organization that provides support and technical assistance to unions and other worker organizations in Asia. Robert A. Senser, a consultant on worker rights issues for the Institute, has lived and traveled extensively in Asia during the past twenty years. The authors wish to thank Frontlash for their assistance in preparing this article. Frontlash, the AFL-CIO's youth arm, is spearheading the labor movement's campaign against child labor. For further information on the issue, write to the AFT International Affairs Department, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001.





In the glass factories of Firozabad, just twenty-four miles from India's Taj Mahal, children looking as young as eight dart about carrying poles topped with 1500° molten glass. A glassblower shapes the glass and then, according to Cox newspaper reporters Joseph Albright and Marcia Kunstel, "throws the pole javelin-style to the child several feet below him . . . [who] spin[s] it and drizzle[s] it with water to tame its fiery heat."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICK MCGAVY/COX NEWSPIAPERS

Pittsburgh Gazette: "These stories, coming from men who knew what they were talking about . . . were pathetic enough to bring tears to most eyes."

That was long ago, but pathetic stories of child labor still abound in the world, especially in far-off places, stories that would bring tears to the eyes of most Americans if they heard them.

Some stories are tragic. In a hillside cemetery in northern Portugal, a small grey tombstone reads "Here Lies Francisco Jose Da Silva." The boy died at thirteen, crushed to death by a defective elevator in a local sock factory where he worked.

Other stories are of tragedies narrowly averted. In the booming city of Bangkok this past April, five workers, two of them women, were injured when the scaffold on which they were working collapsed. Two of the victims were boys, Banyat Pitapai and Krairung Machabandit, both fourteen. All five had been carrying cement up to the fourth floor of a building under construction. "Miraculously," said the *Bangkok Post*, they escaped serious injury. The government took no action against the construction firm, claiming that the workers had not filed a complaint. Hardly surprising, since as casual workers lacking any job security they risked being fired if they dared to complain.

Most stories are less dramatic but no less disturbing. In the Tangerang industrial area near Jakarta, Indonesia, children as young as twelve and thirteen are employed in glass, textile, mosquito coil, and other factories. In one factory visited recently by a foreign group and reported on by a Bangkok-based organization, the Child Workers in Asia Support Group, one hundred children (earning 70 cents a day) comprise more than half of the work force. The children reported that supervisors hid them in toilets and large container boxes during visits by government labor inspectors.

In India, boys as young as ten work in dangerous occupations in glass and metal factories at wages of less than \$1 a day. Employers provide no protective glasses, shoes, or gloves—no safety gear at all, not even for pouring red-hot molten metal. A report on conditions in India by the Child Workers in Asia Support Group states:

"Child workers in industrial situations are particularly vulnerable because of their unquestioning obedience to employers who place them in such hazardous circumstances [e.g., exposure to toxic substances] . . . They are vulnerable also because of the class/caste situation. Employers do not care if the children live or die; so preventive measures are not taken."

Nobody knows the number of boys and girls under sixteen who hold down jobs across the world. No international agency has counted them because governments themselves seldom bother to count them. There are only estimates, and these vary widely and wildly: The most commonly cited range from 80 million to 200 million. Even 200 million may understate the reality. In China alone, according to an estimate made by the United Nations' International Labor Organization (ILO) a few years ago, there were 40 million working children from ten to fourteen. Child labor exists throughout the underdeveloped world — in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The examples in this article are drawn mostly from Asia because our organization is most familiar with this region.



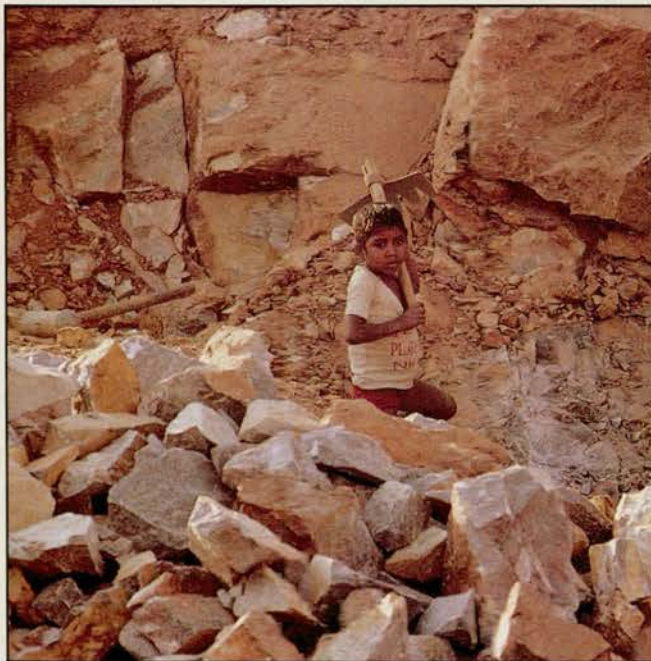
One thirteen-year-old worker at a live-in gem polishing factory, such as this one in Bangkok, told the Cox writers that with the three months' salary he had sent home, "my parents can buy a water buffalo." The three months' salary totalled \$36 and probably will buy only a calf.



MOST CHILD laborers engage in what economists call the “informal” sector . . . in activities such as hawking cigarettes at street corners, shining shoes outside hotels, selling vegetables from a road stand, repairing bicycles in an empty lot, harvesting crops on farms. This informal work often goes unreported. Also unreported is much of the child labor used by a growing number of small enterprises that have avoided the formality of registering for a license in order to escape taxes, regulation, tabulation, and compliance with child labor laws.

The problems of street children peddling pineapples and chewing gum are there for the public to see. Not so the situation of children working in registered or unregistered firms behind closed doors, which are almost never open to the public. With time and perseverance, however, it is possible to open some doors to get the facts. An enterprising reporter-photographer team from the Cox newspapers in 1987 traveled 65,000 miles and with difficulty managed to get into workshops of all sizes. Only twenty-four miles from the Taj Mahal, for example, they found boys under fourteen (some looking as young as eight) working in five of the country's largest glass factories. Their conclusion after visits to North Africa, Asia, and South America: “Children working sixteen hours a day, seven days a week in deplorable working conditions for pennies—that's the harsh reality of life in the Third World.”

And according to information from the ILO, child welfare organizations, and various international unions, that reality is becoming harsher. As Third World countries struggle to develop their economies, they encounter pressure to lower—or ignore—labor standards that would diminish the comparative advantage (based on low labor costs) of their products on the world market. Also, the explosion of business creates jobs that, at no matter what the wage, magnetically attract impoverished youngsters.



A study of 1,600 working and nonworking Bombay children found that nearly half of the children working in construction, such as this tiny quarrier in New Delhi, were severely malnourished. One in six suffered from a respiratory illness.

EVENTS IN THE People's Republic of China illustrate the point that child development and economic development do not necessarily go hand in hand. That country's steps toward liberalizing its economy have produced an explosion of multinational business activity in export-oriented firms, often operating out of Hong Kong. This development, hailed as a sign of progress (and certainly producing some progress) has had a retrogressive effect on children. The new freedom to foreign investors has granted them, or their intermediaries, the right to exploit the labor of children. According to a Chinese newspaper, 30 percent of school-age children, mostly girls, became dropouts to take jobs in Guangdong province. Some Chinese factories work ten-year-old girls fourteen hours a day; others employ twelve year olds for fifteen-hour days for \$10 a month, plus lodging (the girls sleep two and three to a bed in cramped quarters).

Although the English-language press seldom uncovers details of this kind of exploitation, *Business Week* in October 1988 reported on conditions in China's special economic zones located near Hong Kong. These zones, set up to attract foreign investors through tax advantages and other privileges, “have

spawned twin horrors associated with old capitalism—child labor and illegal working hours,” the *Business Week* article said. It cited the situation of Hung Biu Yun, a Chinese toy worker who claimed she was seventeen (the minimum legal working age) but looked closer to twelve:

“Hong Biu Yun is clearly exhausted as she sticks Mickey Mouse heads onto motorized toys at a factory in Shekou, China. One of twelve thousand mainland Chinese employed by Hong Kong’s largest toymaker, Kader Enterprises Ltd., Hong works fourteen hours a day, seven days a week, to rush toys to American kids.”

The pressure on Hong Biu Yun, the magazine reported, became more intense when rush orders arrived from the United States for the Christmas season: “Recently her hours grew even more oppressive: To meet the holiday demand for Ghostbusters, Big Hauler trains, and Mickey Mouse dolls, the girls at the Kader plant were ordered to put in one or two twenty-four-hour shifts each month, with only two meal breaks per shift.”

Troubled by such abuses, Chinese government officials have pressured Kader to respect the law, but, in the words of a Kader executive in Hong Kong, Andy Lee,

“We told them, this is the toy biz. If you don’t allow us to do things our way, we’ll close down our Chinese factories and move to Thailand.”

THAILAND MAY not be the country with the worst child labor problem in the world, but of late it has seemed that way, partly because the country has a free press, is open to outsiders, and has private groups actively doing something about the problem. Publicity and international pressure caused the government to briefly consider a number of reforms that are still far from being implemented. One was to raise the minimum age for workers from twelve to thirteen.

If that reform had been adopted, and if it was enforced, it still would not affect many thousands of boys and girls like Baulee*, thirteen years old, employed in a small garment factory in Bangkok for \$27 a month. She works from 9 in the morning till at least 9 in the evening, six days a week, sometimes on Sunday. About twenty-eight children and adults work, sleep, and eat

*Details about Baulee (not her real name) were obtained by the Asian-American Free Labor Institute as part of a project designed to better understand the causes of child labor.

CHILD LABOR IN THE U.S.: ITS GROWTH AND ABOLITION

BY TODD POSTOL

CHILD LABOR—the employment of children under sixteen outside of the home—and the fight to control it have had a long history in America.

During the Colonial period, children were frequently hired out on a temporary basis to local farms and households. Since working children performed many of the same tasks for their neighbors as at home, the distinction between paid labor and family-based work was not sharp. In addition to this informal labor, a much more highly structured set of work arrangements existed in the ancient English institution of apprenticeship. Boys customarily began an apprenticeship between the ages of ten and fourteen. The apprentice-master relationship was rooted in a web of mutual responsibilities: Children learned a skilled trade by loyally following their master’s orders; masters acted *in loco parentis*, providing vocational training and teaching their apprentices the rudiments of reading and writing.

The emergence of a factory system in the United States in the early nineteenth century changed all of

this. By the 1830s, apprenticeship was systematically being replaced by wage labor in Pennsylvania, New York, and the New England states. This new form of industrial child labor differed from the older family-based model in several significant respects. Unlike family-based work, which was task oriented, industrial labor was time oriented. Child workers ate, rested, and worked by the bell. At home or in a master’s workshop, children always knew the people who supervised them. This easy familiarity disintegrated with the spread of industrial child labor. The two worlds of work and home became clearly separate. Finally, the obligations of employers decreased to the point where the only responsibility they were assumed to have was to pay their workers.

In 1870, when the federal Census recorded the number of working children for the first time, more than a quarter of a million children aged ten to fifteen were listed in nonagricultural occupations. By 1900, these figures peaked at nearly seven hundred thousand. Since the Census excluded children under ten and usually missed juvenile workers in industrial

homework, domestic service, and the street trades, these tabulations only hint at the true extent of child labor during these years. Charles Loring Brace, head of New York’s Children’s Aid Society, estimated in the early 1880s that there were at least 100,000 child workers in that city alone.

One way to prevent children from working was to keep them in school. As child labor reformer Florence Kelley declared in 1903: “The best child-labor law is a compulsory education law covering forty weeks of the year and requiring the consecutive attendance of all the children to the age of fourteen years.” Between 1890 and 1918, every state in the U.S. passed some form of legislation mandating compulsory education. These Progressive-era acts often proved ineffectual as they lacked provisions for adequate enforcement. The result was that thousands of underage youngsters left school to enter the job market.

IN 1916 the first national child labor law, the Keating-Owen Act, was signed by President Wilson. This act prohibited the interstate commerce of goods produced by

three meals a day in the four stories of her employer's factory, which subcontracts jobs for an export firm.†

Cases like Baulee's are not exceptional. A Thai government agency, the National Youth Bureau, found boys and girls of thirteen and fourteen working in a wide range of manufacturing industries: food processing, textile, furniture, printing, chemical products, machinery, and metalware, among others. The bureau's study provided detailed case histories of child workers, such as Rungjaroen Pradabmee, thirteen, who planes and cuts wood by machine in a furniture factory. Six days a week Rungjaroen, like the forty-five other workers there, faces health and safety hazards in the dark, dusty, and poorly ventilated factory.

