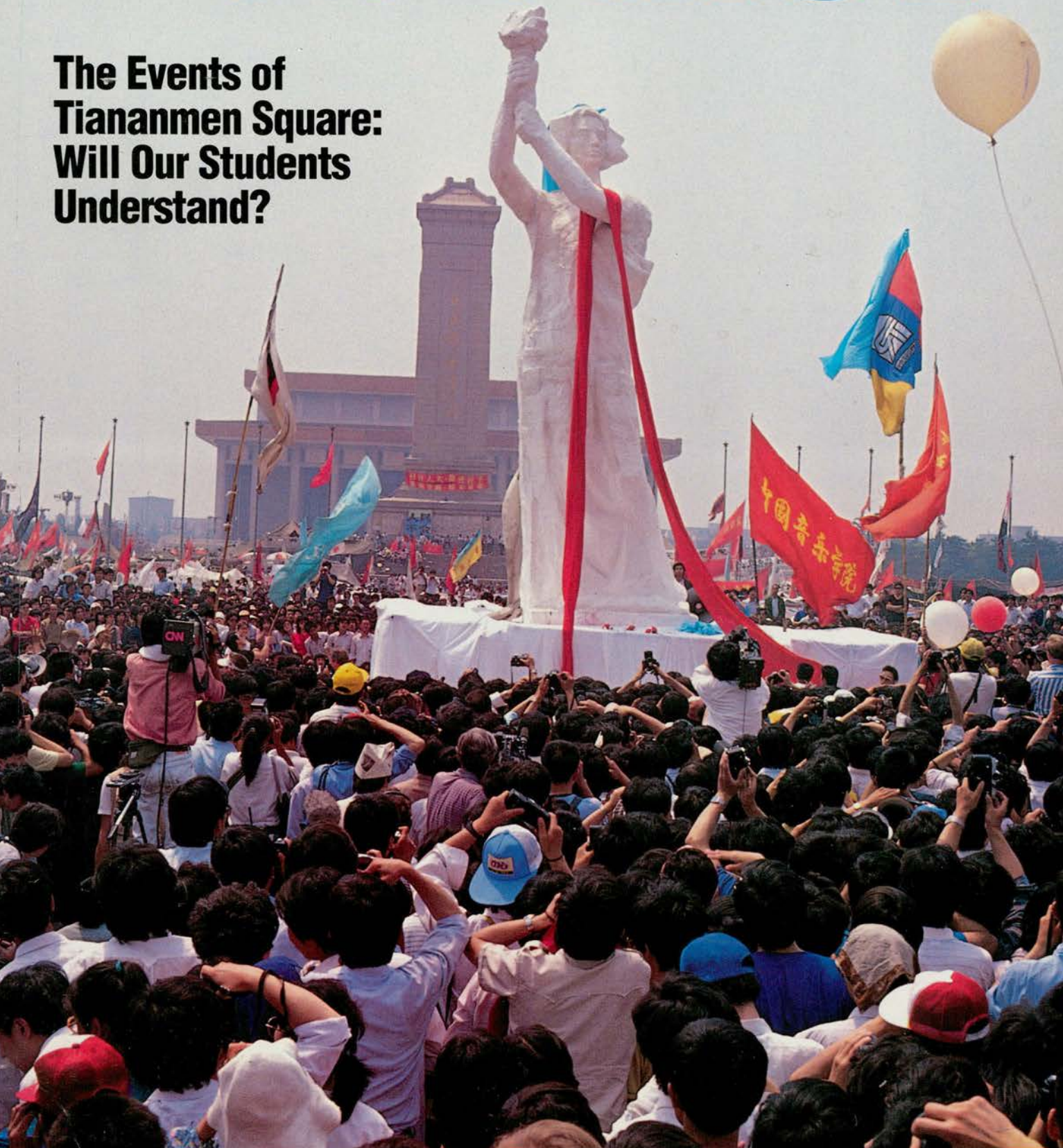


AMERICAN **Educator**

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
FALL 1989

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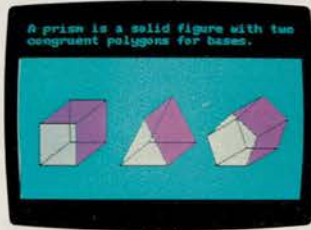
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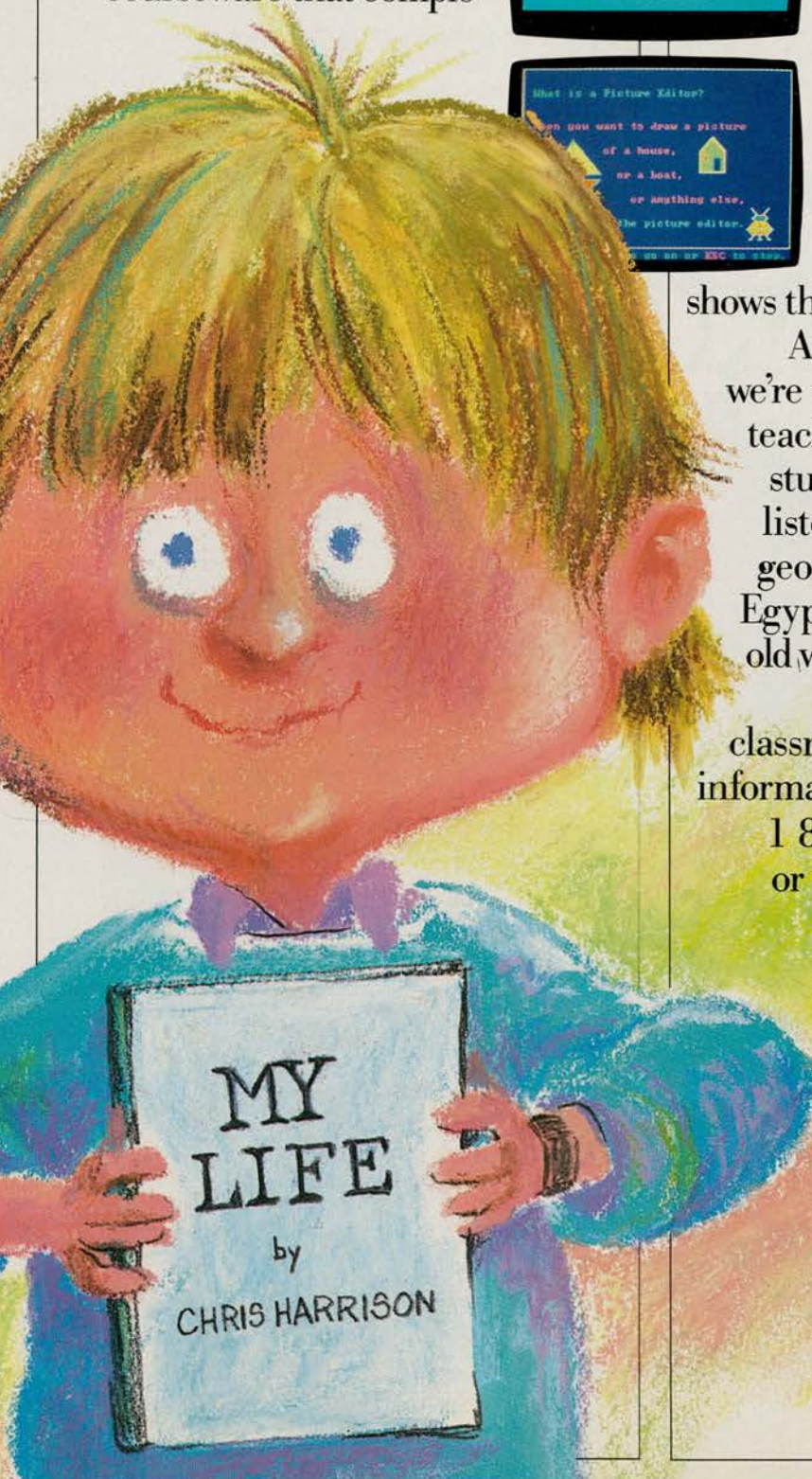
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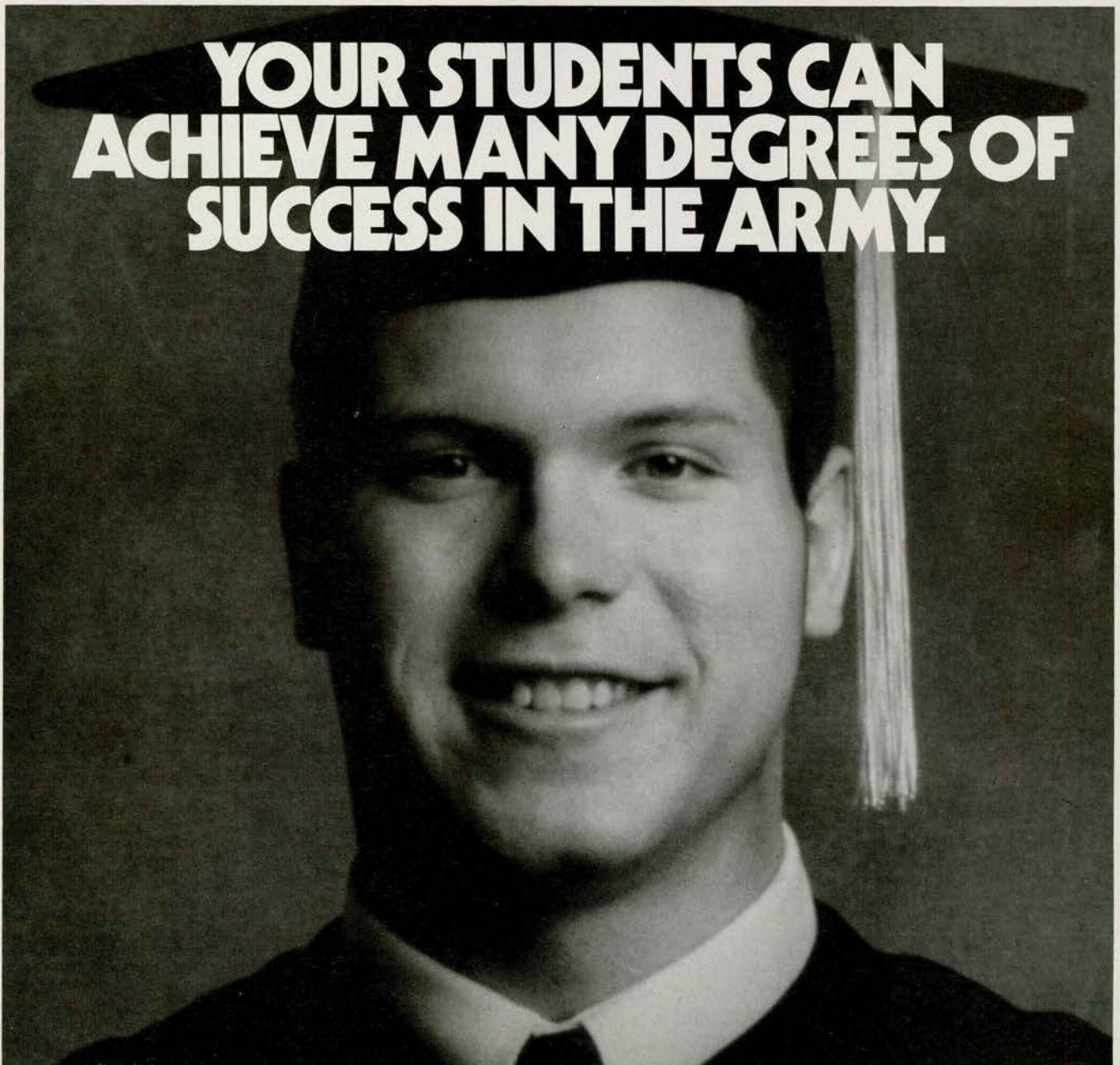
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"IT'S LIKE . . ."