†Most multinational corporations prohibit their firms from hiring children under sixteen. But for parts and services, these same firms turn to contractors and subcontractors who are not bound by this same prohibition. After the Cox newspapers exposed the scandal of child labor in a group of Indian glass factories patronized by Corning Glass, Corning stopped purchasing from those suppliers. A Corning official said he was "surprised" by the Cox revelations, emphasizing that Corning was only "indirectly involved" with the offending suppliers. (This "indirect involvement," of course, was making products for Corning.)

children under fourteen and established an eight-hour day for working youngsters under sixteen. Just nine months after it was put into place, the Supreme Court ruled that Keating-Owen exceeded the federal government's power to regulate interstate trade, and the act was found unconstitutional.

A second federal child labor law was enacted the following year, with the support of a potent reform group, the National Child Labor Committee. It imposed a 10 percent tax on the net profits of manufacturers who employed children below the age of fourteen. In 1922, the Supreme Court struck down this act as an infringement on the rights of individual states to impose taxation measures. Having suffered two serious defeats, reformers became convinced that the only way to control child labor was through the passage of a constitutional amendment. Throughout the 1920s, the NCLC unsuccessfully sought to gain approval of the required number of state legislatures.

Advocates of child labor reform were encouraged when, in the early 1930s, the National Recovery Administration banned child labor

below the age of sixteen in most industries. In an all-too-familiar scenario, however, the NRA was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 1935. Ironically, opponents of child labor were now on the verge of their biggest victory. Three years after the NRA was overturned, the Fair Labor Standards Act incorporated many of the same limitations on interstate commerce as the old Keating-Owen act. It raised the full-time working age to sixteen and strictly limited the conditions of labor for fourteen and fifteen year olds. Unlike previous efforts, the FLSA was not invalidated.

A key reason the FLSA was effective was that child labor was already in decline by the time the bill was passed. By 1940, automation and structural shifts within the maturing American industrial economy had made child labor increasingly unprofitable. Changes in family size and demographics and restrictive immigration policies also contributed to the declining use of juvenile employment. But there were loopholes in the FLSA. Large numbers of children in migrant agriculture remained beyond the protection of the law well into the 1950s.

The parents of both Baulee and Rungjaroen are farmers, and they had a practical incentive to let their children migrate from the farm to urban Bangkok—an employment contractor paid them a substantial advance on their children's pay. Both children had worked on the family farms, and as millions of other rural parents have done in countries being industrialized, they did not fully appreciate the sharp difference between their child's work on the family farm and his or her employment in an urban factory. Although their work on farms can be hard, children in rural areas can generally count on their parents (and even grandparents), who are close at hand to provide for their comfort and look out for their welfare.

The harsh poverty of rural life and of slum-like communities around cities, however, induces parents to let their children go to work at an early age. In Thailand, the advance of two or three years' salary that parents receive for a child "leased" to an employment contractor often enables a rural family to improve its life substantially, for example, by buying oxen to work the fields. Poverty, which drove children into the coal mines in the United States decades ago, still drives millions of children into the work force in developing countries today.

While it is reassuring to think that child labor is a thing of the past in the United States, it is important to recognize that violations of the laws do occur. There has been a general relaxation over the past decade of state regulations governing the number of hours children under sixteen can work. Not surprisingly, this has led to abuses of child labor statutes. A 1986 Massachusetts survey, for example, found underage juveniles illegally operating heavy earthmoving equipment, running power drill presses, and closing restaurants at 2 A.M. And earlier this year a certain fast-food chain, known for its sesame seed buns and its patronage of children's charities, was cited by Pennsylvania authorities for 466 alleged violations of state child labor laws. □

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WHAT MAY be a tempting solution for individual families, however, actually prolongs poverty in a developing country's economy. Samuel Gompers addressed the poverty dilemma of his time in a speech to an audience in Denver in 1888:

"I have seen tender children in the factories tending dangerous machinery, parts of which seemed to be constantly reaching out for their delicate limbs. This may seem necessary. But in this age of steam and electricity, and of rush after wealth, there should be a halt called somewhere. . . .

"Some of you may be tempted to send your children out to work. A little fellow will bring home a dollar at the end of the week. That may seem a very grateful addition to the income. But don't you know that the child is employed because its labor can be had cheaper than that of a man? He becomes a competitor of his father. And if the father is not discharged, some other child's father often is. In this competition, the rates of labor are often so reduced that the combined wages of the father and child are less than the father's wages alone before It is bad [even] from an economic point of view to send young children out to work."

A similar viewpoint was expressed recently by Francis Tan, labor analyst of the Center for the Progress of Peoples, a Hong Kong-based research organization. "In most Asian countries," Tan pointed out, "cheap child workers take jobs away from adults, and since they do not have the chance to develop their talents in school, they will have little, besides their unskilled labor, to contribute to the economy when they become adults."

The child labor problem is so pervasive, and becoming more so in some of the industrializing economies of Asia, that even some child welfare advocates are content to rely solely on palliative measures: improving the working conditions of children (such as by providing safety goggles), shortening their hours, and providing them with on-the-job skills training. Such measures may be all that is possible in the most impoverished nations, but the world should never lose sight of the essential goal of eliminating child labor entirely.

Fortunately, despite the enormity of the problem, there is cause for hope. In almost every afflicted country, there are men and women, both within the government and in the private sector, who see the evil of child labor and who, often at great sacrifice, are working to eliminate it. One of them is a former teacher, Panudda Boonpala, who heads the Child Workers in Asia Support Group. "We are lucky," she writes, "to be working with many persons across Asia who think positively."

Advocates of improved educational systems often lead the way to reform. "The single most important instrument for ensuring that children do not work," says ILO expert Assefa Bequele, is to have them attending schools. That means at least three things:

- gradually increasing the age of compulsory school attendance and enforcing it;
- increasing resources allocated to education, including school lunch programs and elimination of school fees and other student costs that, while small for the well to do, are a burden for families barely able to eke out a living; and
- finding other ways to make sure that school enroll-



(Above) Girls as young as seven work in Morocco's many rug factories. Piecework wages run about 15¢ to 25¢ an hour; apprentices often go without wages altogether. (Right) A Filipino girl works in a spinning mill.



INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION PHOTOGRAPH

ment for children of the poorest of families is not an impossible liability, for example, by making up on a transitional basis for at least a part of the modest but necessary income a family loses when a child quits his or her job.

Such ideas grow out of practical experience. In 1978, Kenya became the first country in Africa to provide free milk in school, and as a result, primary enrollment tripled by 1983. In South Korea, where a decade ago the work force consisted of many twelve and thirteen year olds, child labor has almost disappeared, thanks partly to a drive for universal education that now sees 90 percent of Koreans enrolled in school until they are sixteen.

WHY DON'T more governments in the developing world do more for the education of children and their protection against exploitation? The barriers are many. For one thing, the process of development involves conflicting priorities. There is, for example, an impulse to show quick and visible results by heavy investment in steel and concrete. As a result, governments in the developing world have been inclined to invest in unproductive, heavy industrial projects, unnecessary military expenditures, and other non-economically sound endeavors at the expense of human development. When the budget does include more money for education, a disproportionate share often goes to very expensive higher education, to the benefit of an already-favored elite.* Another barrier is the acceptance of traditional economic advice against the improvement of labor standards on the grounds that such "rigidities" will hinder economic growth. Also, fielding, training, and paying for inspectors to monitor compliance with labor standards is expensive and can often strain the weak governmental infrastructure that exists in many underdeveloped countries.

Outside criticism of retrogressive policies and practices provokes negative reactions from leaders of developing nations. Typically, they respond by objecting to "meddling into internal affairs"—what they do within their own borders is their own business. Of course, the direct responsibility for changing priorities lies within each country itself. But in this modern age, to paraphrase John Donne, no country is an island. More than ever before, because of the growth of international trade, the low labor standards of one country can depress those of competitor countries. As the Chinese official who asked Kader Toys to obey the law discovered, the labor policies of Thailand very much affect the well-being of workers and nations elsewhere.

In the realization that countries can best make social progress together, the ILO in 1973 adopted a convention (number 138) that established a set of minimum ages for employment:

- fifteen as a general rule;
- fourteen for countries "whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed"; and

* World Bank statistics, based on UNESCO data, show that in some Third-World nations the cost of providing a student with one year of university education can be up to one hundred times that of providing a year of primary education. In contrast, in the developed world, the ratio is closer to two to one.

● eighteen for any employment "likely to jeopardize the health, safety, or morals of young persons," with a loophole allowing a country to reduce that minimum to sixteen.

That convention, akin to a treaty, sets standards by which nations are supposed to regulate their labor affairs. So far, most nations have not ratified that convention, and even among the thirty-seven that have, some are not enforcing it. "There is a wide gap between law and practice," the ILO's Assefa Bequele points out.

Although U.S. law (and generally, though not always, practice) conforms to the requirements of the child labor convention, the United States itself has not ratified it (or most other ILO conventions), largely because of the opposition of employer groups who raise the specter that ratification could be a backdoor way to alter U.S. labor standards outside the normal federal and state legislative process. The failure of the U.S. to ratify the ILO convention weakens our moral position when we try to persuade other countries to improve their child labor conditions.

THE ILO itself has no power to enforce its conventions. It is up to individual countries to put teeth into the standards. Of late, Congress has taken a set of ILO standards (without crediting the ILO) and inserted them into four foreign trade and investment laws. The U.S. government now can make a country's privilege of exporting into the United States contingent on observance of five "internationally recognized worker rights," including a minimum age for the employment of children. The most important such law so far has been the U.S. Trade and Tariff Act of 1984, which, in extending authorization for duty-free import privileges under the so-called Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), linked those privileges to recognizing worker rights, or at least "taking steps" in that direction.

The U.S. government has not taken advantage of this new lever against the exploitation of children abroad. In June 1987, the AFL-CIO filed the first of a series of petitions with the U.S. Trade Representative urging the withdrawal of GSP privileges from Thailand because of violations of worker rights, "most flagrantly the prohibition against child labor, which for many boys and girls in their early teens amounts to involuntary servitude." While U.S. officials were investigating those petitions, the Thai government responded by expressing renewed interest in its child labor problems, and even by discussing a number of reforms, including raising the minimum working age from twelve to thirteen, but so far, two years after the first petition was filed, nothing concrete has happened. The Thai governmental concern tapered off after the Reagan administration, impressed with Thai promises, decided in April 1988 to continue Thailand's GSP benefits.

Later, however, the U.S. did reduce some of Thailand's GSP benefits for another reason, one affecting U.S. business: Thailand's failure to halt piracy of U.S. copyrighted software and other violations of "intellectual property rights." In the belief that child protection doesn't deserve a back seat, Rep. Donald Pease (D-Ohio) is preparing legislation to impose civil and criminal penalties against those who import into the United States products fabricated, assembled, processed, mined, or quar-

ried by children under fifteen.

Another potential lever for reform is UNICEF. Although it is the lead U.N. agency for children's rights, UNICEF does not take the lead in the battle against child labor. Far from it. One reason, says UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant, is a lack of resources. But, as Tom Kahn, the AFL-CIO's Director of International Affairs, wrote recently to Mr. Grant, "How much does it cost to express the moral principle that eight-or nine-year-old children should not be abused by ten hours a day of factory labor? The issue here is not so much money as commitment."

That commitment is lacking because of a desire not to offend U.N. member governments in the Third World. But the U.S. government, with our tax dollars, provides the largest single source of money for UNICEF. An AFL-CIO executive council resolution in February formally urged the U.S. government to prod UNICEF to launch a campaign against child labor.

November 1989 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which states: "The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form. The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment that would prejudice his health or education. . . ."

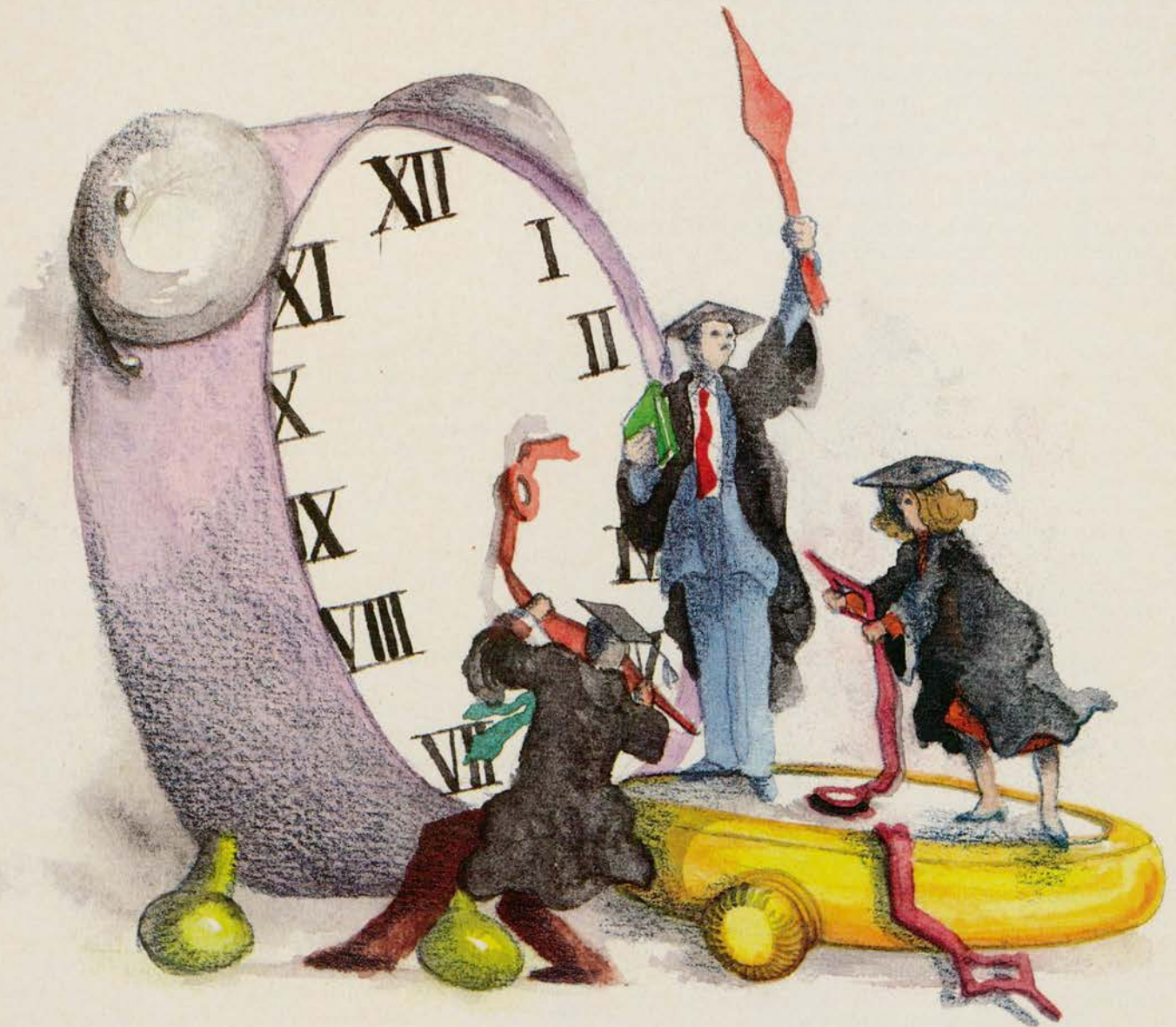
The lethargy on this issue internationally is illustrated by the fact that governments are still negotiating the text of a new convention on the Rights of the Child, first proposed in the late 1970s. It might be ready for consideration by the U.N. General Assembly by the end of 1989—hopefully in time to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child. The convention's main weaknesses are that it sets no minimum working age for children and contains no ban on trade of products made by child labor.

Commemorations are fine, but they don't go far. Meanwhile, in the words of an ILO report, "Child labor continues to be a tragedy of our time." New, practical initiatives are needed. It is time for the international business community to assist in some way, perhaps by adapting and adopting something like the Sullivan Principles, which pledged foreign business firms in South Africa to the practice of nondiscrimination. Companies active in international commerce ought no longer use the excuse that they are not responsible for the child labor practices of a contractor or subcontractor.

Aroused public opinion in the United States can also play an important role. As economists like to point out, American consumers are the prime beneficiaries of the new integration of the world marketplace. Its products fill up our closets, our garages, our kitchens, and every other part of our homes. But a global economy must produce more than goods for some. It must also produce a better life, especially for children in countries producing the goods we enjoy. That will not happen until the global economy is shaped by global concern about exploitation of children in the labor force.

We need more American voices to echo Samuel Gompers': "Shame on such crimes! Shame upon us if we do not demand action against them!" □

SCHEDULES THAT BIND



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT EARKIN

BY KATHLEEN CUSHMAN

IMAGINE YOU have a week to accomplish a series of specific tasks, Bob McCarthy likes to say to the people who come to the scheduling workshops at the Coalition of Essential Schools, where he is Director for Schools. You're going to read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and discuss it with a few friends;

This article has been condensed by the American Educator, with permission from the Coalition of Essential Schools, from the May 1989 issue of Horace, the newsletter of the Coalition.

you're going to repair the front steps; you're going to write a long letter to a friend you haven't seen in years; you have a few other projects large and small. How would you organize your week so as to get all these different things done?

Chances are, workshop participants tend to agree, the least useful way to start would be to divide up your days into forty-five-minute blocks, moving at rigid intervals from one task to the next. Yet precisely in this way do most American high schools schedule the learning tasks they set for students. Few students get the chance to work for sustained periods during the day on one pro-

ject; few can easily call for help from more than one expert in a particular time period. In short, if you decide to use the high school as a model for your week, the book discussion may have to break up just when it is getting going, and the front steps may languish till they rot.

"I know of no other organization in the world that has duplicated the high school schedule as a way of organizing learning," says McCarthy. Amazingly, though, the standard schedule is one of the few aspects of American education that has remained virtually unchanged in the last century. Despite the "flexible modular scheduling" trend of the 1960s, most high schools today still operate on some variation of the six- or seven-period day, with classes around forty-five minutes long. And even for those of us long past our school years, the schedule continues to wield an almost unnatural power over how we set up learning situations. Few people cannot recall in precise detail the way they moved from class to class during their senior year in school, McCarthy asserts—and many will merely replicate it if asked to design a school schedule on their own.

But does such a way of organizing school time actually help students learn to use their minds well and teachers to teach? Do all subjects require the same amount of time every day and must they have it all to themselves? An increasing number of Essential schools are saying no; and their efforts to change their schedules reveal much about how deeply a school's organization of time is connected with its assumptions about how learning occurs. "Schools equal their schedules," says one Coalition principal emphatically; yet the schedule is often the hardest thing in education to change.

TO EXPLORE the scheduling issue, we spoke with schools at the beginning of this process and those who have long since discarded traditional schedule

THE COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

Founded by educator and author Theodore R.Sizer, the Coalition of Essential Schools includes over fifty schools—some of them schools-within-schools, some of them whole schools—committed to nine common-sense principles, the application of which would transform secondary education.

Among the key Coalition principles is the need to personalize education. To fully challenge a young mind or to help a student master what's confusing him, a teacher needs to know the intricacies of *that* student's mind, a goal that is beyond reach if the teacher is responsible for one hundred and fifty or more students per year (or even per semester!). Coalition teachers have experimented with interdisciplinary teaching and other mechanisms to get teacher loads down to eighty students.

Two other principles call for students to spend much more time as the "worker" and much less as the recipient of lecture and textbook information and for curricula to focus more deeply on a limited number of essential skills and knowledge areas, a principle that shorthands as "less is more" and is something of a hallmark of the Coalition schools.

Being forced to fit a thoughtful and innovative curriculum into a "container" that cannot accommodate it has led many teachers to ask for changes in scheduling.

models, schools that teach a stripped-down core curriculum and those offering a variety of courses as wide as most junior colleges. For each of these disparate schools, however, one thing held true: Changes in their schedules invariably were driven by their commitment to principles of learning that simply could not be accommodated by the old time slots. This progression from pedagogy to schedule change is critical if the change is to work, says Amy Gerstein, who as Assistant Director for Schools leads many of the scheduling workshops the Coalition offers at regional symposia. When schedule changes are not driven by educational principles, they risk becoming just another educational fad. The best schedules may actually change continually, in response to the evolving vision of a particular school.

One of the most common such changes is to introduce some form of flexibility that allows teachers to work in greater depth with their students. It has long been acknowledged that science labs require extended periods to accomplish their aims, but as teachers in other disciplines put the principle of "student as worker" into practice, they often find themselves equally frustrated by short periods. Seminars that encourage students to exercise their own critical thinking skills in a new area, serious projects in the library or community, work in small groups at different levels with the teacher in a coaching role—all these require more than forty minutes at a time to achieve. Being forced to fit a thoughtful and innovative curriculum into a "container" that cannot accommodate it has led many teachers to ask for scheduling change.

Inevitably, however, any one change has ripple effects throughout the school's schedule. Coordinating course offerings that include requirements and electives is already complex enough; when schools undertake to lengthen some class periods, certain kinds of classic scheduling problems become acute. How these problems crop up—and the resources of time, teachers, and space available to deal with them—varies according to the size of the school. In a large school, where many courses meet in multiple sections at various hours, a student who spends all morning in a lengthened human-

ities class will still have a chance to take that economics elective in the afternoon. But if there is only one economics section, and it meets in the morning, that extended block of humanities time precludes any other choices.

One solution that is used in some Coalition programs is to schedule flexible time blocks for core subjects in the morning and offer electives only in the afternoon, allowing students to choose among, for example, economics, art, or advanced calculus.

Figure I illustrates a sample student's day using such a schedule. In this school a team of four teachers is responsible for a group of eighty to one hundred ninth graders, whom they instruct in science, math, history, and English in groups of twenty to twenty-five students at a time. Classes meet for an hour and forty minutes, on alternate days—three times one week, twice the next. This student, for example, has science three times this week; next week she will have math three times and science only twice. Teachers also meet for a weekly common planning period of the same length. After lunch, there is time for study hall or physical education and one forty-eight-minute elective period.

Clearly, the schedule reflects definite priorities: a smaller student load for teachers; the personalization that results from one team sharing the same students; more extended time for academic subjects. But students must compromise by having less choice of electives; and some teachers think only seeing a student in class two or three times a week is a compromise as well. The Coalition's Susan Lusi points out that all schedules

are built on such priorities and compromises, whether examined or not; the question schools must face is whether the existing schedule in fact reflects their educational philosophy.

One Solution: Strip Electives

Some Essential schools believe the best way to reconcile flexible scheduling of core subjects with electives is to move unequivocally to a stripped-down curriculum reflecting their highest priority; Ted Sizer's dictum that "less is more." Such a plan eliminates altogether the courses that cause schedule conflicts and makes a shift to a 1:80 teacher-student load far simpler as well. Course content that conventionally would be covered in elective classes—music, art, or calculus, for instance—can be incorporated into interdisciplinary offerings in such a schema, or otherwise arranged as teaching becomes more personalized.

The barest of such schedules is that of New York City's Central Park East Secondary School (shown in Figure II). Here all teachers are teaching at once, and they are all off at once, too, to facilitate common planning time. Two-hour interdisciplinary classes meet in the morning and the afternoon, and a student-teacher advisory period is scheduled four days a week. One morning a week, all students go into the community for service projects, while teachers meet to make plans together. Spanish is the only language offered, for one hour before school four days a week; and any other electives take place in the two hours after school is officially over.

The plan appears to work admirably at Central Park

Figure I.
Sample Schedule

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 8:30-8:49 | H.R. | H.R. | H.R. | H.R. | H.R. |
| 8:53-9:41 | Science | Math | Science | Math | Science |
| 9:45-10:33 | Science | Math | Science | Math | Science |
| 10:37-11:25 | History | English | History | English | History |
| 11:29-12:16 | History | English | History | English | History |
| 12:16-12:46 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 12:50-1:30 | Study | Phys. Ed. | Study | Phys. Ed. | Study |
| 1:42-2:30 | Elective | Elective | Elective | Elective | Elective |

Figure II.
Central Park East Secondary School

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 8:00-9:00 | Language | Language | Community Service | Language | Language |
| 9:00-11:00 | Humanities | Humanities | Community Service | Humanities | Humanities |
| 11:00-12:00 | Advisory | Advisory | Community Service | Advisory | Advisory |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch/Options | Lunch/Options | Lunch/Options | Lunch/Options | Lunch/Options |
| 1:00-3:00 | Math/Science | Math/Science | Math/Science or Humanities | Math/Science | Math/Science |
| 3:00-5:00 | Electives/Library | Electives/Library | Electives/Library | Electives/Library | Electives/Library |

When schedule changes are not driven by educational principles, they risk becoming just another educational fad.