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The Bridges Teachers Build

"It's like . . ." may be the phrase most frequently heard in the classrooms of good teachers struggling to help students understand new concepts. Recall this scene from Stand and Deliver and send us your favorite example.

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The Tiananmen Square massacre was the latest confrontation between the Chinese people and a system of government responsible for the death of millions. But students who study popular educational materials would know little of the Chinese government's ongoing repression and nothing about the Chinese people's desire for freedom.

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Science museums have developed the knack for making science exciting for children. Now they're helping teachers bring the same hands-on style to school.

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Work is under way to make teacher evaluation more meaningful than the current principal-standing-in-the-back-of-the-room-with-a-checklist method. Read about this and related developments in this special sample issue of HEL.

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Anyone who has ever gotten lost in a book—and then returned to this world richer for the journey—will want to read this stirring memoir by the Pulitzer prize-winning author.

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IF YOU'RE DOING MORE THAN JUST TEACHING BY THE BOOK, CUT IT OUT.

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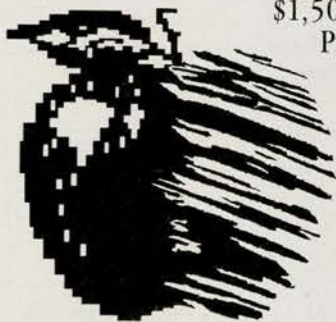
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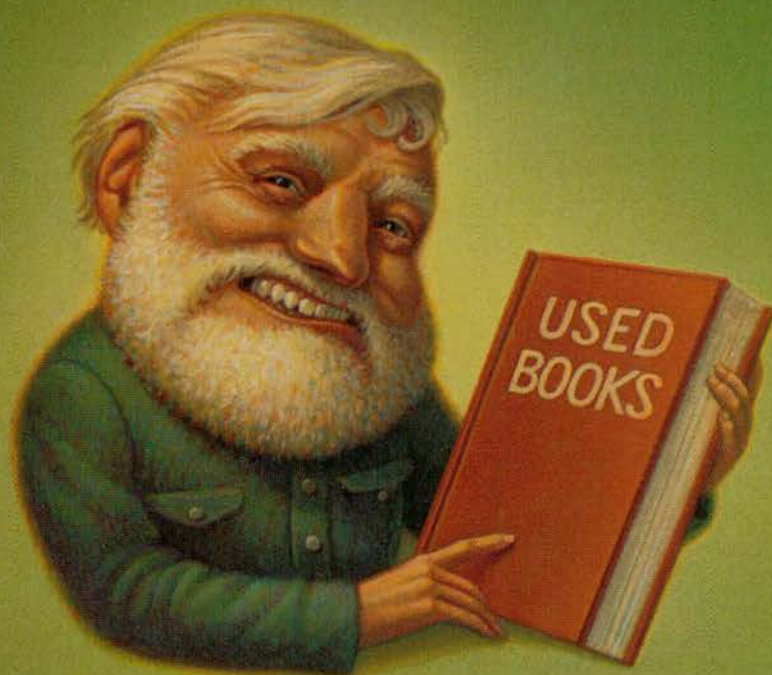
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NOTEBOOK

PARENT PREPARATION

We all know that a student's success in school is aided when his parents are involved. But unless the parent herself was a good student, she may be unsure about what it takes for her child to excel. A new Urban League publication, developed with support from the College Board, meets this problem head on with advice to parents that goes well beyond such familiar suggestions as "make sure your child has a well-lit desk area."

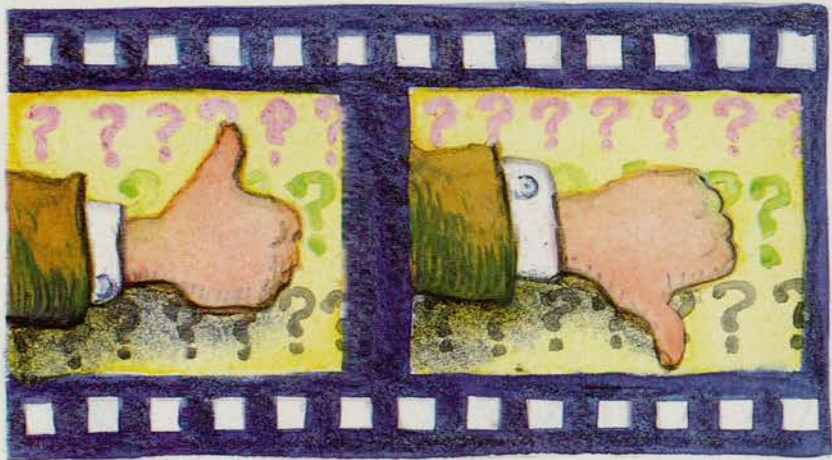
Each of the 131 big-print pages in *What Students Need To Know* is easily duplicated and packed with information for parents. It contains both facts about schooling that will enable parents to be better advocates for their children and practical ideas for promoting informal learning around the house.

The section on math warns parents that decisions about ability grouping made in grade school and about curriculum made in junior high will determine a student's college preparedness years later. If a grade-school child is placed in a lower ability group, parents are urged to "make sure that as progress is made [the child] is moved into courses that challenge his/her ability." It tells parents that without algebra, "students will find it hard to score well on standardized math tests" and reminds them that "general mathematics, business mathematics, and arithmetic courses often do not count as credit toward college entry."

To improve students' English skills, the publication offers such practical ideas as giving children the opportunity to fill out order forms and application blanks and to have the student call stores for information.

What Students Need To Know also includes great lists: free and inexpensive materials for parents, magazines for children and youth, and community organizations interested in education.

The publication costs \$10 and can be ordered by writing: Stephanie Robinson, Urban League, 500 East 62nd St., New York, New York 10021.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BARKIN

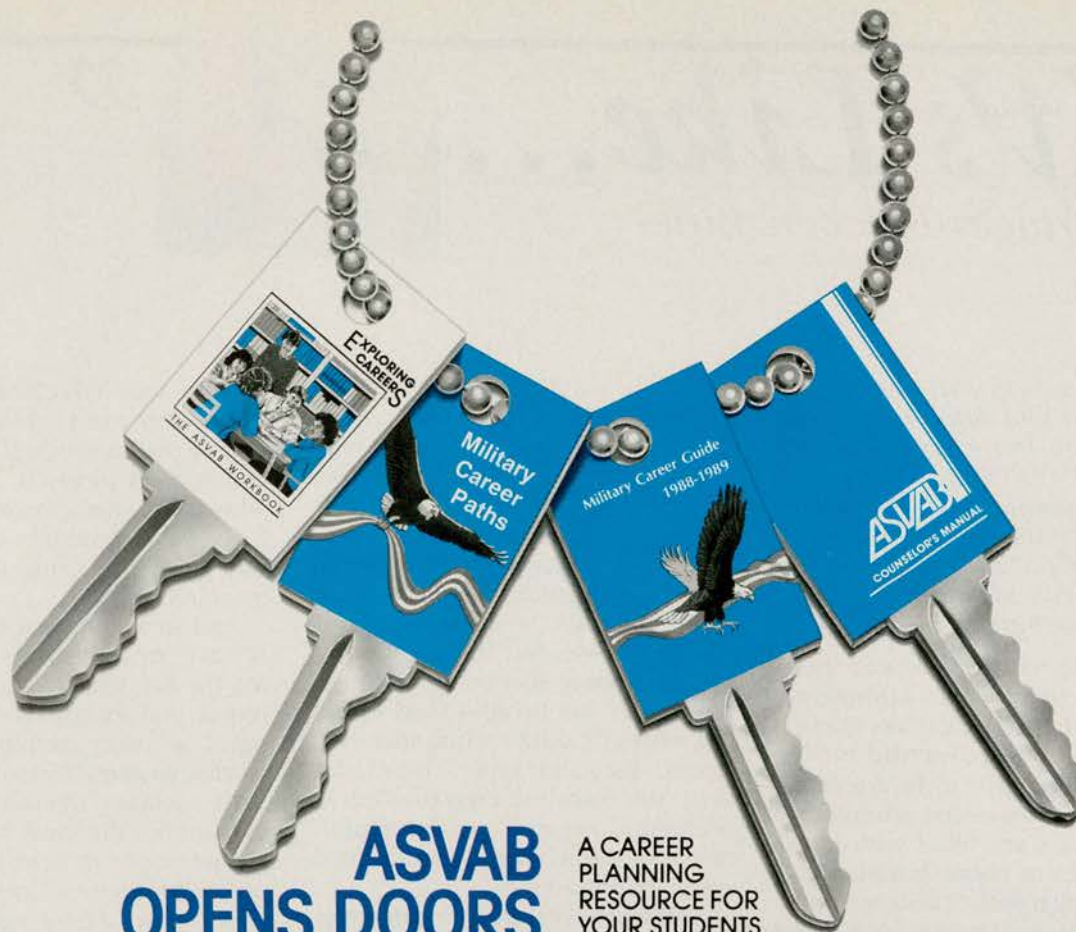
VIDEO VALUES

With the number of movies available on video growing daily, it becomes increasingly difficult to choose among them. With the average family now viewing five videos each month, more parents also want to know which of these movies are out of bounds for children, which are minimally appropriate, and which are genuinely rich offerings. A brief answer to these questions—along with a one-sentence capsule review—can be found in *The Family Guide to Movies on Video*, which sells for \$12.95. To order, call Harper and Row at 800-638-3030.

HARVARD: ANOTHER PREVIEW, A LAST CHANCE 'TEACHER': A FIRST CHANCE

Through a special arrangement with *The Harvard Education Letter*, we are letting our readers take a look at an entire sample issue (see page 31) of this very useful little publication. We hope you'll agree that its six information-packed issues per year are well worth the \$12 subscription rate offered to AFT members — just a little over half the regular rate. Last chance, everybody.

And while we're talking about education publications, we would like to extend a welcome to the new *Teacher Magazine*, which premiered this month. Published by the same folks who do such a good job on *Education Week*, *Teacher* will come out monthly and will focus on "the growing movement toward professionalization" among teachers. Every profession needs common frames of reference that facilitate the exchange, debate, and refinement of ideas, and *Teacher Magazine* is a good addition to that effort. It can be subscribed to for \$18 a year by writing to: Teacher Magazine, P.O. Box 2091, Marion, Ohio 43305-2091.