East, a five hundred-student urban school with a student body reflecting the heterogeneous city population. But that school was created as an Essential school from its first day. Its philosophy was clear from the start. And no teachers were displaced to make its unusual schedule possible. Few of the Coalition's fifty-seven member schools have offered such a stark testing of the "less is more" slogan.

The curriculum of Adelphi Academy, a Brooklyn, New York, college preparatory school for sixth through twelfth graders, also comprises only the core subjects, focusing each year on a central theme. (Art and music and a modern language are considered part of the core; students choose between French and Spanish.) Here, the move toward a new schedule with longer time blocks was a direct result of an ongoing shift in the school's teaching philosophy over a period of several years. In the English and history departments, according to Adelphi teacher Phil Stone, teachers were moving toward more analysis and critical thinking in a seminar context. To suit this, they designed a system of double-period seminars in each subject twice weekly, in combination with shorter lessons on alternate days.

"But since the seminar would meet on Monday and Wednesday, or on Tuesday and Thursday," Stone says, "practically a whole week would go by without contact in the seminar context. The break disrupted the flow, and it didn't foster the kind of thinking for which the seminars were designed." To solve the problem, the two departments combined to teach an interdisciplinary English and history curriculum—based on critical thinking goals, and the seminar as a way of teaching them.

After continual fine-tuning, Adelphi's schedule now works as shown in Figure III, a tenth grader's schedule for the week. An eight-period day is the basis, but forty-five-minute "lessons," or lectures, take up only about a third of the student's time; most classes are ninety-minute interdisciplinary seminars in either English and history or math and science. The foreign language, perhaps, is shortchanged; it gets only one ninety-minute block and two forty-five-minute periods in the week, and students can't take two languages because they both meet at once. (Stone notes that the humanities program does try to coordinate its plans with foreign languages, particularly at more advanced language levels.) In addition, the schedule accommodates a few curricular anomalies: at least one "dialogue" or guidance period weekly for each student; a period where everyone in the school, including the faculty and headmaster, drops everything and reads for pleasure; and a Great Books weekly seminar. Two days a week, a ninth period is added at the end of the day.

How Much Less Is More?

Adelphi has shaped its curriculum expressly toward preparing students for college-level work; and it can defend its "less is more" philosophy on those grounds. But for schools that say vocational electives form an important part of a curriculum that serves a broader range of students, Adelphi's compromise on electives would be unacceptable. For others, stripping the curriculum of most electives would involve an intolerable or unworkable degree of teacher layoffs or transfers. And still others—often high-achieving suburban schools where virtually all students go on to college—are firmly committed to offering the variety in advanced or elective courses that they see as an integral part of their top reputation. For such schools, wrestling with the pedagogical issues the Coalition raises is often a matter of asking just how much less is how much more.

Back-To-Back Scheduling

So far, then, we have examined two ways of coping with scheduling dilemmas: stripping down the curriculum to eliminate singletons and electives and schedul-

Figure III.
Adelphi Academy

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Modern Language | English/History | English/History | Math/Science | Math/Science |
| 2 | Modern Language | English/History | English/History | English/History | Math/Science |
| 3 | Math/Science | English Lesson | Modern Language | Math/Science | Art/Music |
| 4 | Math/Science | Math/Science | Math/Science | Math/Science | Art/Music |
| 5 | General Assembly | Math/Science | Math/Science | Modern Language | Math/Sci. Lesson |
| 6 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 7 | English/History | Dialogue | Phys. Ed. | Recreational Reading | English/History |
| 8 | English/History | Great Books | Phys. Ed. | English/History | English/History |
| 9 | — | Great Books | — | English/History | — |

ing such courses before and after extended blocks of time in the schedule. Another possibility, however, is simply to schedule certain classes at the same grade level back to back at the teachers' request. This allows individual teachers to work together in teams if they want to but preserves the convention of shorter periods and the priority of numerous electives. Some teachers find this a useful way to trade time with others to accommodate longer projects and field trips; others use it as a way to ease into interdisciplinary teaching.

Bronxville High School, a small public school in a wealthy suburb of New York, has an eight-day rotating schedule with seven forty-seven-minute periods per day. One class drops out every eight days, so that students can take eight courses, a high priority for this college-bound student population with a strong interest in electives. Electives can meet every other day in the eight-day cycle.

A major component of Bronxville's Essential School is an interdisciplinary course in history, art, and English scheduled for two back-to-back periods and taught by a teacher team. In addition, to allow for more flexible and interdisciplinary approaches, three periods in the schedule cycle are set aside for grade-wide "seminars," which incorporate enrichment material and group discussions. The remaining four periods in the cycle are used for physical education and other less frequently scheduled classes.

THERE MAY have been a time when a schedule could be made by dividing up the day into equal blocks, punctuated by breaks long enough for a principal to walk the length of the school backward, as one student legend has it. But pedagogy that grows from the Coalition's principles clearly has begun to disrupt that pattern in ways too fundamental to be ignored. Flexible scheduling undeniably poses difficult problems. But they are not insurmountable. How resistant a school is to the necessary next step—serious rescheduling of the entire school—may depend in the long run on how serious it is about articulating its priorities and accepting the necessary compromise. □



Rita Irene Esparza, RSM
Vice Principal-Teacher
St. Joseph's
Elementary School
Sacramento, Calif.

YOU WON'T FIND HER PROGRAM FOR SUCCESS INSIDE A COMPUTER.

In a neighborhood burdened by the statistics of poverty and unemployment, Rita Irene Esparza has a program for educating the young.

For students at St. Joe's, the distractions from greatness are many...broken homes, street gangs, drug abuse, incest, even suicide. But Sr. Rita Irene believes that the character of future achievers is made from within.

"My job as educator is to make them believe they can be anything they want

to be. But it's education with a price. I tell them getting ahead means taking someone else along. I know what that kind of support can do for kids. I was there once myself."

Now when she computes the odds of her students learning the value of self-worth and compassion, she says, "I'm not the one teaching. It's the spirit of God in me."

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But District 4 is now also drawing students from throughout the city, and many of those students come from affluent homes. The fact that District 4 can now attract these students is testimony to its efforts. But it is also the case that District 4's improved average test scores may be the result of a new and different student mix.

It is possible that District 4 has kept separate data on the performance of its resident students and that this data indicate that their achievement is higher relative to comparable students in nonchoice schools. Such data would certainly make a very strong case for choice on the basis of student outcomes. If such data are available, I have been unable to find them. Such a result, however, would not be unlikely. There is, for example, evidence that poor children who are low achievers perform better in economically and academically mixed schools than they do in schools attended predominantly by low-achieving poor children. To the extent, then, that choice promotes economic and ability integration, it may indeed improve the achievement of poor and/or low-achieving youngsters. This may occur in an assigned neighborhood school as well as a choice school, but current residential patterns make this level of economic and social integration rare in a neighborhood school.

District 4 has therefore produced a rare phenomenon in poor neighborhoods: a school system that attracts families and students from outside its boundaries. But if choice has been the mechanism for doing so, good schools have been the reason. Put another way, choice did not create the improved schools in District 4. Rather, it was the opportunity and assistance the district gave to the faculties in its schools to rethink and redo policies and practices that weren't working for their students that helped turn the schools around. Unlike the teachers in most of the city's schools, District 4's faculty were treated like knowledgeable professionals. Allowed to work together in a collegial fashion, to concentrate more on the needs of their particular students than on following the directives of a distant bureaucracy, they created new programs and improved traditional ones and broke the mold of perpetual failure. Would choice have made an educational difference in District 4 without the efforts at change the district made prior to and along with introducing choice? It hardly seems possible. To offer a choice of roughly similar and similarly failing schools would have been to offer no choice at all.

Ironically enough, although District 4 and other schools whose faculty have been permitted to depart responsibly from standardized policies and practices have been much admired, they have not been widely emulated. Instead, they remain exceptions at the margins of a system that seems to prefer the habits and routinization of failure to the risks necessary for success. Choice has now been deemed the reason for District 4's and others' success. But if that is the only lesson carried away from their experience, then we should not be surprised if the nation becomes dotted with choice systems that afford some students a geographical change but fail to stimulate an educational cure.

CHOICE PLANS COME IN MANY VARIETIES

The recent hurry to choose up sides for or against public school choice has created the impression that choice is a singular policy or program when it is actually a rubric for a variety of policies and programs. Moreover, the generally sloppy way in which both advocates and opponents of choice have used the evidence has intensified that impression. Regrettably, by citing the results of one choice model to attack or support a very different model, they have managed to talk not only past one another but down to the public. Staking out a position on choice is therefore more than a matter of sorting out principles and arguments. It also involves sorting out the various models of choice and their respective costs, benefits, and tradeoffs.

INTERDISTRICT CHOICE

The most common form of this type of choice plan permits urban students to cross district lines and attend suburban schools and vice versa. Most of these plans were motivated by court-ordered desegregation or the imminence of such an order, and most of them regulate choices on the basis of their racial impact. In practice, this tends to mean that only minority students may leave city schools, and only white students are eligible to leave suburban schools. The participation of suburbs is generally voluntary; the participation of cities is generally not.

The major, and significant, expense of such plans is transportation, with the state and the city generally assuming the burden. Some states fully or partially double-fund for interdistrict choice, while others do not. Double-funding means that both the resident school district that students leave and the nonresident district where they attend school can count the students for state aid. Double-funding cushions urban districts from the impact of declining enrollment and is supposed to help them improve the quality of their schools and thereby attract suburban students. Double-funding is, of course, expensive, and as the competition for scarce resources increases, the inclination to double-fund decreases.

In order to attract white suburban students into the cities, most interdistrict choice plans have involved the creation of city magnet schools. Some such magnet schools have been successfully integrated, others have not. Virtually all of them, however, have received a relatively large amount of state and local funds (as well as federal funds earmarked for this purpose) compared to the funding of neighborhood schools. Magnet school costs in St. Louis, for example, average 42 percent more per student than regular, city elementary schools, 25 percent more than middle schools, and 27 percent more than traditional high schools. In some cases, these funds represent "new" money specially appropriated for the purpose of promoting choice and integration. In other instances, it represents money siphoned from neighborhood schools or at least money that could have been spent to improve neighborhood schools. In just about every case, the superior funding of magnet schools leads to resentment among the staff in neighborhood schools.

Typically, however, interdistrict choice plans have been a one-way street from the cities to the suburbs. For example, Milwaukee County's interdistrict choice plan began in 1976 with eight suburban districts volunteering to assist the city in complying with a federal court order to desegregate. Eleven suburban students entered city schools, and 323 city students transferred to suburban schools. Twelve years and another court battle later, 4,300 city students are attending schools in twenty-three suburban districts, and the city has attracted 1,070 suburban students, about half of whom attend magnet schools.

Interdistrict choice in St. Louis provides another example of a one-way street from the city to the suburbs. Initiated in 1983, St. Louis's plan was designed to attract at least six thousand suburban students into city schools. The main vehicle for realizing this plan was to be twenty-four magnet schools, with more to follow. By 1988, the plan's sights were lowered from six thousand to 1,670 students. In the fall of 1988, only about six hundred suburban students were in city magnet schools, while 11,131 city students were enrolled in suburban schools.

The typical one-way street of interdistrict choice plans has also been a restricted street. That is, while suburban districts have been volunteering to accept urban minority students, they have refused to accept students with discipline problems and special needs and have "creamed off" the most academically (and, sometimes, athletically) talented and motivated youngsters from urban schools. Put another way, many suburban districts, through student record reviews, parent and student interviews, and the like, have been acting just like private schools. Moreover, not only have they been keeping "undesirable" urban students out, they have frequently failed to inform their students of the city school option or refused to let them transfer.