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“It’s Like...”

The Bridges Teachers Build



How do we help children understand new and often mystifying concepts? In this excerpt from his speech to the AFT QuEST conference this past summer, Lee Shulman of Stanford University used a scene from the popular movie Stand and Deliver to call attention to a time-honored teaching technique:

WHAT'S STRIKING about these recent movies—*Stand and Deliver* and *The Dead Poets Society*—is that the hero in the movie doesn't just happen to be a teacher who then has his or her adventures. These movies are filled with classrooms. They're about teachers and kids learning together in classrooms. One of the things I loved about *Stand and Deliver*—the movie about Jaime Escalante—was that there were some classroom scenes that I thought were exquisite pieces of pedagogy.

Let me remind you of one scene near the beginning of the movie. Escalante has decided he is not going to teach general mathematics to this group. He is going to teach them algebra. And the kids say to him—because kids are very wise—they say, “Mr. Escalante, you don't understand. If we could learn algebra, we wouldn't be in your class.” And there is this wonderful scene where he tells them how important it is that they understand the concept of positive and negative numbers. He begins the litany, “plus two, minus two, plus two, minus two.” And then, his hands shaping the forms in the air, he says—he knows what they're thinking, remember they're in L.A.—he says, “you go to the beach”—ah ha, he's got their attention—“you go to the beach and you dig a hole in the sand. You dig a hole in the sand. You put the sand next to the hole. The hole: minus two; the pile of sand: plus two. You see that? The hole is minus two, the pile of sand is plus two.”

Now he's walking down the middle aisle and he levels his gaze at the student in the back of the room who has one foot and one lobe out the door already—that's the frontal lobe—and he says, his hands still gesturing, “What happens when you put them back together, the plus two and the minus two, what do you get?” The kid resists but the hook is set and after some silence the kid mutters under his breath—God forbid the others should hear him answer—“zero.” Escalante says, “That's right, zero. You know not even the Greeks understood zero. *Your* ancestors,” he says, “the Mayans, they invented zero.” End of scene.

And what a remarkable scene it is. Because if you look at it and take it apart, it teaches you an enormous amount about what it means to be a teacher. What has Escalante demonstrated about what a teacher needs to be able to know and do? First of all, Escalante shows that you've got to know your subject matter. There is no substitute for that. You've got to know the territory. And Escalante clearly does, but he then demonstrates that content knowledge just is not enough. We've all seen examples

of very well-educated mathematicians who can't educate anybody else in mathematics. It's a very difficult subject to teach. Those of you who teach mathematics know that. Knowing the subject is indispensable. *Merely* knowing the subject is insufficient.

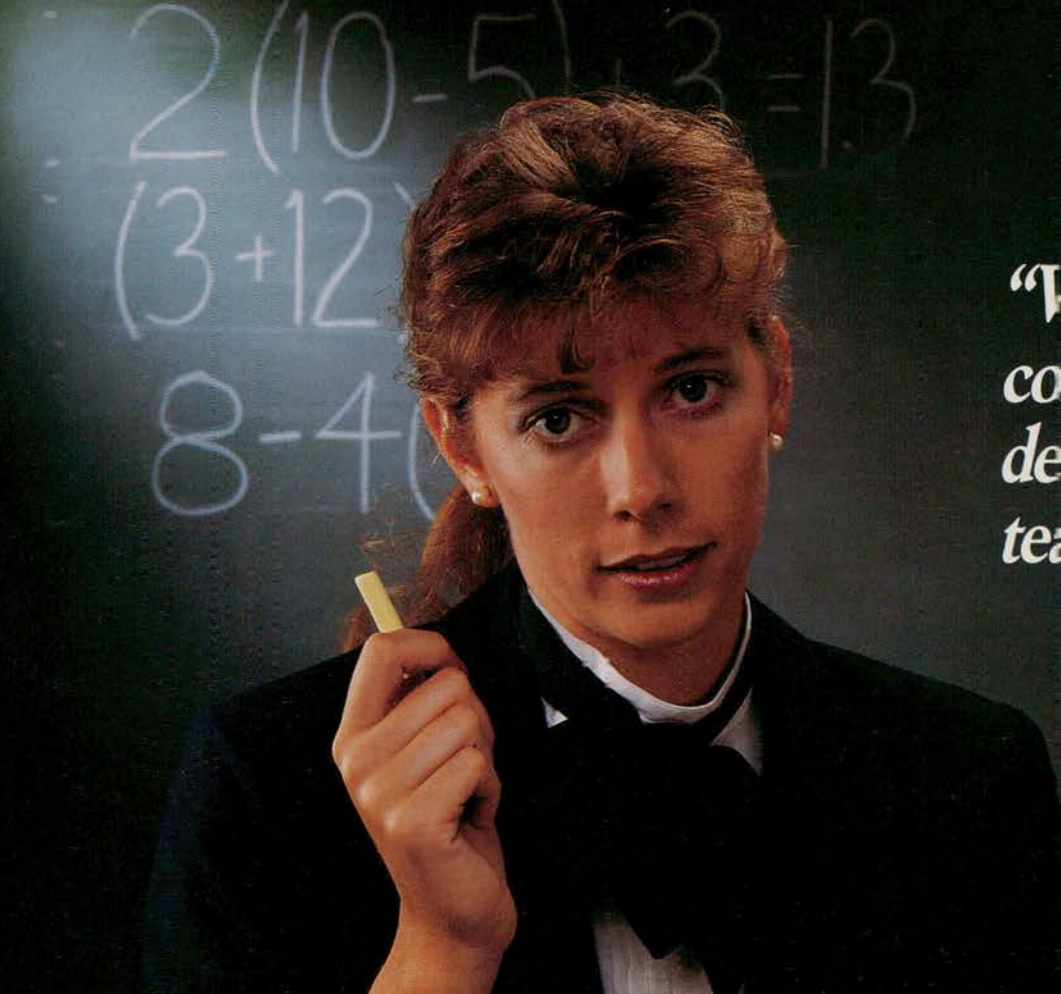
And so we see that Escalante also is masterful in his ways of representing the key ideas. As you watch this movie, you see him use so many analogies, so many examples, so many stories, so many metaphors and similies, so many demonstrations. He exemplifies the most important single principle of learning, which is not reinforcement any more. That was twenty years ago. We know more now. The most important single principle of learning, we now understand, is that you must find ways to connect new concepts, new ideas to the ideas that are already in the heads of the youngsters. Teaching is bridge building.

That's why when you walk into a classroom of a fine teacher, I contend that the word you will hear most often when a teacher is explaining something is the word “like.” Like. The teacher is always saying, well it's like this, it's like that, helping students make connections. And if you study what Escalante does in that movie, he's always helping to make those connections, those links. He understands how critical it is to transform new ideas into representations that kids can begin to connect with. He builds bridges for his students to walk across. And that is part of what we understand to be the essence of good teaching. □



ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SHERRO

Send us your favorite example of bridge building: metaphors and similies, examples, stories, analogies. We'll pay \$25 for each one we print and share them with teachers around the country.



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CHINA'S UNTOLD STORY

*Social studies materials distort reality,
ignore questions of democracy and repression.*

BY ANDRÉ RYERSON

A YOUNGSTER studying his lesson on China in *Exploring World Cultures* (Ginn & Co.) will learn of the selfless dedication that inspires China's Communists, the society's new elite:

The life of a Communist Party member is not easy. Members are expected to carry out party decisions regardless of hardships or personal sacrifices. They are expected to be an example to the people by promoting hard work and thrift. Yet no shortage of candidates for party membership exists.

A teacher's guide published by China Connections (Community Learning Connections, Boston) concludes that

the Chinese government is trying to: 1. improve education throughout the country; 2. build more industries in the countryside; 3. reduce economic inequality; 4. manage and reduce its population; 5. improve Chinese women's rights.

André Ryerson, a former professor of French and Humanities at Amherst College, is a freelance writer and educational consultant who has written previously about peace and global education.



itself, feeding its people, housing them, providing education and building new factories, while allowing its citizens the pleasures of traditional family life. Rural work teams encourage sharing. Street and factory committees help individuals with their private problems. The textbooks display color photographs that show well-stocked food stores, women doing industrial work, and a countryside of lush agricultural landscapes. Here is a people that has rid itself of old and primitive traditions, a people and government committed to the ideals

One of the tasks that students are assigned is, "Explain why the Chinese government has the trust of the Chinese people."

One might think the question would have occurred to either of the guide's two authors: Since China is not a democracy and is a country where free expression is not permitted, how do we *know* that the government "has the trust of the Chinese people"?

Questions like this—about democratic government, democratic values, and human rights—seem not to occur to most of those writing educational materials on China. Indeed in a review I have made, a majority of popular educational materials on China omit the reality of a totalitarian government suffocating its people. Instead, the picture of China that emerges is of a nation defying the odds in developing



of equality, and while the government is structured somewhat differently from ours, the people seem to elect local officials, and the Communist Party works to improve the people's lot. It may be a more controlled society than ours, but the Chinese are not disturbed by this fact. A few of the campaigns of Mao Zedong did not work out so well, admittedly, despite their noble aims. But whatever the problems under Mao, the post-Mao regime has made adjustments, increasing private initiative, and the Chinese people—though less wealthy than we—are happily striving toward a better life.

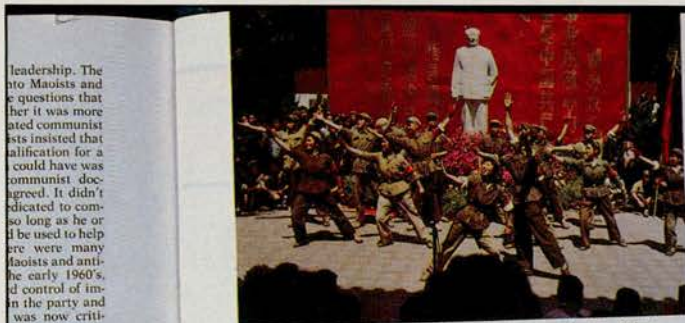
American students taught with these materials must have been incredulous at the events in Tiananmen Square last spring. Why would Chinese students demonstrate against a government so dedicated to answering the people's needs? And how could such a government respond with a massacre?

* * *

THE DISTURBING truth is that most American educational materials on China, with remarkable consistency, avoid those questions that pertain to issues of democratic government, democratic values, and human rights. Questions such as: How are people's basic rights and civil liberties protected? If they are not protected, to what extent are they violated? What institutions are available for people to express their will? How strong are these institutions? Through what modalities does the government or party seek to control people? How effective and total are these controls?

Whether such questions should inform students' study of nondemocratic countries has been an issue of some debate in the field of global/international education. Many global and international educators have argued that it is inappropriately "ethnocentric" to look at other countries through our own democratic lens. As Michael Gordon writes in *Approaches to World Studies*,¹ "Not everyone wants to be like us." Many educators also view global/international education as an extension of multi-cultural education, as an opportunity to increase appreciation of diverse cultures and customs. This group is, understandably, eager to present foreign cultures in the best possible light, so as to thwart students' natural instincts toward prejudice. Indeed, many texts and guides in the international/global field include prefatory notes urging teachers to see such education as an antidote to students' tendencies to ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

A third strain noticeable in global/international materials is the belief that in our interdependent world, under the shadow of nuclear weapons, the future of world peace may depend on educating students to see the commonalities among different peoples, not the differences, for differences can lead to hostility, conflict, and war. This group of educators prefers a curriculum geared to topics such as families, languages, the arts, and other subjects that focus on peoples' common humanity. If they must deal with issues such as government and values, they tend to do so in a neutral voice, implying that just as all peoples have families, some being nuclear and others extended, so all peoples have governments, some being democratic and others not.



The Chinese government sent out dance groups, such as the one above, to teach about Mao and communism. How is media used today to spread political beliefs?

leadership. The into Maoists and e questions that her it was more ated communist sts insisted that alification for a could have was omunist doc- agreed. It didn't edicated to com- so long as he or d be used to help ere were many faoists and anti- he early 1960's, d control of im- in the party and was now criti- only.

arian Cultural pture control in his supporters- letarian Cultural army refused to ized high school the Red Guards, demonstrations, were shut down, so Tse-tung were tions. demonstrations, but they had lit- no effective way appeal to the apparently suc-

Shortly thereafter, China's policy toward the United States took a dramatic turn. After Chinese-Soviet border struggles, the Soviet Union became the great enemy of the Chinese, and China sought detente with the United States. (See page 553.) President Nixon visited China in 1972 in the spirit of detente. After Mao's death in 1976, a power struggle developed. The struggle was won by a group of leaders who hoped to modernize China rapidly. They also favored better relations with non-com-

SECTION REVIEW

1. Mapping: Using the map of the Far East in the Atlas, describe the geographic features of the following: Malaysia, Vietnam, the land through which the India-China border runs, Bangladesh. How are geography and a nation's power related?
2. In your own words, identify: Sukarno, Suharto, Mohandas Gandhi, Nehru, Indira Gandhi, communes, the Red Guards, the "Great Leap Forward."
3. What are the reasons for hostility between India and Pakistan? Between India and Communist China?



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This textbook (published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston), having given no attention to the persecution and killings of the Cultural Revolution, illustrates Maoist China with this happy photo (top). The reality was much different. Here, Mao's Red Guards parade "enemies" of the regime through the streets during the Cultural Revolution. In addition to such persecution, 2 to 3 million Chinese were killed during this period (above).

Outspoken critics of these various approaches have argued that when international education materials are not animated by a commitment to democratic principles and values, civic education is undermined. Students are left thinking that there are no universal human rights, that democratic values are merely optional values, a matter of personal taste, nothing about which to get overly concerned—even possibly—something to be compromised when the going gets tough.

These criticisms raise serious questions about the assumptions, methods, and civic values that presently shape international education. By looking at how a particular country's history and culture are taught, we can better judge the weight of these otherwise abstract arguments. By virtue of its distance, both geographic and cultural, China is a logical choice for a case study of how the doctrines of international/global education are being translated into actual teaching materials.

For this study, I reviewed those textbooks and teacher's guides on China that are among the most widely publicized or used. The twenty-eight reviewed items include thirteen textbooks (five of the most popular secondary world history texts, five of the most popular elementary texts, and three global studies texts) from major publishers with recent copyright dates (mostly 1986-89), plus fifteen teaching guides on China (or with substantial sections on China) from the six most frequently recommended* distributors of supplementary educational materials on China, mainly university-based resource centers for international studies.

It should be noted that the complexity, scope, and level of these materials varies enormously. The textbooks, which aim at an overview of selected countries, devote anywhere from seven to seventy-three pages to China; obviously depth, detail, and concern for history will vary accordingly. Among the teaching guides, three are geared to early elementary students² and emphasize such topics as China's animals, its calligraphy, and its arts—although they also make small, possibly naive, but essentially dishonest dips into politics and values. Four guides, from the Stanford Project in International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), focus on specialized topics such as the family, education, and rural development in China.

One cannot expect the early elementary guides and the narrowly focused topic guides to give full attention to questions of government and values; but one can insist that they not mislead the reader by distorting facts or ignoring realities that properly fall within their scope. Nonhistorical materials can ignore details of history; but their contemporary accounts should reflect the history that has shaped the present, just as we expect any fair account of contemporary black life in America to make *some* reference to blacks' second-class status prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

On the issues of democracy and human rights posed earlier, of the twenty-eight materials under review, only six can be said to do a fair job within the limits of their genre. These books have faults, but they are honest efforts in pursuit of truth: *Our Common Heritage: A World History* (Ginn & Co.) by Daniel Roselle; *Eastern Hemisphere*** (Macmillan) by Barry Beyer, Jean Craven, Mary A. McFarland, and Walter C. Parker; *History and Life: The World and Its People* (Scott, Foresman &

Co.) by T. Walter Wallbank, Arnold Schrier, Donna Maier, and Patricia Gutierrez-Smith; *The World Yesterday and Today*† (Silver Burdett & Ginn) by Kenneth S. Cooper and Gary S. Elbow; *China* (Dushkin Group) by Suzanne Ogden; and *Values in Conflict: Literature on China's Youth* (Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education—SPICE 1988) by Sally Clark, Rod Hollingsworth, Robert Rudholm, and Stan Seaberg.

The remaining twenty-two items³ fail to give students a fair, honest accounting of what life without democratic rights is like. The overall picture presented in these materials leaves students with little sense that the people of China are not free, that the government's agencies of social control are pervasive, arbitrary, and beyond the rule of law, and that the Chinese people are not happy with this state of affairs. Nonetheless, the extent to which these materials fail varies greatly. Some soften or even applaud features of totalitarian rule. Others offer no more than a lifeless sentence or two about the abuse and extent of Chinese state power. A few do venture, however timidly, into the less benign features of China under Communist rule, or else manage, however erratically, to ask students to intelligently discuss political rights or economic choices, though without providing sufficient facts to nourish such discussion. *China Workbook* (Columbia University's East Asian Curriculum Project), *Economic Choices: China After Mao* (SPICE) and the *World Past and Present* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) fall into this last category.

* * *

SINCE THE Communist victory over the Nationalists in 1949, China has been a modern dictatorship of the extreme, totalitarian variety. The distinction is not trivial. (Whether this distinction should drive U.S. foreign policy is a matter of controversy, but that is a separate issue.) Traditional dictatorships have been narrowly political in nature, allowing the people to continue established practices of family life, commercial arrangements, and religious worship. Only when the power of the regime itself is challenged, whether in the form of hostile newspapers or rival political parties, does the government move to crush its opposition. Terrible and often bloody as such dictatorships are—the regime of Ferdinand Marcos is a good recent example—their aims are relatively confined: to perpetuate the regime in power and profit from its monopoly.

Totalitarian regimes, by contrast, have cosmic ambitions to fundamentally change human nature. They aspire to create the "new Nazi Man," the "new Soviet Man," the "new Maoist Man." Not only are political rivals outlawed; all features of traditional society—from religion and commerce to the most basic bonds of

*The global education field is not well organized. Though a rigorous effort was made to identify the most recommended materials, it is possible that something has been missed.

**This text should not be confused with the Scott, Foresman & Co. book bearing the same title.

†While this text meets the minimal standard of truth-telling set forth here, it should be pointed out that it devotes a total of only twelve paragraphs to Revolutionary China and, if judged on general criteria such as depth or writing quality, it would certainly be found wanting.

family—are seen as bothersome elements obstructing the way to total control by the state over the lives of individuals. An official ideology becomes the official faith, mandated teaching for every school, farm, factory, and office; its slogans and demands replace all others, and obedience to it paves the narrow road for upward mobility.

After the troops of Mao Zedong defeated the Nationalists, they launched a land reform program that included summary trials and the execution of some 5 million landlords and “rich peasants.”⁴ Following land reform came other campaigns against counterrevolutionaries and “Rightists” in which millions more Chinese were killed. Of the twenty-eight textbooks and guides, twelve acknowledge these executions, with one text estimating the victims as “possibly as many as 2 million,” another as “millions,” a third as “about a million,” another as “thousands,” two others as “many,” and the rest of the twelve using quite inaccurate characterizations such as “only the worst landlords” or landlords who were “not willing to give up their land” or who “resisted” the regime or “those who opposed the government” were put to death. In fact, the executions were based on class or political status with people killed simply for having belonged to the “wrong” political party or the “wrong” economic class.

Nonetheless, landless peasants were given land in accordance with Communist promises, the country after years of civil war and chaos was united under a single authority, women were given rights of greater equality, and a mood of cautious optimism prevailed. But scarcely had the peasantry begun cultivating their land when Mao ordered them in 1953 to begin forming collectives and in 1958 compelled them to combine into even larger and more impersonal communes, neither of which measures the peasants wanted and to which they offered sullen but telling resistance. The success and popularity of the early achievements is conveyed by most of the materials; the disillusionment is not.

As part of his “Great Leap Forward” campaign, to catch up with the developed world, Mao in 1958 ordered peasants to create whole industries, to make steel in their villages, as if ideological commitment could take the place of technology and expertise and lead the peasants to perform miracles. In place of miracles, China reaped disaster. The diversion of energies from farming to “backyard iron foundries” in a country just barely feeding itself, the resulting chaos in the transport system, and, above all, directives from the party ordering peasants to use lunatic farming methods, produced famine. The *Cambridge History of China* puts the death toll at anywhere “from 16 million to 27 million” people,⁵ calling it “the most devastating famine of the twentieth century in China (and probably in the world),” for one must go back to the Chinese famine of 1877-78 when 9 to 13 million perished “to find a disaster on the scale of the Great Leap.”

This terrible consequence of a dictator’s whim surely deserves to be known by students learning about China. Yet of the twenty-eight textbooks and guides, only one gives an estimate of 20 to 30 million deaths, another says “millions died,” and a third says there was “hunger.” For the rest of the books, complete silence on this great

famine reigns. (A textbook especially marked by errors of fact, *Exploring World Cultures*, affirms: “China has not had a famine since the Communists came to power.”)

ANOTHER CAMPAIGN dreamed up by Mao was the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” by which Mao sought to destroy the remnants of traditional Chinese culture (while conveniently crushing his Communist Party rivals and critics), but twenty texts say not a word about the orgy of persecution that struck—even in the estimate of China’s official *People’s Daily*—about 100 million people. Only one text among the exceptions goes so far as to cite that number.

SPICE’s *Values in Conflict* offers a short story with one of the few graphic passages on the human toll of the Cultural Revolution:

Liang Xia was ten years old in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution began. . . . Her father, a leader in his office, was dragged out one night by people who broke into their home. Then her mother was separated from her. Liang Xia, bewildered, was left alone at home, cooking meals to take to her parents. . . . She did this until one day a man told her not to prepare any more for her father, since he had died five days earlier. . . . Because of her parents, she too was criticized from time to time. In those unhappy days, Liang Xia often dreamed that she was being weighed down by a heavy stone. Unable to remove it, she would cry herself awake. But in time she became accustomed to the sneers, and hid the hatred in her heart. After her mother was released, she accompanied her mother to a cadre school to do manual labor in the countryside.