From a number of perspectives, then, most interdistrict choice plans have not worked well. Certainly their high costs have not resulted in benefits that are commensurate with the goals of these plans. Yet if interdistrict choice plans are judged on the standard of helping to rescue individual students, then a measure of success must be conceded to them. For although many of the urban minority students who transferred to suburban schools would probably have succeeded no matter what school they went to by virtue of their motivation or talent, many of them might have succumbed to the uncongenial academic atmosphere now so typical of poor neighborhood schools. Some of these students' parents might have taken them out of the public school system altogether, at great hardship to themselves and to the detriment of support for public education. And without these plans, even fewer white and minority children might have shared a common school experience, a dream of public education.

But the price of rescuing individual students has been high, very high indeed, for the majority of urban schools and youngsters. For the evidence is strong that interdistrict choice plans have also depressed the quality of urban neighborhood schools by "creaming off" their role model students and the parents who are voices for educational excellence and by skimming off many of their most talented teachers and financial resources.

STATEWIDE CHOICE

There are very few statewide choice plans currently in operation. Minnesota's was the first, and its plan is only about a year old. But statewide choice is now the hottest choice model in the nation, and a number of states have followed Minnesota's lead, with more likely to follow.

Statewide choice plans permit students to attend school in any public school district in the state so long as the nonresident school district is willing and has space and the transfer does not upset racial balance. State aid follows the student, which means that the higher the state's share of per-pupil costs, the more equitable a state choice plan is likely to be and the fewer the financial excuses for districts not to accept nonresident students. Many of the architects of statewide choice plans have learned the lessons of interdistrict choice plans and included regulations designed to prevent districts from picking and choosing their students.

Based on current discussions, transportation will be handled in one of a few ways: The state will only pay the costs of transporting poor students out of their resident districts; a district will pay for transporting students to the border of the nonresident district and the host district will take over from there; or families will be responsible for any transportation out of their resident districts.

In many respects, statewide choice is more rhetorical than real, an example of symbolic politics. Very few, if any, parents are going to send their children clear across a state to attend a public school. The claims of statewide choice opponents that the policy will result in massive chaos and defections are therefore greatly exaggerated. Last year, for example, the first year of the full implementation of Minnesota's statewide choice plan, only 440 students availed themselves of the opportunity. (About 5,400 eleventh and twelfth graders used a postsecondary option, which is less than 5 percent of those eligible.) Next school year, Minnesota expects one thousand students to take advantage of open enrollment, which is still under 1 percent of those eligible.

What have been the results of Minnesota's choice plan thus far? Although the evidence is thin, it seems that some students who dropped out or were on the verge of dropping out are completing their studies in schools outside their resident districts. Many high schools have introduced advanced-placement courses in order to retain their students. Schools are generally taking parents' wishes more seriously because they know that their children might be transferred. A number of districts are offering more choices within their borders. And, in a surprise development, about three thousand students have returned from private to public schools.

On the other hand, some districts whose schools were already underfunded, like Westonka, are reeling from the loss of students and state aid, and there is a good likelihood that a number of districts will be forced to consolidate. (Some critics claim that this was the chief purpose of Minnesota's choice policy.) Two of the wealthiest districts in the state have refused to participate. The cities seem to be losing many more students than they are attracting, and the ones they are losing are the student role models. Information on choices is not widely available, and, as is the case with many other

choice plans, relatively few poor parents are exercising choice. There is also no evidence that choice has produced an epidemic of experimentation and innovation in districts and schools.

A number of recent developments in Minnesota also suggests that the state is trying to put some lid on diversity and choice. Statewide standardized testing programs and more specific curriculum frameworks are being actively discussed. If these materialize, the result may be a system that has found a balance between diversity and commonality, student/family preference and professional judgment, and individual desires and social needs. But the result could also be more standardized practices and test-driven schools—and a choice system in which schools are all pretty much alike, save in the important respects of wealth and student-body composition.

A final note: Since statewide choice plans will likely involve only neighboring districts, they are really like the interdistrict choice model writ large but without the exclusive city-to-suburb, suburb-to-city focus. It is unfair to attack statewide choice initiatives on the basis of the sins of past interdistrict choice programs, as many people do. It is, however, prudent to apply the lessons learned from those programs and monitor statewide choice very carefully lest we rescue a minority of students while damning the majority.

INTRADISTRICT CHOICE PLANS

Loosely defined, intradistrict choice refers to any option available to students within a given public school district. This may range from something as common as offering students a choice of curriculum (e.g., academic, vocational, general) and electives within a high school—the most common form of choice in America—to a districtwide open enrollment policy that, theoretically at least, allows students to attend any school in the district.

Current discussions of intradistrict choice generally refer to more proactive and reform-conscious versions of choice than the ones above. Chief among these newer options are magnet schools and controlled-choice plans. Unlike most earlier choice policies, these options generally involve an effort to promote diversity, that is, to create distinctive schools to choose from.

Open Enrollment. Open enrollment permits students in a district to enroll in any school in that district, on a space-available basis and usually subject to racial balance guidelines.

Open enrollment is a fairly common policy in urban school districts, but it tends to be a well-kept secret from parents. Those parents who do know about this option tend to be economically better off and/or better educated and generally savvier about making systems and institutions work for them. The fact that many open enrollment plans do not include transportation further limits their accessibility, particularly for poor parents. Therefore, although open enrollment in such districts is theoretically open to all so long as the choice does not promote segregation, it is known and used only by few. (It also is a popular device for recruiting and transferring athletes into certain schools.)

Another reason open enrollment leads to few transfers is that, with a few exceptions, schools within a district are relatively standardized and most parents prefer the convenience of their neighborhood school. In fact, open enrollment by itself is neither concerned with nor does it result in greater programmatic diversity among schools. In this sense, it is not so much an educational or social policy as a sort of individual “safety valve” for those who are disgruntled with and might leave the public school system. Typically, then, the choices being made have less to do with educational programs or processes (except insofar as individuals have informally heard of something special going on in a school) than they do with educational inputs, particularly with student-body composition and the financial and other resources of a school.

For these reasons, open enrollment, *per se*, is not a major piece of the dialogue on education reform and public school choice these days. Open enrollment coupled with magnet or alternative schools is, however, a different story.

Magnet Schools/Programs. Next to statewide choice, magnets are currently the most talked about variety of choice. They also represent the most firmly entrenched example of choice and the one for which we have the most empirical evidence. Since the previous discussion focused on magnets created as part of an interdistrict choice plan, only intradistrict magnets will be considered here.

Magnets have their roots in competitive high schools (though these were never called magnets) that admit students throughout a city on the basis of an examination. New York City's examination high schools are perhaps the oldest and best known of this genre.

The use of the term “magnet” is more recent, however. What we now mostly think of as magnet schools are the result of desegregation efforts in which one or more secondary schools were given some special focus and extra resources in order to attract whites into predominantly minority schools. (Sometimes it was the other way around, but rarely.) Magnets initiated for desegregation were largely boosted by federal funds available for this purpose. Desegregation continues to be a major, but no longer exclusive, purpose of magnets.

Magnets are organized around an academic specialty or two (mathematics, performing arts, humanities) or teaching philosophy (traditional, open education, Montessori) or, sometimes, theme (technology, sports, the environment). They may either encompass a whole school or a program within a school and are most commonly found at the secondary level; elementary school magnets, however, are becoming increasingly popular. Magnets are generally open to all the children within a district on the basis of open enrollment and are usually subject to racial balance guidelines.

Unlike neighborhood or assigned schools, magnets accept students on the basis of an application, which may range from little more than a sign-up sheet to an academic screening mechanism. Some magnet schools have highly selective admissions standards, others have modest or no requirements. Some are on a first-come, first-served basis, while some hold lotteries if the demand exceeds the supply of spaces, and others

encourage excess demand in order to shape a representative student body. And some magnets operate rather disingenuously by purporting to accept an academically representative sample of the district's students but in fact skimming off the students in the highest end of the middle- and low-achievement bands.

As the earlier discussion suggested, upon closer inspection it turns out that even the least academically selective magnets are in fact selective because it has generally been the case that choice is disproportionately exercised by motivated and well-informed students/parents. (The most vivid and graphic representation of this are scenes of parents camping outside a magnet school, sometimes for more than one day and night, to sign up their children. There are probably many more parents who would go to this trouble, but are unable to take time off from a job or leave other children unattended.) There are therefore few if any magnet schools that are representative of the student body of a district; all the students are there by virtue of self-selection, which in education and other areas is a very powerful selection mechanism.

This does not necessarily pose problems—or, rather, dilemmas—if a district supports a substantial number of magnets and makes information about their availability widely and easily available. Unfortunately, that is not the case in most districts—hence, the camping-out scenes. Indeed, the fewer the magnets available in a district, the fewer the actual choices available to parents/students, despite the ostensible existence of an intradistrict choice policy; the fewer the choices available, the more those choices are available to and exercised only by the more privileged or motivated members of the community; and the more the choices are exercised by the stronger members of the community, the more the students in magnets represent a select rather than a representative student population.

With this caveat in mind, the evidence to date about well-designed magnet schools suggests that the arguments being made by their proponents are substantially correct. Choosing and being chosen do lead to greater mutual commitment and satisfaction among students, parents, and teachers alike. Student absenteeism and dropout rates and teacher absenteeism and turnover tend to be lower, and parental involvement and student achievement higher. But unfortunately—as noted earlier about interdistrict magnets—many of the factors that account for the success of these magnets—such as student self-selection and higher funding levels—have also had a devastating effect on the quality of neighborhood schools.

Although a policy debate about intradistrict choice can ill afford to ignore this dilemma, it need not be paralyzed by it. There is an alternative to improving the educational opportunities of the few at the expense of the many, on the one hand, and foregoing magnet schools altogether, on the other. And that is to make every school in a district or every school at a particular level of education a school of choice. This is not the same thing as open enrollment—merely allowing parents and students to choose which school in the district they wish to attend. Rather, it represents an effort to “reform” each school or level of schooling in a district by giving them all the opportunity and means to create a

distinctive program and then offering a choice among them.

There are, in fact, a few systems that have done so, largely as part of a desegregation effort. In the course of going to an extensive magnet system, however, they discovered some educational as well as social benefits. Consequently, this variety of choice, generally known as “controlled choice,” is now receiving increasing attention as a means to promote reform.

Controlled Choice. This system of choice (also known as districtwide choice) in effect “compels” every student/parent to choose a school either anywhere in the district or within some zones within a district. In some school systems, typically small or modestly sized ones, such choice may extend from elementary to secondary schooling. In other, larger school systems, the policy may be confined to middle or secondary schools. All the schools at that level then become schools with a distinctive focus or philosophy.

The most common restriction districts have put on such choice systems is that the choices not be allowed to upset racial balance—hence the term “controlled choice”—which means that racial balance is a factor in whether students get their first, second, or third choice. Sibling attendance is also frequently taken into account, so that families may remain together. The only other admissions criterion seems to be student or parent interest; applying to a school seems to be a relatively simple matter of indicating interest and filling out a form.

The most notable and successful examples of controlled-choice districts are Cambridge, Massachusetts; Montclair, New Jersey; and District 4 in New York City. Both Cambridge and Montclair are relatively small districts and offer choice from the elementary through the secondary levels; District 4 is a mixed intra- and inter-district choice model, since it accepts students from other school districts in the city, and the choices it “compels” are for the junior high school level. Each of these districts considers all the schools within the scope of its choice plans to be distinctive magnets, including neighborhood schools that operate in a “traditional” fashion.

On balance, the evidence about well-designed controlled-choice plans indicates that they result in a modest but encouraging improvement in district and school racial balance and in student attendance and achievement (probably because schools with high concentrations of poor and low-achieving students become more integrated by social class and ability levels). Increases in teacher morale and parental involvement are also reported, and a few controlled-choice districts have attracted private school students back to the public school system.

On the other hand, controlled-choice plans increase district costs, especially the more successful plans. Transportation seems to be the biggest budget item, which is probably one of the reasons such plans tend to be found only in small cities or in one district within a large city. Large cities that are now contemplating such a plan for the entire school system seem to be heading in the direction of dividing the city into zones and making choices available only within those zones, thereby

creating a number of intradistrict choice plans within a city.

Another cost of controlled choice—and one that some districts skimp on—is information. The availability of choice and the types of choices available must be publicized. Frequently, there also must be an aggressive outreach campaign to encourage parents to exercise choice and avoid increasing social and economic segregation among schools. As this suggests, most parents, and poor parents in particular, tend to prefer the convenience and familiarity of their local neighborhood school and may not have the wherewithal to search out the school that may work best for their particular children. Given that most parents will choose their neighborhood schools, a choice plan that concentrates only on designing a few specialty schools rather than improving all schools is a plan headed for failure.

WHAT, THEN, seems to distinguish successful controlled-choice plans from nominal and less successful ones? First, every or virtually every school within the district is given the opportunity and resources to become distinctive and successful. Sometimes the district may provide school faculties with a menu of themes to choose from, which the district, in turn, may have derived from a survey of parents, teachers, principals and, sometimes, students throughout the district. Sometimes the decision is exclusively school based. In all cases, the decision and plans are worked out by the school faculty working together.

Second, there is a common set of goals throughout the district and sometimes even a common set of curriculum guidelines, but individual schools have discretion over the particulars of content and how to achieve the common district goals.

Third, parents have equal access to reliable information about the choices being offered and what they mean, and there is an especial effort to ensure that poor parents are well informed. Then, parents and/or students apply to the schools, listing their top choices, and the district endeavors to honor those choices, subject to desegregation and other criteria that may be locally appropriate. Although few districts pay attention to this criterion, schools of choice that admit a student body that is representative by achievement as well as by race have shown some striking success.

Fourth, the district administration and teachers union work out procedures to enable teachers to choose the type of school program/philosophy in which they wish to practice, while ensuring that no school is deprived of critical faculty.

Fifth, the district provides transportation, preferably for all but at the least for poor students. And, finally, the schools work hard at ensuring that parental involvement does not end with choosing a school.

There is another criterion of successful controlled choice that is not revealed by the research but by common sense. When schools have a prior bad reputation and are physically in disrepair, unsafe, and starved of resources, many parents will leave them at the first opportunity. Even if these schools go through an educational renaissance, it is hard to convince parents that they have changed, especially if they continue to look

like dumps. They will be just about everybody's last choice. They nonetheless will be filled because space in more desirable schools will be limited. Repairing crumbling schools or making them safe may not be as new or sexy an idea as public school choice, but it is very much a part of what it will take to make choice real.

Last, but far from least, is the issue of space availability. Controlled-choice, as well as other choice plans, strives to give parents one of their first three choices of schools, subject to racial-balance guidelines. Since most parents prefer their neighborhood school—and, clearly, most parents who have moved to a particular part of town primarily for the quality of its schools will prefer those neighborhood schools—it is virtually impossible to honor parents' first preferences *and* achieve greater racial balance. Some choice systems deal with this problem by "grandfathering" children into their present school if that is the first choice of their parents. There is fairness in that approach but also a contradiction of the notion of choice. (It certainly violates the free-market assumptions underlying choice.) Undoubtedly, it will make parents who are presently satisfied with their neighborhood school happy. And just as certainly, it will limit the opportunities of parents who wish to transfer their children out of less desirable schools.

And what of school systems that do not "grandfather," that attempt to create a level playing field? They, too, attempt to honor parents' top choices but do not guarantee continued access to the neighborhood school. This, too, is a fair approach, especially if a district is trying to improve racial balance. Yet, just like "grandfathering," it also contradicts the notion of choice and is bound to make some parents unhappy and perhaps even drive them from the public school system.

It is not altogether surprising that there has been little or no discussion of such contradictions and tradeoffs, for no research evidence can resolve controversial issues that are squarely in the realm of values and politics. But it is not inappropriate to call for a little more honesty in the choice debate: It is a rare case when increasing the choices of some does not constrain the choices of others.

HOW MUCH CHOICE DO PARENTS WANT?

Since choice implies involvement, no matter how minimal, it would be a mistake to view the public school choice movement apart from the issue of parental involvement in education. Concerns about parental involvement are, of course, not new. They were in large part responsible for the school decentralization movement of the 1960s, such as the one in New York City, and are implicated in the recent and more radical decentralization reforms in Chicago, where every school will elect a board on which parents must be the majority. The goal of increasing parental involvement is also motivating many of the calls for school-based management.

But if public school choice is another manifestation of the drive for parental involvement, it is also a less political one. This seems a curious observation in light of the intense politics surrounding public school choice. But whereas decentralization and school-based manage-

ment are concerned with governance, with giving parents, as a group, more authority over their local schools or school, choice is more concerned with fulfilling individual preferences and giving parents more control over their particular child's education. In Albert Hirschman's terms, public school choice celebrates individual exit over collective voice; it's the difference between switching or staying to fight for change for oneself and others. And in this sense, the public school choice movement is very much a sign of our times: the increasing disillusion with politics and with our ability to change our institutions, the fragmentation of civic and cultural life, and the retreat from society into self. It certainly seems to be the case that public school choice represents a feeling that parents can't trust schools or school systems to make the right educational decisions for their children and that therefore parents would be better off if they made those decisions for themselves.

The popular passion for public school choice thus seems entirely understandable; if you believe that the system is unresponsive, that it cannot or refuses to be salvaged, then you concentrate on saving yourself and those closest to you. Yet this also suggests that the extent and depth of the demand for public school choice, *per se*, has been oversold. To be sure, there are plenty of polls and surveys to substantiate the popular demand for choice. It is also true that virtually every poll or survey that asks the public whether it would rather have a choice of product or service X, Y, Z, or no choice finds that the answer is "choice." That is not surprising and it is healthy, a sign of our individualism and our democratic habits.

But when a respondent is probed and told the costs and benefits and other terms of the choice, or when actual behavior is studied, the results come out differently. Suddenly, choice is not the concern; it is instead quality, costs, familiarity, convenience, the tradeoffs among them, and the like. The mere prospect of choice or of acquiring product X may no longer seem so desirable; product Y may not be perfect, but it now appears preferable.

Indeed, if we look at the rather superficial surveys on school choice alongside other polls on education and against actual behavior, we find that, first and foremost, parents want a quality education for their children in safe, local neighborhood schools. Judging from their behavior, they also seem to want the right to pull their child out of an uncongenial or unsuccessful classroom—the kind of "little divorce" that the public school bureaucracy now makes so difficult (and which choice, the threat of leaving the school altogether, may make easier). As for teachers—and no one is much talking about teacher choice—choice for them means the ability to fulfill the desire to practice in schools where good practice is possible and to get out of schools and districts where it is not. Is the issue, then, choice? Only collaterally so. The basic issue is quality education and the conditions that make it possible.

Unfortunately, there is still disagreement over what quality education is. More troubling, we still don't know a great deal about what works in education, for whom, and when. Choice proponents seem to believe this, too, and use it as an argument for why parents need to choose the schools that work best for their kids. But

another argument may be that public school choice is an admission of our ignorance, for if schools knew what worked, for whom, and when, then wouldn't they be doing it? Wouldn't we then accuse the schools that weren't doing it of malpractice and find a way to make them practice what works? And then wouldn't there be no educationally compelling reason for choice?

Competition and choice may indeed promote some much-needed diversity in our schools. But diversity is not the same thing as quality, and there may be as many diverse examples of bad or mediocre schools as successful ones. It seems, then, that the zeal for diversity ought to be marshalled to a search for commonality, for the ways and means that enable students to learn. This does not preclude diversity any more than an architect's obligation to build a structure that stands and resists stress precludes using a variety of design and decorative styles. But it does suggest that if diversity and choice become ends in and of themselves rather than another systematic means to discover how best to educate our children, then like an architect's dazzling but flawed structure, our school system will continue to crumble.

After five intensive years of education reform, all too many of our children are still not learning, and quality education is still beyond our grasp. For public school choice proponents, that is a *prima facie* case for choice. For public school choice opponents, that is cause to focus only on the lack of ideal conditions for choice and on what could go wrong. In this regard, the argument goes to the public school choice proponents. There is no evidence that the more-of-the-same-old-things-but-better approach to education reform that has characterized the past five to eight years is working. By concentrating only on the risks of change and insisting that we wait for a more perfect world before we act, public school choice opponents are sure to help perpetuate the status quo. That is unacceptable.

There is a third and more agnostic point of view, and that is that public school choice—at least some models of it—may indeed be an engine to improve our schools, but it is not the whole vehicle and it doesn't drive by itself. If choice is coupled with the restructuring of our schools, with a systematic search for new ways of organizing learning and teaching, then there is reason to think that it will deepen and accelerate education reform. But if choice is used as a cheap substitute for this more fundamental pursuit, then the prospects for turning around our public school system and dramatically improving the education of our children will be more remote than ever. Public school choice will then certainly be the prelude to privatization, as some choice opponents have charged. But not because of some political conspiracy; it will be because we preferred a quick-fix fantasy over the reality of hard work. The choice is ours to make. □

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(Continued from page 25)

school for three years and had completed a training course in consultation skills. Her work with Grace was one of her first full-fledged team projects. For each session, Grace videotaped one of her recent reading comprehension lessons. She controlled the VCR and stopped the tape when she wanted to discuss an episode. She also sometimes stopped the tape to talk about episodes at Stephanie's suggestion.

The goal of this mentoring was to assist Grace in conducting instructional conversation by using "responsive teaching" rather than recitation teaching. These responsive, instructional conversation skills were to be learned and practiced in Grace's small-group first-grade reading lesson. At KEEP, the reading program was focused on building children's comprehension skills, and responsive conversational interaction with the students was the central instructional strategy for each teacher.

The First Goal: Getting Students Involved with Story Comprehension

Grace had already acquired a certain level of skill in conducting the instructional conversation. For example, early in the first session with Stephanie, she talked of the value of guiding discussions with the students about the story they were reading by selecting a *theme*, which would provide a goal toward which she could assist student comprehension. This theme could also serve to guide choices among alternative lines of discussion during the lesson.

As Stephanie and Grace discussed a lesson on the folk tale *Billy Goats Gruff*, Grace reported that she had selected the "greediness of the troll" (who kept waiting for a bigger goat to come by) as the central theme. In this first consultation session, Stephanie and Grace were watching the videotape of Grace teaching her first lesson about the trolls and goats. For a few minutes, Grace is able to stick to her planned "script," but when the children begin to join the conversation with some vigor, she completely loses the reins:

GRACE: Why, why, what was the problem with the troll?

KANANI: He wanted to eat He was greedy.

GRACE: Greedy. Are you greedy?

CHORUS: Noooooo!

GRACE: What happens to you if you're greedy?

LOUISE: You going to come mean and you going to get spanking from your Mommy.

GRACE: Does the troll have a Mommy?

LOUISE: No [giggles].

SHEIDA: He's all by himself. He's lonely. He can't find an equal, with no body.

KANANI: His Mom dies. He killed his Mom.

SUMMIE: He doesn't have food.

GRACE: All right, so we know we think . . . you're thinking, that's your idea.

KANANI: He killed his Mom.

GRACE: He's that greedy and that mean? All right, we learned something about the troll yesterday. We did find out one thing about him. What did we find out about him from our reading yesterday?

In this excerpt, Grace's questions are responsive, in the literal sense, but to no clear purpose. She produces a string of questions and answers that are linked to one another, but they are not tied by a line of thought, and certainly not tied to the preselected theme of "greediness." As a result, they are quite similar to the classic recitation script, and unlike a conversation. For example, Grace asks if the troll has a mommy in response to the child's connecting of greediness with parental punishment. The child responds with an elaboration that adds details not found in the text nor in the usual versions of the myth. Grace recognizes that she has elicited some original thought, but she does not know what to do with it. She comments once on the child's idea, and then changes the topic.

Why? Though a newcomer to this program, Grace was a highly motivated and dedicated professional. She had completed workshop training and knew the program principles well enough to talk about them intelligently. How did this aimlessness come about? More importantly, as we shall see, how is it that Grace perceived what occurred in the lesson?

Later in this first session, an answer began to emerge: A major issue is Grace's approach to the text itself. She treats the text as consisting of the literal details presented in the primer, organized by her single theme of greediness. Grace herself needed a deeper understanding of the text. The opportunity for Stephanie to provide some assistance arose with the following exchange on the tape:

GRACE: Okay. We know that it has something to do with. . .

CHORUS: The troll.

GRACE: The troll, and what belongs to the troll?

CHORUS: The bridge.

GRACE: The bridge. Okay, we know something. . .

SHEIDA: What belongs to the goats?

GRACE: What belongs to the goats?

TOSUEA: The grass.

GRACE: The grass belongs to the goats.

SHEIDA: Not all of it. The village has . . . you got to share the grass.

GRACE: Who has to share the grass?

CHORUS: The goats.

The tape is stopped. Stephanie recognized a positive achievement and followed that up with a suggestion.

STEPHANIE: That seems to be a moment of [conversational] responsiveness, Grace. . . .