The fictional Liang Xia reflects the reality of nearly 20 million city people deported to the poorest districts of the countryside (the largest forced movement of human beings in recorded history). Mao’s frenzied young Red Guards killed, usually after torture, at minimum several hundred thousand⁶ persons, virtually none of whom was guilty of anything except having an education, having spent time in the West, or owning “bourgeois” books or records. Soon Red Guard factions were fighting among themselves as well, bringing the death toll to between 2 and 3 million in the judgment of Jürgen Domes in *The Government and Politics of the PRC* (Westview Press 1985). Some Chinese privately compare it to Europe’s Holocaust. (When the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia launched a similar campaign a decade later that killed about a million people, one-sixth of the population, their inspiration was Mao’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.)

Only seven texts mention the deportations in any way, and in at least one case, *Teaching about World Cultures* (Center for Teaching International Relations [CTIR], University of Denver) the mention is favorable: “Students gained a greater respect for the peasants by actually taking part in farm labor and talking with them about the hardships of their life,” and “they had a feeling of being an important part of ‘building socialism’ in China, of helping the nation to develop.” A different picture emerges from those who endured the experience.

In *People and Our World* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston) by Allan Kownslar and Terry Smart, the photograph that accompanies the section on the Great Cultural Revolution (having said nothing about its human cost) shows



UPI/BETTANN NEWSPHOTOS, 1979

smiling young men and women in uniform with Red Guard armbands, gesturing before a white statue of Mao. It bears the caption: "The Chinese government sent out dance groups, such as the one above, to teach about Mao and communism. How is [sic] media used today to spread political belief?"

ONLY TWO texts ever use the word "totalitarian" to describe the nature of the Chinese government. In neither book are details offered to make clear just what this means, and in one of them the text is otherwise a homage to the good life under totalitarian rule. A third text bravely uses the word "dictatorship." All others avoid such words perhaps from concern that they might provoke "negative stereotypes," against which teachers and students are constantly warned.

Accounts of China's governmental system are quite misleading. The teacher's edition of *Eastern Hemisphere* (Scott, Foresman & Co.) by Joan Schrieber, et al. offers the following description of how China is run:

General elections, in which all the people vote, are held only at the commune and urban-district level. All Chinese citizens can vote for officials of their local people's congress. Candidates do not have to be Communist Party members, but must be approved by the Communist Party. Members of the local congress elect members to the congress at the level above them. This goes on all the way up to the National People's Congress. In this way, all levels of China's government are closely tied together, like a giant pyramid.

The impression conveyed is of a "bottom-up" system of authority in the hands of the people. The same picture is painted by other texts, such as *An American Family in China* (Community Learning Connections, Boston): "Chinese elections are indirect. That means the Chinese can only vote for candidates running for small, local offices, like a neighborhood committee. These local officials in turn elect those who serve in higher offices."

Teachers who read such guides must conclude that China's "Democracy Movement," launched more than a decade ago (long before the Tiananmen Massacre), was the creation of a few grumbling malcontents.

Few textbooks seriously examine China's legal system. One that does is *Global Studies: China* (Dushkin Group) by Suzanne Ogden. It includes an article by Otto Ulc, a Czech who is now a professor in the United States, who toured China to compare his experience as a judge in Czechoslovakia with the Chinese justice system. He found it to be completely subordinated to the state and the Party, and he asked Mr. Li, a former judge he met, "How did you feel after you had condemned an innocent person because the Party ordered you to do so?" Mr. Li tries to avoid answering, but finally concedes: "Yes, the innocent are bound to be liquidated; there is nothing that can be done about it. Law serves politics. Law serves politics," he repeated. Nothing comparable is found in other texts.

THE INSTRUMENTS of political repression are very developed in China. The courts and prison camps represent only the terminus of the system. Much closer

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REUTERS/BETTANN NEWSPHOTOS, 1987

1979, Beijing. A protester hangs the first poster on the new Democracy Wall. The old wall, much more easily accessible, was closed by the authorities, as was this one subsequently.

1986, Shanghai. Students protest the failure of the official Chinese news media to cover their demonstrations accurately.



BETTANN NEWSPHOTOS, 1987

1987, Beijing. Plain-clothes Chinese police arrest protesters during a crackdown on the Prodemocracy Movement.

PUTTING MINDS TO WORK

How To Use the Seminar Approach in the Classroom

BY DENNIS GRAY

IF YOU know anything about how Alcoholics Anonymous deals with problem drinking, you probably know more about the successful introduction of seminars in the classroom than you would ever learn from studying the literature of professional development. It will not be easy, and it cannot be done alone.

What I mean by this bald assertion is that most teachers need much the same sort of help to replace deeply ingrained bad habits of teaching as they would need to quit excessive drinking. After recognizing that the old ways are not working for them, after forming a firm commitment to change, the long hard work of actual change begins. Readers will recall that the recent Summer 1989 issue of *American Educator* presented an excellent case study of such change in an elementary school research project in Hawaii ("Rousing Schools to Life," by Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore). Most of us teach pretty much the same way we were taught, so altering our style—or at least moving away from the totally didactic style that Tharp and Gallimore call "recitation"—can be arduous and wrenching.

But if students are going to have a chance of learning to think independently as part of schooling, shift we must, and in the direction of what Mortimer Adler calls Socratic seminars in his *Paideia Proposal*, (Macmillan, 1982). Adler argues that effective schooling should include seminars as one of three kinds of teaching and learning. The other two modes are didactic (commonly through lectures and textbooks), which has the impor-

Until recently, Dennis Gray was deputy director of the Council for Basic Education and director of its Fellowships for Independent Study in the Humanities. This September, he moved to San Diego to spend full time with that city's public school program to implement seminars districtwide.





ILLUSTRATED BY SUSAN DAVIS

tant goal of helping students acquire organized knowledge—cultural literacy, one might say—in the various academic subjects; and coaching in the all-important fundamental skills of academic learning (such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematical computation). These three modes of teaching and learning are interrelated, obviously, and are often integrated, even though a teacher should ordinarily have one as the controlling purpose of a given lesson.

THE WHOLE business of radical change might be much easier if all of us had previously experienced good seminars anywhere in our own education. Even though we may have enrolled in classes called “seminars” somewhere in our formal education, few of us have ever experienced the kind of learning that can occur in the seminars described here.

Seminars differ from typical classroom recitations, which are nothing more than thinly veiled question-and-answer sessions in which the teacher is desperately covering ground in the syllabus and trying to extract right answers from otherwise bored students who want mainly to pass tests. Seminars are a different ball game. The differences are several in number and great in significance.

The purpose of seminars is always to enlarge understanding of ideas, values, and issues through intensive conversation about selected texts. Adding to students’ storehouses of information and organized knowledge is not the main purpose of seminars, although such by-products are certainly common. Nor is the purpose of seminars to add muscle to the skills of learning, although seminars do give strenuous practice in close reading, careful listening, clear speaking, and precise thinking. Understanding the intellectual complexities of important ideas demands ever-growing knowledge and skills, to be sure, but enlarged understanding remains the primary goal of seminars.

Seminars abandon coverage of a syllabus as either a

means or an end; they are dedicated to achieving an enlarged understanding of a text, not merely to ingesting it. As a result, seminars are not compelled to seek synthesis or closure, the relentless imperatives that drive didactic teaching. Suppose Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is the text. A seminar might focus on, say, King's ideas of just and unjust laws, or his justification for civil disobedience, or his views of moderation versus extremism in pursuit of social justice. In two hours of talk, one group of people in a seminar might touch on all three topics, another seminar on only one. The main task is to enlarge understanding, not to learn about King or the events of the Civil Rights Movement, even though some knowledge about King and the movement will surely be gained.

Seminars demand rigorous thinking by all the participants, not mere mastery of information. They require no predetermined notion of what particular understandings will be enlarged or what routes to greater understanding will be followed. The conversation moves along in accordance with what is said by the participants, rather than in deference to a hard and fast lesson plan.

Seminars are inhospitable to competition for right answers, particularly given the principal aim in engaging students in critical thinking about complex, multi-sided matters. Instead, they join participants in a collaborative quest for understanding, in a mutual testing of each other's responses to text.

Seminars work best in an atmosphere of respect for the contributions of all the participants. But because the whole enterprise is dedicated to learning, the ideal of respect should not preclude on-the-spot corrections of misstatements and misreadings—outright errors, that is, as opposed to differing opinions. And opinions, of course, rate the same treatment in seminars as elsewhere: They should be valued according to the cogency of the supporting arguments and evidence brought to bear by the persons who voice them and the others in the group who comment on them.

SEMINARS REQUIRE good texts. The word is texts, not textbooks. Textbooks, except for anthologies of primary materials, usually contain knowledge organized and presented for a didactic purpose. They are therefore not discussible, which is what seminar texts must be. Being discussible means being rich in ideas, values, and issues, in complexities and ambiguities, perhaps in contradictions or mysteries. Being discussible means being food for thought, not just grist for the memory mill.

Because of Mortimer Adler's identification with the Great Books Program, many people believe that seminars require the reading of a certain canon of Great Books. That's wrong. It is certainly true that many so-called Great Books meet the standard of being rich in important ideas and so are worthy of extended and intensive discussion. On the other hand, dozens of works have been discovered outside the traditional canon by teachers who want to use them for seminars: complete works and excerpts, old and new, well known and little known, mainstream and tributary, by women and men, by thinkers and creators in every culture, from

Seminars are not compelled to seek synthesis or closure, the relentless imperatives that drive didactic teaching.

all races and ethnic groups, and at various levels of difficulty.

A third-grade teacher in Washington, D.C., recently led a highly effective hour-long discussion of ideas in *The Velveteen Rabbit*. This wonderful children's story about the interplay of imagination and reality probably is not on anyone's list of Great Books, yet the level of conversation was quite sophisticated. This was so largely because the children rose to the challenge of talking about ideas that underlie the deceptively simple plot. The ultimate test of a seminar text is whether it leads to better understanding of ideas that are worth discussion.

MAKING THE shift from lecturer-questioner to seminar leader exacts a considerable payment in time, money, discomfort, disappointment, and unflagging support from others. In the long run, of course, the price seems a bargain, because in seminars teachers reap gratifying rewards: students who learn to think, read, listen, speak, and write better; escape for teachers and students from dependence on the mindless recitation of information into the pleasures of genuine intellectual discourse about ideas; the satisfactions for teachers of deepening their own understanding of important ideas in our culture and of broadening the horizons of their own general education.

These are my conclusions after spending the last five years assisting schools in their efforts to introduce seminars of the kind advocated by Adler. For several years, Adler and his colleagues have been urging schools to commence a "Wednesday Revolution," which means simply scheduling every school child to have one seminar a week (on Wednesday morning, according to Adler's hypothetical illustration) with the objective of the discussion—propelled by a leader who is skilled in Socratic questioning—the students' enlarged understanding of important ideas, values, and issues found in readings, art works, and scientific experiments chosen for their richness in these qualities. Any observer of trends in school reform will recognize how well Adler's proposal fits with vogueish talk about restructuring schools and critical thinking and renewed emphasis on

'I'LL TELL YOU RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, MRS. LEE, I HATE READING'

Anita Lee teaches sixth grade at Shepherd Elementary School in Washington, D.C. A teacher for seventeen years and a member of the Washington Teachers' Union, she has been using the seminar approach in her classroom for two years. She was interviewed by Liz McPike, editor of American Educator.

Editor: Many people, I'm sure, feel they already conduct discussions in their classrooms, especially as part of social science or English classes. Wouldn't your English class, for example, read a short story and discuss it? What are the differences between that kind of discussion and a seminar discussion?

Anita Lee: First, let me say that the great majority of exchanges in a classroom are not anything like a discussion, but, rather, are question-and-answer sessions in which the teacher is checking to see whether the students have read an assigned text or listened to her lecture. But, yes, there are occasions when, as you say, an English class might read and discuss a short story. It could be the same short story I would choose for a seminar, but in a typical classroom discussion I think the teacher's questions would be much more based on what's happening in the story. What happened here? What's the plot? What's the theme? These are the types of questions we would be looking at in a regular reading or literature class, at least the ones that I have taught, and also the ones I attended when I was a student.

In a seminar, the questions are different because the goal is different. You are looking more for ideas. You're trying to get to the issues behind the story. What ideas do you see forming? What are the author's ideas? What are your ideas, and how are your ideas different from someone else's ideas?

In a traditional classroom discussion, there is usually a right and wrong answer. The teacher knows the right answer, and the child is trying to give the answer that the teacher is looking for. And the child is constantly trying to figure out, "Am I pleasing the teacher because I'm saying the right answer?" In a seminar, there is none of that. There are no quick answers. For example, one of the readings I used for a seminar with my sixth-grade class was *The 18th Emergency* by Betsy Byars. My opening question to the children was, "Which character in the story would you choose as your best friend?" Children chose various characters, and that got us into talking about what kind of a person you look for in a



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

friend. What is a friend? Why do you choose friends? What do you do with a friend? What makes a friendship strong? Is friendship just for companionship? A lot of issues came out of that. The text was a means for displaying them.

Editor: But in a regular classroom discussion of this short story, might you not have raised a question about what constitutes friendship?

Lee: Probably not. I would have been so set on making sure the children understood the book, the plot, the qualities of each character in the story, and so on. The discussion would be much more cut and dry. Oh, we may have had time to spend a few minutes on something that's more of an "idea" question, but even that would be very teacher-centered and would lack the kind of sustained time, digging, and reflection that takes place in the seminar. It would not have gotten the children to think deep and long about these larger issues, the ones that I think of as the truths of our world, the ones a child will have to face anywhere he goes.

When we discussed Stephen Benet's *Trials at Salem* in seminar, the children grappled with questions like: Where does justice come from? What is its basis? Is there more wisdom in the majority? I choose texts that will raise important questions and that will also help the children find answers. But they have to think for themselves. They have to formulate their ideas, make them clear, and be accountable for them. In a traditional class, we don't give students the opportunity to really start thinking. We're so busy trying to develop skills and certain bits of knowledge, which we think we have to pour into children, instead of pulling out their ideas.

Editor: How do you stop the discussion from being dominated by some children? Is that a problem?

Lee: One technique I use is to sometimes ask the very verbal ones to be observers. I have about twenty-six children in my class. I might pull out four children to be observers. Their job is to really listen carefully. I have a form I give them on which they have to record their observations. What are the really important ideas? Did somebody say something that you have never thought of before? Is the opening question a good one? Would you have changed that opening question? Are there any children who you feel are dominating the discussion? If so, who are they? How did they dominate the discussion? What should they have done?

So at the end of the seminar—there are a few other questions on the form—the way we begin our critique period is for the observers to come forward, and that's the first time they may speak. The whole time they have not been able to speak, even though they prepared for this seminar just like everybody else. Now, remember, I'm often taking at least one of the most vocal people. They usually are dying to say something; they love to talk all the time anyway. But this person has sat there quietly for an hour or so, and this is the first time he or she gets to say something. This does a few different things. It enables children to recognize problems for themselves without me having to say, Johnny kept talking the whole time, or Susie is dominating, or Mary did not speak up. The children are able to say it to each other. And they can put themselves in the situation and understand why certain behavior is a problem.

The other way I handle behavior problems—let's say the children get too fidgety or are carrying on in private conversations—also relies heavily on the children themselves enforcing our rules. My class now has enough experience with the seminar format—and cares enough about what happens—that they are able to look at each other and say, "You're ruining our seminar." They have grown to that extent.

Sometimes, too, I might stop a seminar. If no child has taken the initiative, I'll put my hand up in a time-out signal. Then we discuss the rules of the seminar, and they know the rules. Sometimes somebody has forgotten the rule or somebody just isn't following the rule. But after we go back over it, someone will say, "Oh yeah, we're supposed to be doing this, or we're not doing that." They know that the rules are necessary to make the seminar work, and they want it to work.

Editor: What do you do when it's clear that someone has not read the text?

Lee: Well, let me tell you, in the beginning that used to be a big problem. When I first started seminar, there were children who definitely didn't like to read, even though they could read. They told me that from the beginning, as soon as I said that our class this year is going to do something new, we are going to read these particular works, and we are going to have seminar. One little girl came to me and said, "I'll tell you right from the beginning, Mrs. Lee, I hate reading. I don't like reading and all these years I don't read. When they tell me to read books, I don't read them. I just don't." There were other children who didn't do the reading beforehand. Unless I had something very short that we were going to read right there together, they were not prepared. For the first few seminars, I told them, that's okay, you are not in the seminar. If you haven't read it, you can't be in it. So the first few seminars there were some children who were on the outside of the seminar.

Editor: You mean you actually placed them on the outside of the circle?

Lee: That's right. I told them they had to sit over in certain corners of the room and watch. You can be an observer, but you cannot be a participant in this particular seminar. The seminar would go on, and these children would have the text in front of them because I

didn't completely isolate them by saying now you can't have the text we're discussing. I let them have it. And what other children began noticing is that these children were reading along. Somebody would say, "Look on page ten and on page ten it tells us about. . ." and these children on the outside of the circle would look to see what was on page ten. They started getting interested, and they started preparing for the seminar so that they could take part.

Editor: Let's stick with the children for a minute. What do they think of the seminar approach?

Lee: We took a survey of all the children in our school last year, and we asked them that question. One child said, "I like the seminar because we don't have to raise hands and everyone can talk when they feel like it." And another child said, "I like seminar because I get to share my ideas and feelings." And another child said, "I like it because I can disagree and no one gets in an argument." What some children have said to me takes me back to that girl I mentioned before, who said she didn't want to read and she wouldn't read. By the end of this class year she was telling me, "Mrs. Lee, I really have liked reading in your class. I really just started reading." Now for a child like that, the seminar has opened up a door for her. It's a door that she is going to need for the rest of her life, and when she was turned off to reading, that door was closed for her.

Editor: Let's try to get to the bottom of that girl's turnabout. Why was she turned off before and why is she excited now?

Lee: In my opinion, I think it's partly because, in the seminar approach, everybody is accepted as equal. There is no one with all the right answers. Children are held accountable for their ideas and comments, yes, but that also means they are taken seriously. They are treated as people with valuable ideas worth listening to. Too often in school, I think, we listen only for what we want to hear. We aren't really listening to children and what they are actually saying, we are listening only to determine if they are saying what we want to hear. If they're not, we sometimes don't hear the rest, and we go on.

A seminar is an exercise in shared knowledge. That's a very different feeling from what usually prevails in the classroom. A reading becomes something that the children collectively confront and come to terms with. In some of our seminars, if we have a poem or other short reading, we might all read it together. And our understanding grows together.

Lastly, I would just say that ideas can be very exciting. There is an enthusiasm that arises from the issues that come up in seminar. Children don't want to be left out. They have ideas about an issue, and once it's framed in the right way, they are very interested in knowing what someone else has written about that particular issue and what their classmates have to say. All of a sudden, here is an avenue for *my* thinking to be in. The seminar ignites something, and the searching, the learning continue to take place long after the seminar has ended. The seminar is just the beginning. □

writing in all subjects.

As much as school budget-minders would like to imagine a quick and easy path for making seminars a regular feature of instruction, they will not find one. To be frank, nobody can say for sure that any route guarantees reaching the desired destination, which Rexford Brown of the Higher Literacies Project at the Education Commission of the States calls simply "thoughtfulness" and Theodore Sizer of the Coalition of Essential Schools refers to as "students learning to use their minds well." Uncertainty about what works exists because the schools' experience with seminars is still young, because few schools regard thoughtfulness as more than an interesting experiment and an exclusive preserve for certain students and certain teachers, and because the institutional environment surrounding budding seminars stunts rather than nurtures their growth.

Fortunately, the prospect is far from hopeless. We have learned a great deal in five years, and it is possible to list and describe the essential ingredients of a seminar program that will have a high probability of sustained success.

To prepare, read any text as you would read a love letter.

IMAGINE THAT you are a New Yorker who has never learned to drive a car and who at age thirty has moved to Los Angeles. Now driving becomes essential. How best to learn? Because you are a teacher, you look for a book, a self-help book, a compilation of the main things you must know in order to get from place to place. You recognize the importance of behind-the-wheel practice and the tutelage of a skillful coach, but the handbook is at least a starting place, and it has its own importance as a summary of accumulated experience by many other learners.

That is what we have here: an abbreviated guide for teachers who want to get started leading seminars as a regular feature of classroom instruction, even as they are also making arrangements to enroll in training and practice sessions conducted by a qualified coach. These are guidelines predicated on what teachers have said *they* find necessary to make seminars work in their classrooms, from kindergarten through high school.

Given the assumptions about the way seminars ought to be, teachers new to this kind of instruction have developed the following guidelines for themselves:

- Start gradually. Don't try for lengthy seminars at first—ten or fifteen minutes in the early elementary grades, with the duration lengthening toward thirty or forty minutes in the upper grades. Expect students eventually to be able to handle seminars at least twice as long. Initially, pick short works with accessible language, but works that will require students to confront important ideas and to stretch their thinking. To prepare, read any text as you would read a love letter. Read to formulate questions. Select short passages for special attention. Consider using two works that relate to each other in their treatment of a subject—the familiar compare and contrast.

- Begin a seminar with enough introduction to set the stage—but no more. Get focused on the purpose of the seminar—enlarged understanding—and get on with the conversation.

- Don't expect to be a perfect leader. Don't even try. Be willing to appear awkward and uncertain; students know those feelings well. With experience will come skill and confidence in the natural course of doing many seminars, perhaps as many as ten or fifteen.