GRACE: [responds favorably and at length] I thought it was kinda' neat when Sheida brought up what belongs [to the characters]. I think it's neat when the kids can start asking questions about what they're [reading] and that we are trying to take the purpose from them I thought it was a good question for her to bring up I thought it was kind of neat to pick up on what she was saying.

STEPHANIE: Yeah. It's because it could relate to some bigger concepts in the story. In fact, [you could begin] the investigation of the character of the troll in terms of why is he acting this way. One reason may be that he is plain hungry. Another reason might be that he is [being territorial] and they are invading his place. And [there

***Grace's questions are responsive,
in the literal sense, but to
no clear purpose.***

are] other things that you know about animal behavior that make them operate in certain ways . . . [but] his nature may not be exactly as they see here. There may be other things that are making him act the way he does. [You're] starting to touch on some items that later you might want [to use].

GRACE: [Grace, however, does not think so. She objects by complaining about the story.] The story is very—it's very shallow. All it says is: The goat comes along and is going to eat grass. [The troll says] "No, I am going to eat you." [The goat says], "Don't eat me. Wait for the bigger one who's coming behind me." [Grace continues paraphrasing text] And this is all the kids get. . . .

Grace's comment that the story is "very shallow" is a key to understanding the early phases of the consultation. Her initial problem in conducting the comprehension lesson has more to do with subject matter knowledge than pedagogical method. She cannot carry on an instructional conversation until her own understanding of the story is deeper.

Integrating Subject Matter and Pedagogical Knowledge

Stephanie now faces a problem. Grace must be brought to a higher content-skill level—for example, to be able to perceive more than one theme in a story and

to relate them structurally. In addition, Grace also needs more skill development in pedagogy. However, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge do not separate as simply as it seems. Grace must also learn to encourage and elicit theme identification in students—a hybrid of pedagogy and content. Stephanie must assist Grace to develop this hybrid skill; but Stephanie makes the (correct) training decision to address first the content knowledge: She assists Grace through a theme-and-structure analysis of *Billy Goats Gruff*. After that basic skill is acquired, she will be in position to address Grace's need to shift from the role of *analyzer-of-themes* to the role of *assistor-of-children-who-analyze-themes*.

Now their discussion began to sound more like a seminar on children's literature than a consultation on conversational technique. This is appropriate, because Grace will not be able to assist the children until she can recognize in the story multiple opportunities to link schemata, concepts, and text details; only after that point can knowledge of questioning technique be joined effectively to subject matter knowledge.

Stephanie persisted. Through an instructional conversation between herself and Grace (a series of questions and comments about character interpretation), she assisted Grace to reach the appreciation of the troll and goats' commonalties; that both are hungry as well as territorial; that, in fact, the troll's behavior may be complexly motivated.

Stephanie's immediate goal [she reported later] was to assist Grace toward the idea that there is more to these texts than what is literally presented. She focused on the case at hand and discussed the parallels between the character and circumstances of the troll and of people—especially those in the world of the students. She wanted to assist Grace to consider more than a single preselected theme. A single theme places a severe limit on how conversationally responsive a teacher can be to the ideas and interpretations that a topic or text elicits from children. If the teacher insists on being guided solely by preselected goals, a lesson will inevitably take on more of the quality of a recitation than a responsive conversation. Directing them to an interpretation provided by the teacher can have merit, but the ultimate goal is to teach students to construct an understanding without assistance:

It's important to distinguish between help that somehow gets a child to produce the right answer and help from which the child might learn how to answer similar questions in the future [without the assistance of a more capable other] If, for example, when a child cannot read the word *bus* on a word card, the teacher prompts the answer with the question, "What do you ride to school on?" The child may answer correctly . . . [and] say "bus." But that is not a prompt the child could give to herself the next time, because the prompt depends on the very knowledge of the word that it is supposed to cue. (Cazden, 1981, p.5.)

Grace and Stephanie's first consultation session ended with an agreement to tape the next day's lesson and to meet again. In concluding, Stephanie reminded Grace to reflect on many possible story themes and interpreta-

tions so she would be better able to respond to child contributions. By the end of the session, Grace had become enthusiastic about having alternative themes in mind. This joint understanding, created by building and refining joint concepts, moved both toward mutual trust. Such movement is the hallmark of collaboration that arises in assisted performance and reveals that the conversations of Grace and Stephanie were themselves instructional conversations within Grace's zone of proximal development.

But even with alternative themes at the ready, children's comments cannot always be quickly understood and related to the text. The integration of student ideas and experience with the text is a fundamental cognitive goal of teaching comprehension; the importance of this goal is matched by its difficulty of achievement!

These difficulties were well illustrated in the second consultation session, which occurred the following day. When they began to examine the new videotape made for the second day of consultation, it was clear that Grace's questions were not being guided by a theme—neither her own, nor ones gleaned from the many interesting interpretations offered by the students. For example, a child connected trolls to dinosaurs, but Grace lets another child change the subject to trolls and dragons without making use of the dinosaur connection. And then a child offered a correction, that there are no dragons in the story, and introduces the idea of the troll “stepping in tar.” Later, this same child implies she has seen tar pits with remains of dinosaurs, another idea not pursued. Grace was unable to select any of these possibilities for focus, and the conversation drifts and bounces from one idea to another.

Grace has not yet shifted from the role of analyzer-of-themes to the role of assistor-of-children-who-analyze-themes. The problems in this sequence are recognized as clearly by Grace as by her mentor:

GRACE: Oh my God. What am I going to do with all this information? . . . I did not expect to get myself in this direction. I'm really amazed with what these kids give me. I didn't expect that much . . . I think that's my one problem . . . I'm not experienced enough to make the most out of the situation while I'm in it right then. [I get a lot out of just watching my tapes along with you] but I really need your feedback. Because there's tons I would have missed, really, without you . . . I feel more comfortable . . . with the stories . . . and I think I'm giving those kids more, because each time I read the story I see a little bit more. Maybe I'm reading it slower and slower as I go down the line with these kids or maybe I'm taking more time to bringing, figuring things out. But I can see that I go right over a whole lot of stuff.

This second consultation session was a pivotal one. It is one in which Grace achieved greater mutual understanding with her consultant. She moved toward a new set of standards by which to judge her own teaching. She discovered how important it is to be attentive to text and student utterances, and to observe, accurately and conscientiously, not only the text but her own behavior.

In the following month, Grace virtually solved the “multiple theme and structure” problem, with little or no further assistance from Stephanie. As Grace moved

Grace has learned that announcing to children the meaning of a word, concept, idea, or theme does not mean they have learned it.

further through the zone of proximal development, however, a new aspect of teaching skill came to the fore: that of eliciting ideas from students and engaging in responsive conversational turns that assist child performance.

Advancing through the Zone of Proximal Development

As this next session begins, Grace and Stephanie are watching a tape of Grace and her students reading a story about characters who can't stop eating cookies.

GRACE: . . . in the beginning of the story there is not a whole lot until they come across this thing called “will power.” That's where the big deal is because the kids don't know what will power is. We spent a lot of time talking about it. I had anticipated it, but I didn't want to bring it up in the beginning of the story.

Building on what she had learned in the earlier sessions with Stephanie, it seems clear that Grace had studied the story and correctly identified the concept of “will power” as a crucial theme. Grace reported that she had learned much about eliciting from kids and that she had applied her new understanding to the taped lesson they were now reviewing.

According to Grace, it was a visit to Janet's class (another teacher in the school) that helped her anticipate the importance of “will power” in the story. Janet, a

third-grade teacher, was widely acknowledged as a master of eliciting students' own experiences and concepts they could bring to bear in comprehending new text. In Janet's lesson on civic government, she began by having the students read a portion of the textbook. (She did not begin by announcing and explaining the new concepts, as one might well do with older students.) Then she elicited, in conversation, the children's understanding of the text and their relevant personal experiences.

After this visit, "elicitation" became a key idea in Grace and Stephanie's project: "eliciting" from students rather than "telling" them. This new concept and the visit to Janet's classroom taught Grace that there are alternatives to bringing up such concepts as "will power" too early because the teacher ends up "telling" the students about the concept, which may not help them comprehend at all. Stephanie urges Grace to emphasize "elicitation" even more than Janet did, because Grace's students are even younger and because they are reading fiction, where the crucial issues and emotions are likely to be found in the students' experiences. (While there are many ways of assisting students to acquire concepts, such as demonstrations, arranging joint experiences such as field trips, and assigning auxiliary text material, Stephanie concentrates on the issue of elicitation because she sees it as a route for Grace to adopt more responsive instructional dialogue.)

GRACE: When we went to visit Janet, I saw that she could have mentioned "housing project" at the beginning but instead she waited until the children read it and then she chose to talk about it at that time. . . . [Before the visit] I would have been inclined to [start today's lesson by asking], "Who knows what will power is?" right at the beginning. And I would have thought, "Oh, yes, I'm laying the groundwork [for the theme]," but really it would be too far fetched, I think, at the very beginning of the story. . . . (smiles) "Have you ever heard of will power?" [Instead, today I was] planting these little (seeds): "Who decides how many cookies you eat? Does *Mom* say, 'You can eat only 3?' or do *you tell yourself*, 'I better not eat more than 3 because I didn't eat my dinner yet.'"

STEPHANIE: Were you trying to elicit. . .

GRACE: . . . from them. You know, just laying it out and then have them tell me what they would do. And most of them said that *Mom* would say [how many cookies to eat].

Implied in Grace's comments is the assumption that this line of discussion will eventually lead to the question of "telling yourself" to eat only three cookies, which is just a short step from an understanding of "will power." This represents a major shift in Grace's thinking. Previously, Grace expressed some doubts about the value of eliciting from the children rather than "telling" them. Her impulse to "tell them things" arose from an accurate recognition that they often did not know certain facts or definitions that would be crucial for understanding a story. Her doubts in the earlier session were expressed in terms of the problem of reconciling elicitation (from students) and working with a preselected lesson objective.

In this session, she is beginning to appreciate that elicitation of child utterances actually assists the devel-

opment of comprehension and that the goal is to assist students to engage in such cognitive activity rather than "feed" them the lines. As a result of observing Janet, Grace seems to see the value of patiently building comprehension on a foundation composed of the text itself, students' initial responses to discussion, and their own experiences. Grace appreciates that the new understandings will emerge from collaborative text analysis, through the instructional conversation. Grace's understanding is developing rapidly, and it looks as though the need for Stephanie's assistance is diminishing.

Grace has learned an important distinction. She has learned that announcing to children the meaning of a word, concept, idea, or theme does not mean they have learned it or can then use it to comprehend what they read. A startling parallel between Grace's learning and the children's learning also reveals itself: Grace has grasped the concept of conversational elicitation, but she cannot yet control it as a tool of teaching, just as the children can discuss the concept of "will power" but cannot yet use it as a tool to analyze new text:

GRACE: Okay. Do frog and toad have a problem?

CHORUS: Yeah.

GRACE: What's their problem?

SUMMIE: They can't stop eating cookies. . . .

GRACE: They can't stop eating cookies. And what is one of the solutions they gave for their problem?

ISSAC: Will power.

GRACE: Will power. Will power is one solution. Have you any idea what will power is?

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT: Superman.

GRACE: Okay. What do you mean Superman? What kind of power?

ISSAC: Exercise!

GRACE: Exercise would be will power? Okay. If you have. . . Okay, let me use it in a sentence. If you have will power and know that exercise helps you to lose weight, you have will power if you exercise every day. If *Mom* says you can have one scoop of ice cream when you come home and you really want three, if you eat only one, you have will power. Does that give you an idea of what will power is?

At this point, Grace stopped the videotape (and said, sharply):

GRACE: No! . . . it was like blank stares [on faces of children]. It just went [over their heads]. I thought I had brought it down to the point that they could understand, but they still couldn't get it. . . . I was hoping that since I had given them several examples, they should be able to tell me because then I would think that they know.

STEPHANIE: It seems that you really didn't get enough of their experiences. [You were] heavy on teacher-talk all the way to the end. At the end of the teacher-talk, you've got dead-pan silence, which says that it's got to come from them. So, you've got to turn it around into elicitation. . . .

GRACE: I thought: "These kids don't know anything about it [will power]. If these kids don't know anything about it, you've got to teach them about it."