- Develop an opening question that will give everyone a chance to think and answer without feeling vulnerable and threatened. Use a question that has several plausible, defensible answers, and the conversation will flow from the differing answers that students choose. Frame a question to which you don't know the answer, perhaps one arising out of your own curiosity or uncertainty.

- Listen hard. Follow every answer with another question. Rephrase a question, if it's not understood. Permit students to "pass" if they are not prepared to speak. Insist that answers be clear. Allow a few seconds for students to think about their comments; take time to reflect. Stick with the subject at hand. Insist on using the text to support answers. Refuse to supply answers yourself; get the students to dig for their own, no matter how arduous the process seems. Neither praise nor put down their ideas and their reasons, but keep pressing them for clarification, amplification, explanation, and implications. Encourage discussion of differences.

- Take stands to provoke thoughtful disagreement but not merely to start arguments. Keep an open mind, especially when you sense it closing or when you know you have firm opinions already. Remember what was said of Senator Robert Taft: "He had the best mind in the Senate, until he made it up."

- Be didactic only when supplying information necessary to advance the conversation. Be a co-learner and a discussion facilitator, not an authority on "correct" thinking about the ideas in the text.

- Be willing to coach students on seminar behavior, especially as you and they are learning how to conduct seminars: speaking, reading, listening, observing, taking notes, taking turns, citing evidence, defending positions, paraphrasing passages, repeating another student's statement, pronouncing and using words correctly, and so on. Take time for the class to critique every seminar.

● Handle chronically silent students outside the seminar, but not until they have been noncontributors for three to five seminars. Even so, recognize that active listening is a legitimate form of participation.

● Do not permit unprepared students to participate. Seat them separately in the seminar room. Make it clear that the conversation is for those who have read the text.

What an observer sees when teachers become skillful and confident in using all these techniques is revealing for anyone wondering how seminars will work and trying to predict whether they can produce change for the better in the reality of today's schools. In good seminars, one sees: students learning the protocol of intellectual conversation; willing and easy reference to the text to support arguments or comments; effective exchanges with other students, including courteous questioning and growing respect for other students' ideas when they are well defended; keen interest in keeping facts straight while wrestling with "why" questions; reduced reliance on the teacher and correspondingly greater self-reliance.

MOST TEACHERS need fifty to sixty hours of intensive participation in seminars to be properly prepared to lead seminars with their students and with

other teachers. Such preparation might begin with observing an experienced leader in action with students or other teachers, but the would-be leader should soon plunge into full participation. A four-day workshop for twenty-five participants constitutes a sound beginning, provided it entails at least one full-blown seminar daily, ample time for reflection and critique, and intensive exercises designed to cultivate the skills of close reading, concentrated listening, and Socratic questioning. Consecutive days produce better results than scattered days. With emphasis on active engagement of the participants in whole group and small-group activities, the workshop should be demanding—a full schedule, tough readings for seminar discussion, and the expectation that no one will hold back. Good seminars and workshops are best thought of as "Outward Bound for the Mind."

Some of Adler's Paideia Associates, people who conduct the kinds of workshops I am describing, would argue for a Rule of Fives: watch five seminars, participate in five, lead five; then you will be ready for students. These fifteen preparatory seminars need not—indeed, should not—be arranged in separate blocks. That is, it would be wrong to think that all the observation should come first, then the participation, then the leading. Rather, these three kinds of activity are dissimilar in

KEEPING THE SEMINAR FROM BECOMING A 'BULL SESSION'

Editor: In many group discussions that I've witnessed, once they move beyond narrowly conceived questions and answers, there is a hesitation to apply intellectual standards or to make any judgments about the quality of the comments or opinions put forth. "Well, that's your opinion, that's valid for you, maybe another idea is valid for someone else" is often the operational tone. Opinion is treated as by its nature rather untouchable, like a preference for blue ties or a taste for strawberry ice cream. If that is the operating tone, what are children learning other than each other's often rather unformed ideas and a misguided notion of tolerance?

Dennis Gray replies: That would be a terrible misuse, a terrible abuse of the seminar. I certainly don't believe that all ideas or opinions are equally cogent, insightful, interesting, or wise, and I don't believe we do children any good by letting them think otherwise. In fact, the seminar is the perfect setting for teaching children that their opinions—and other people's opinions—should not be given a free ride; ideas and opinions are to be valued according to the cogency of the supporting arguments and evidence brought to bear on their behalf. The seminar is an opportunity for teaching children the responsibilities that go along with thinking.

But you're absolutely right, the notion that tolerance requires us to affirm all ideas or that opinions about ideas fall into the same category as statements of personal taste, those notions have

taken hold. As a result, kids have gotten a lot of practice, which has been validated by schools, in this kind of "bull session" business. It takes some time to root it out. I see it primarily at the beginning, when seminars are first introduced. But it changes.

A good seminar leader can insist upon standards of intellectual rigor in a way that is nonthreatening and that doesn't constitute put downs and hurt feelings and all of that. For example, what I might do, if someone makes a less-than-cogent comment, first of all, I notice whether other people are picking up on it. If they're not, I usually direct them to it. I would say, "Well, Frank, did you hear what Mary just said? Would you repeat it in your own words?" Suppose Frank can't repeat it, I'd say, "Could you repeat it if Mary says it again?" Then Mary says it again. "Now, Frank, can you put this in your own words? Okay, now, how do you think that sounds? Does that seem like a good understanding of the part of the text that Mary is pointing to?" Then I'll call in a third party and I'll say, "James, what do you think of this exchange between the two of them? Do you think Frank did justice to Mary's idea? Do you think Mary could have said her idea better?" And so on, along those lines. It takes a semester and sometimes a year's worth of seminars before kids get the hang of it. They start challenging the text and each other. They start finding foolish statements and contradictory statements and so forth. It takes awhile, but with a good leader, it happens. The free ride for sloppy thinking is over. □

What teachers know, from bitter experience, is the futility of half-baked, underfunded, feebly tended forays into school improvement.

their demands and effects, so mixing up the sequence is a decided benefit. Teachers gain much more from observing, for example, after first participating in one or two seminars. Whatever the pattern, it is not the typical wham-bam-Is-that-all-there-is? style of "inservicing" that characterizes Jiffy Lube and all too much professional development for teachers.

After a solid start in a four-day workshop, teachers should set up a schedule of, say, monthly practice seminars for themselves, still using texts for discussion that have been selected to stretch their minds and advance their general education. The aim is to become comfortable with the challenge of confronting new sources of ideas—new texts to the participants, that is. So they should avoid readings that are familiar from college days or that are found in the syllabus they use for their teaching. Again, every practice seminar should be followed by a thorough critique of the leader and the participants. Video recordings of seminars can be used to good advantage for analysis and self-correction.

LIKE ANY other innovation in education, and especially in instruction, seminars will falter and fade quickly without proper institutional support. Old habits die hard; new ones feel uncomfortable. Imagine trying to switch from playing tennis right-handed to left-handed and you will have an approximation of the time, practice, and coaching needed to complete the task of leavening your didactic recitations with authentic Socratic instruction in which the students are the principal workers and thinkers.

Unless teachers receive help in the following areas, progress in the introduction of seminars is likely to be fitful at best:

- Released time and substitutes to permit taking the workshop and participating in practice seminars.

- Opportunities for observation and constructive criticism from trainers and other teachers. Access to video-recording equipment for this purpose.

- A suitable room for seminars, preferably one with a large hollow square of tables with seating for twenty-five participants and some added seating for observers. A chalkboard is good to have, too.

- Changes in the schedule, starting in the upper elementary grades, to permit seminars to run from one hour up to two hours. The longer durations are not advisable or necessary in the early going, when leaders and participants are still finding their way, so the upheaval of a major shift in schedule can be held off until the second year of implementation.

- Suggestions, sources, and funding for obtaining copies and building a library of readings and art works suitable for seminar discussion.

- The appointment of a teacher or administrator (or volunteer) as seminar coordinator for each school, particularly for the first few years of a new program, to facilitate all the support called for here and to maintain a support network with other seminar coordinators. Released time for the coordinator to do the job.

- Authority and time to think and plan on critical issues: how to integrate seminars with the remainder of the curriculum; how to deal with opposition and skepticism; how to provide seminars for poor readers and other students who might mistakenly be judged poor risks for effective participation; how to handle the matters of grading and testing in connection with seminars; how to arrange for training of other teachers; how to connect seminars with writing so that more thoughtful writing flows from better critical thinking in seminar discussions; how to use clever scheduling, cooperation among seminar leaders, and extra leaders to reduce the size of seminar groups to twenty-five or fewer (especially important in the early seminars, when skills are still shaky).

- The participation of key administrators in seminar workshops, even to the extent that they qualify for leading occasional seminars for students or teachers: the superintendent and the senior staff; curriculum specialists, principals and vice principals. Principals are particularly critical to the start-up phase.

- An extensive public information campaign to inform parents, employers, and the rest of the community about the seminar program, its rationale, and its anticipated benefits.

- Clear signals to everyone concerned that ideas are the property of all human beings, and therefore all students and teachers; in other words, seminar discussions are appropriate for everyone and need not—must not—be restricted to some elite subgroup of teachers and students.

Without doubt, what is called for in the way of individual commitment to change, adequate investment in professional development, and unequivocal institutional support is a high aspiration. What teachers know, however, from bitter experience, is the futility of half-baked, underfunded, feebly tended forays into school improvement. Inevitably, they fail and leave a sour after-taste of frustration and cynicism. Perhaps now, with a nation thought to be at risk because of deficiencies in public education, perhaps now is the proper time to undertake a reform that is not done on the cheap. If employers, college officials, parents, and a self-styled "Education President of the United States" genuinely want high school graduates who can think, read, write, and continue to learn, no time could possibly be more propitious for rousing the schools from their intellectual coma through the introduction of seminars. □

A MUSEUM IS SOMETHING YOU DO

Science museums help teachers bring hands-on approach to class.

BY KARIN CHENOWETH

WITH EVERY new study documenting the lack of scientific knowledge among American students comes a call to teach more science and math, particularly in the elementary grades. But elementary school teachers often feel uncomfortable with scientific subjects and are, therefore, reluctant to teach them.

To overcome that reluctance, thousands of teachers are turning to their local science museums where they are learning both more science and new ways to teach it. Such museums have "the style, the level, and the content that is close to what you want to do in the classroom," says George W. Tressel, a leader in the development of informal science education and a senior staff member at the National Science Foundation.

To show how a science museum and a university course approach the teaching of science differently, Tressel tells how each might teach about electricity. A teacher in a museum course might be handed "a battery and a wire and a couple of bolts and a light bulb and be told to make a flashlight." In a university course about electricity, the same student would "open a textbook showing diagrams and talking about currents."

To Tressel there is no question that the more informal, "hands-on" approach of the science museum leads to more learning. And teachers attending a workshop at Philadelphia's science museum, the Franklin Institute, agreed.