STEPHANIE: Well, that's true in the case of what Janet did with the city government lesson we observed. But

how did she do that? What did she say? She elicited everything from them They may not be able to label [their experiences]. But you (should) expect them to talk about experience that they have had, so that the experience is out on the table.

GRACE: . . . but what I feel is that if the kids don't have any experience with [the topic or concept], then you have to supply it.

STEPHANIE: Or somehow find out what experience is [for them]. [In some cases, you may have to provide content background, like Janet did with texts]. But in the case of the stories at [your grade level], it's human experience. So you fish and fish and fish until you come up with whatever experience it is that they have that is going to relate to what's going to happen in the story.

Grace is still using too much "teacher-talk." Grace's growing sophistication is revealed in her developing skills of self-observation and analysis; she can now "see" more clearly what she is doing, and what needs repair. But she cannot yet observe and repair "in flight." Until she saw the tape, Grace did not know that this lesson failed to match her advancing standards—standards that were internalized from earlier interactions with Stephanie and Janet. A growing ability to self-analyze does not produce an instant change in the ability to conduct lessons, just as knowing a "definition" does not lead to changed behavior. As the exchange above reveals, knowing the meaning and accepting the value of elicitation does not translate into its effective application.

Actually, Grace is at an advanced point in her zone of proximal development. She has mastered much, but there are still elements that must be assisted. This is an extremely frustrating point for the learning of any competence: the acceptance of higher standards, the discrimination required to identify good performance, the awareness that one's skill is not yet there, and the felt need for help from a more competent other. Grace's discomfort is entirely human.

STEPHANIE: How about this. [I think you've got to go; the kids are coming back]. How about if you film your Blue Group lesson tomorrow. . . .

GRACE: No. I don't want to film anymore. . . . I won't. Maybe I'll [audio] tape it. I don't want to film it.

STEPHANIE: Because of the is it easier to audiotape?

GRACE: No. I just don't want to go through this tomorrow.

STEPHANIE: [recounts her own complex schedule of the week; but offers to tape the lesson and make the meeting] if you were really, really

GRACE: No.

STEPHANIE: . . . hot to do it

GRACE: No.

STEPHANIE: I could [delay some work I have]

GRACE: Yeah, maybe I should, Steph but I felt, you know, I felt really good about my lesson this morning. When I came to school today, I thought "Well, Grace [today you finally start to do responsive teaching right] I felt, last night I felt, "Oh good, you've got it." Because some days I walk in and go, "God, what am I going to do?" I was feeling really good about this today. [Stephanie is offering supportive comments] Actu-

ally, I should audio. Audio would be easier for me to do because then I could listen to it at home. Because you know, I don't I think I'll audio it. It would be easier all around.

Despite her frustration and disappointment, Grace agrees to audiotape her lesson and to meet again. She is at the point in the zone of proximal development that is most stressful but that heralds the coming of a new level of competence.

Grace Breaks Through

The next session occurred about one week later. Stephanie begins by asking Grace about her goals for the lesson. Again, Grace has returned to the problem of too much teacher-talk and her responsiveness to what the students have to say.

GRACE: I'm focusing on not talking so much My goals for today were to cut back on teacher-talk and to think about my questions for them. I am focusing on the same goals.

Each teacher utterance at the beginning of this lesson was a question. Grace was talking less and doing a better job of eliciting ideas from the students, rather than "announcing" to them as in the prior lessons. As the tape rolls, it is obvious that an important change has occurred in Grace's conduct of the lessons. A highlight of the entire series of consultations is about to occur.

GRACE: Okay, what did Cucullan say when he came over to Fin McCool's home?

SUMMIE AND LOUISE: Is Fin McCool at home?

GRACE: Ammm.

KANANI: She said, "No, Fin McCool is not home."

ISSAC: He went out to look for a giant named Cucullan.

GRACE: Ahum.

SUMMIE: His wife said Fin McCool is stronger, but he said, "I'll show you who's strong."

GRACE: Okay. What could he do to show his strength?

KANANI: Lif' up the house.

GRACE: Allright. How is he going to do this?

ISSAC: Use his magic finger.

GRACE: Aha. Using that . . . okay. What else could he do to show his strength?

ISSAC: By sweating.

GRACE: You show your strength by sweating? How do you show your strength by sweating?

TOSUFA: You go like this [child flexes her muscles].

GRACE: Okay. What do you call it when you do that?

LOUISE: Show his muscles.

GRACE: Yes. Show his muscles. But does that show how strong you are?

ISSAC: Soft muscles.

GRACE: That you have soft or hard muscles? What could he do to show his strength?

KANANI: Lift up a tree.

GRACE: Lift up a tree. Sure. What else?

SUMMIE: Lift up somebody's house.

GRACE: Allright. Turn to the next two pages [students turn page]

SUMMIE: Wow. He lift up the house.

(TAPE STOPPED)

Principals treat teachers according to their own "recitation script"— assignments are given and assessments are made.

STEPHANIE: I just can't help but applaud, because that is such a good series of questions.

GRACE: Bite my tongue! Did you see that? I almost felt like I was just really biting my tongue. "Don't say anything else, Grace. Don't you dare say anything else." . . . I was really concentrating on listening to them, I almost practically bit my tongue. I was, hmmm, I mean, that's about as . . . shut down as [a teacher] can be . . . I really wanted to listen to what they had to say and it was, it's true. I just . . . didn't say anything and they kept feeding me more and more. And I thought, this is kinda' neat that they kept doing all this!

STEPHANIE: That was really apparent. That was real good. Not a single wasted utterance on your part. . . .

GRACE: Finally!

The frustration and disappointment of the preceding session is now gone, and in its place is Grace's deserved satisfaction with what she sees on the tape. The dialogues with the students are smooth and conversational. There are no more abrupt changes of topic. Aimless questions have been replaced by questions that genuinely assist the children to assemble the thoughts needed to comprehend the story. . . . There is no "telling" the students about the text; at various points in the lesson, Grace begins declarative statements and then changes them into questions. Does she remember Stephanie's instructions from a previous session?

Toward the end of the session, Grace expressed satisfaction about the amount of information she had elicited from the students through questions and her movement

away from "announcing" information to them. Grace reports that Claire [another consultant of high repute] came by the day before and complimented her on the quality of her teaching, to which Grace replied, "I have been working on this" . . . I said, "We went to see Janet [the teacher who provided a model of elicitation], and I've had a lot of help from Janet." I said we had been working on this and I was glad that she noticed it. I thought, "Oh great!" Stephanie is delighted with Grace's progress, and gives her a long compliment that serves as a summary of progress to date.*

WHAT'S NEXT

The case of Grace and Stephanie reveals many of the key concepts of a new definition of teaching. When such teaching occurs, classrooms and schools are transformed. Stephanie herself wrote, after many years of assisting teachers, about "the community of learners" that schools can become "when teachers reduce the distance between themselves and their students by constructing lessons from common understandings of each others' experience and ideas" and make teaching a "warm, interpersonal, and collaborative activity" (Dalton, 1989). But our case study not only illustrates what teaching must be for school children, it reveals what teaching must be for all—whether it is preservice and inservice teachers, administrators and supervisors, or college professors.

Yet the recitation script persists in schools because it is endemic to schools. Principals treat teachers according to their own "recitation script"—assignments are given and assessments are made. Superintendents assign and assess principals. Boards assign and assess superintendents. Professors of education assign and assess preservice teachers. No one is really teaching anyone, not through the authentic teaching of the instructional conversation. Is it any wonder that teachers assign and assess pupils?

In 1972, Sarason made a similar point as well as anyone has before or since, and the situation has changed not one whit:

. . . I have spent thousands of hours in schools, and one of the first things I sensed was that the longer the person had been a teacher the less excited, or alive, or stimulated he seemed to be about his role . . . being a teacher was on the boring side. Generally speaking, these teachers were not as helpful to children as they might have been or as frequently as the teachers themselves would have liked to have been . . . Schools are not created to foster the intellectual and professional growth of teachers. The assumption that teachers can create and maintain those conditions that make school learning and school living stimulating for children, without those same conditions existing for teachers, has no warrant in the history of man. (But this assumption) gives rise to ways of thinking, to a view of technology, to ways of

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training, and to modes of organization that make for one grand error of misplaced emphasis" (pp. 123-124)

In any school organization, one of the duties of each member should be to assist the performance of the person in the next subordinate position: The superintendent assists the principal, the principal assists the teacher, the teacher assists the pupil. The central responsibility of the teaching organization should be to assist the performance of each member. This assistance, with its accompanying cognitive and behavioral development, is the justifying goal of the school, and all other duties should be in its service.

What this definition of teaching implies, and the case of Stephanie and Grace shows so clearly, is the need for schools to be different kinds of places. Schools must be organized to provide time and resources to assist teacher performance, so that they may acquire skills and knowledge needed to truly teach. What Grace and Stephanie did is not possible in a system that fully scripts teaching practice or fully scripts teachers' roles. Teachers must have sufficient autonomy, authority, and warrant from the school system to organize the kind of assisted performances that Grace experienced. Stephanie and Grace had the authority and support to organize their own contacts, to spend the time necessary to do their work, to enlist the assistance of Janet. They had the resources from the school of equipment, space, encouragement, and—most important—of treating their undertaking as something of vital importance. This was a school system organized to assist the performance of all its members.

But we must not overlook another aspect of Grace's experience: Teachers must accept a degree of responsibility for professional development involving long and sometimes painful self-examination. They must accept a higher criterion of what constitutes teaching.

Will the school reform movement of the 1980s, set in motion by *A Nation at Risk*, provide for true teaching in the classroom and professional development programs? It is too soon to judge, but we can predict that reform will depend on

changing the *idea* of school. The idea of the reciting school that has been passed down by our grandmothers, and lives in the memories of each of our elementary school days, is no fair vision to guide us. The reciting school did not teach well a century ago and will not teach well tomorrow. How can we escape the control of our common image of what school is? There is only one way. Teachers must do it. In classrooms here and there, in a whole school here and there, even for an hour here and there, we must each work to change school culture so that it more reliably assists the performance of all, beginning with the teachers. □

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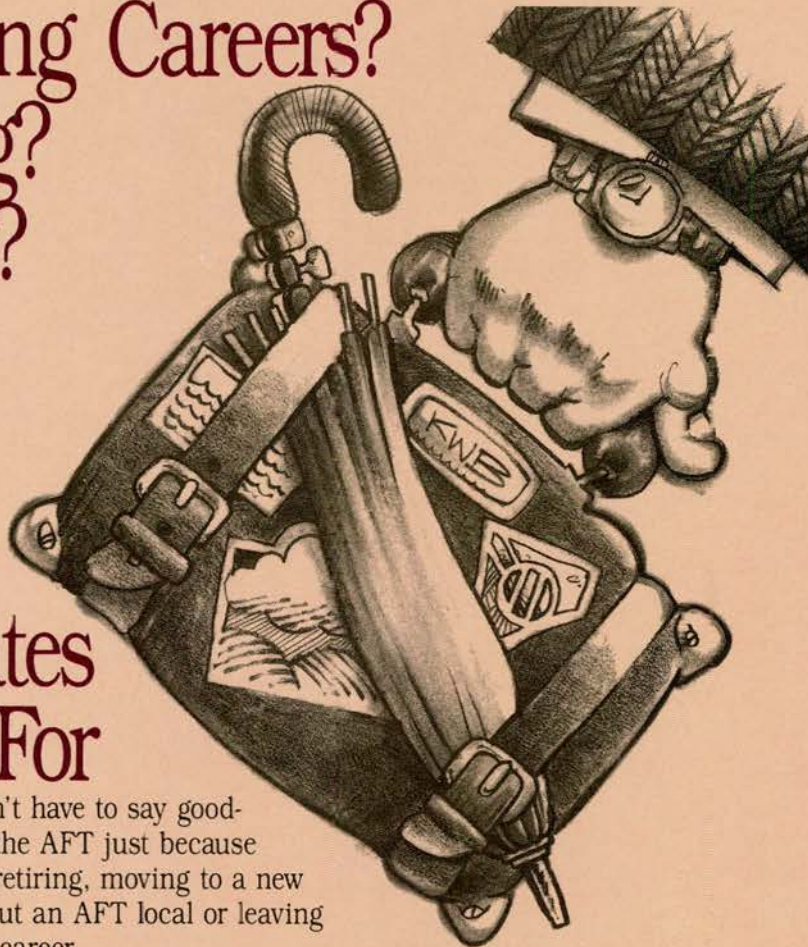
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