Museum courses "relate more to the classroom" than do university courses, said Ernestine Bonnett, a fourth-grade teacher at Daroff Elementary School in Philadelphia. The workshop Bonnett attended, like many sponsored by science museums, trains teachers to feel comfortable teaching hands-on science. Advocates of hands-on science are fond of repeating the Chinese proverb, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." They argue that students need to manipulate objects and personally observe phenomena in order to become truly interested in science.

And that goes for adults as well as for children. The workshop participants were not lectured at. They conducted experiments that were designed for them by

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At one of the Franklin Institute's many hands-on science workshops, Philadelphia teachers Carmella Giancaterino, Vicki Walsh, Suzan Gersbenson, and Constance Smith discover why certain things float.



museum staff and by each other. In one experiment, workshop participant Valarie Richardson poured hot water into bottles and had group members put ice-covered cloths over each bottle's opening. The rising hot air clashed with the falling cold air and made clouds, at least most of the time. Those who failed to form clouds pondered what had gone wrong—had they not covered the bottle top quickly enough? Had they not used enough ice or hot water? Had they provided too little heat to generate clouds? That kind of inquiry, the teachers were assured by the museum staff, was just as much part of the scientific method as performing successful experiments.

By organizing the workshop of thirty or so teachers into small groups, providing them with simple materials, and having everyone participate in the experiments, the teachers were "being taught the way they want us to teach," Linda Weiss, a kindergarten teacher in Sharswood Elementary School in Philadelphia, said.



Linda Weiss's jar of food coloring-tinted liquid illustrates for her colleagues how fluids flow through the root systems of trees.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY KON TANKER

TRESSEL, THE creator of *3-2-1 Contact*, the children's TV science show, believes that "Science is the humanities of our time. . . . Everybody needs a baseline knowledge of math and science." Unfortunately, Tressel says, studies show that elementary school teachers spend virtually no time at all on science, and what time they do spend rarely permits students to manipulate objects or otherwise participate. "For all practical purposes, we wait until you're in high school and then ask, 'Would you like to take chemistry or physics or botany?' My kid said yes because he had a microscope and a chemistry set and a father who took him to the museums. He's all set. For most of these kids who haven't had that, if they say yes there's a good chance they're going to fail."

Tressel and others in the science museum field evince a sense of mission and purpose. They have found that people learn about the functioning of the heart after walking through a model of one; about aerodynamics by designing airplane wings; about color by experimenting with lights; and about astral distances by looking through telescopes. They have found that the difference between performing an experiment and watching one being performed is so profound that it can make the difference between an interested student and a bored one, a student who learns and a student who doesn't.

Their expertise in finding ways to make science fun and interesting, they feel, makes science museums an invaluable resource for teachers looking to improve their science curriculum. This is one reason why the National Science Foundation has given about \$60 million a year in grants to science museums around the country to develop teacher training programs.

Bonnie VanDorn, the executive director of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, says teacher training is a relatively new role for science museums. When she began in 1971, whatever teacher training museums did "was usually an ad-hoc outgrowth of the old-fashioned class trip." After the trip to the museum, a few teachers would be inspired to conduct hands-on experiments in their classrooms. They might then call on the expertise of the museum staff to develop programs, but, says VanDorn, "not many teachers were involved."

The number of science museums is increasing all of



This straw and construction-paper airplane, flown by Jackie Harris, is the centerpiece for a lesson that teaches fourth graders about aerodynamics.

the time. The Association of Science-Technology Centers has 226 members in the U.S. and another sixty in twenty-nine other countries, up dramatically from just a decade ago. "We don't even know about all the small ones," VanDorn says. Science museum size ranges from that of a storefront in Ithaca, New York, run by two retired teachers, to the Exploratorium in San Francisco with a staff of about 150.

EACH SCIENCE museum has a different method for training teachers. Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, for example, holds camp-ins for teachers one night a year, conducting demonstrations and hands-on experiments all night. It had held several camp-ins for children—copying an idea originated in Ohio—but, says

Jacqui Walsh of the Institute, "We weren't sure any grown-ups would want to stay up late and sleep on marble floors." As it turned out, hundreds did, and the program has been growing every year. The teachers, Walsh says, have welcomed the opportunity to really study the exhibits without the distraction of chaperoning thirty or more kids on a class trip.

The Franklin Institute, one of the oldest science museums in the country, has hundreds of exhibits that permit the viewer to personally manipulate objects and then observe the results. One can mix colored lights to see how different colors are formed. One can see the effect of blasts of air on a ball or design an aerodynamically sound airplane wing. One can see a real human heart and how an electromagnet works.

SCIENTIST-BY-MAIL

A mutual interest in science led Senta Burton and Gerhard Heinrich to begin their correspondence. When the two discovered that they shared a talent for playing the violin, Gerhard proposed that they exchange ideas on how to design the instrument so that it could be played on a spaceship in zero gravity.

The two worked on plans for their "space violin" during nine months as pen pals. Nine-year-old Senta, a fourth grader at the Pierce School in Newton, Mass., hoped then to meet her pen pal. But when the appointed day came, Dr. Gerhard Heinrich broke the date. He had to complete his work on a \$1.5 million grant proposal to continue his research on Alzheimer's disease at Boston's University Hospital.

Senta and Dr. Heinrich may seem like an unlikely pair of pen pals. But their relationship is typical of the pairings made through the Science-by-Mail program at the Boston Museum of Science.

The program, launched in 1988, is designed to increase the knowledge of fourth to ninth graders interested in science by having them correspond with professional scientists. The basis for the correspondence—which can then take unexpected turns, as did that between Senta and Gerhard

Heinrich—is the resolution of a series of scientific problems devised by museum staffers. When the youngsters have solved the problems, they are sent to and critiqued by the scientists, with the museum serving as the go-between.

The students and scientists involved in this year's program tackled three problems:

- In one, students learned about the scientific principles underlying such circus tricks as bubble making and were then challenged to put together their own circus activities.

- In another, amateur sleuths got a chance to sharpen their skills. Students collected and read fingerprints, studied tracks, collected fibers and identified teeth marks. (The Boston Police Department Crime Lab assisted in the preparation of this problem.) Having learned some techniques for detective work, students were asked to set up a mystery at home (for example, who removed an object from a room, bit into an apple, or drank from a glass) and to solve it.

- In a third, students were asked to investigate how waste is disposed of on Earth, particularly in their own communities, and to apply what they had learned about earthly trash disposal to the design of a waste-management system for a space station.

(When Senta suggested in her waste-management project that astronauts might wear disposable paper underwear, Dr. Heinrich calculated how much paper that would require and suggested to Senta that the idea was impractical.

He encouraged her to come up with another idea. She did. She designed a solar-powered machine that could wash clothes in space.)

Science-by-Mail packets include various items to get the young scientists started. The waste-management kit contained a packet of yeast for an experiment on decomposition. The detective package contained a packet of "special police fingerprint powder" and a detective's notebook.

At the end of the year, the Museum of Science hosts Science-by-Mail Day at which time the youngsters and scientists get to meet, exchange ideas, and work together, carrying on in person the process they began through the mail. At last October's Science-by-Mail Day, two hundred students, fifty scientists, thirty-three staffers and four hundred visitors, including parents, participated.

AND WHAT of the space violin? Dr. Heinrich suggested that if he and Senta turned a violin upside down they could simulate the effect of playing the violin in space where there is no gravity.

Senta countered by suggesting that an elastic with one end tied to the bow and the other end tied to the violin could serve as a spring and would bring the bow back to the strings, simulating the effect that gravity has on the bow on Earth. "A good solution," says Dr. Heinrich.

For information on how your students can participate in Science-by-Mail, see *Museum-to-Go*, p. 28. □

Elizabeth McNulty is a Boston-area freelance writer.



(Above) Following the path of the blood — illustrated by flashing colored lights — children can travel through this Franklin Institute heart into the lungs and back to the heart.



Visitors to the Franklin Institute learn that the same air currents that hold up this beachball hold up airplanes (middle photo) and that body heat varies from person to person (below).



In addition to the standing exhibits that were accessible to the teachers all night, last year the museum arranged a special event: The six hundred attending teachers were confronted with a mock robbery. They were expected to detect who had stolen gold from a special gold exhibit. To aid their search for the culprit, the teachers were taught how to perform hair analysis, skin analysis, and other forensic tests. And, they learned how to reproduce the whole activity in their classrooms.

The Franklin Institute, with a grant from the National Science Foundation, has also developed a series of self-contained kits that teachers can use to teach hands-on science in each of the elementary grades. Each of their more than twenty kits contains activity suggestions for the teacher and enough materials—usually simple, everyday objects such as tennis balls, paper clips, and horseshoe magnets—for thirty kids to work in groups of three.

One of the more sophisticated kits includes a large tank, a small terrarium that fits inside of it, algae, elodea (a green plant), bugs like isopods and crickets, and snails, among other things. With these materials, students construct their own ecosystem, the lifecycle of which they can then examine and features of which they can graph and chart. They can study the interaction of the ecosystem's various elements, seeing, for example, that plants can't live without light and water; that when crickets die, other creatures eat them; and that when the crickets themselves are hungry, they eat each other. They also see the effect of a burning candle—pollution—on the ecosystem.

Under an arrangement with the Philadelphia school system, by next year all elementary school teachers in the city will receive four such kits per year, each one specifically designed to fit the curriculum. If teachers want help in learning how to use the kits, they can attend workshops like the one cited above. But each one nevertheless comes with a suggested lesson plan. (For information on how teachers outside of Philadelphia can order similar kits, see sidebar page 28.)

The kits are important because they eliminate one of the problems inherent in teaching hands-on science. "The biggest deterrent I hear from teachers are the materials," says Ilma Levine, one of the founders of the storefront Science Center of Tompkins County in Ithaca, New York. "You have to run around for hours assembling the materials. Teachers just can't do that. So if they get the kits, they will do the projects."

ANOTHER SCIENCE museum that offers kits to teachers is Fernbank, in Atlanta. Fernbank is unusual in that it is wholly owned and operated by the county school system. Begun with federal money that was available after Sputnik, it has the third-largest planetarium in the country and leases a sixty-five-acre forest next door. Each school in the school system is permitted to take as many as six classes to the museum each quarter or request a museum instructor to come to the classroom as many as four times a quarter. Instructors arrive with telescopes to see sunspots or king snakes for biology lessons.

On field trips to the museum, students study botany and ecology in the forest, astronomy in the planetarium,

meteorology at the weather station (which includes a seismometer and satellite telemetry from the National Weather Service) and microbiology in the electron microscopy laboratory.

Fernbank offers special internships to students, permitting tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders the opportunity to pursue individual research projects two afternoons a week. Such projects might be, for example, collecting plant and animal specimens and then examin-

ing their cell structure; or designing their own project using the scanning or transmission electron microscopes. In addition, sixty ninth graders each quarter spend every day at the museum, studying geology by participating in field and laboratory investigations in mineralogy, petrology and mapping; electron microscopy by preparing and photographing specimens; and the tools and techniques of other areas of science by actual participation. Fernbank also conducts twenty-five

MUSEUM-TO-GO

A number of science museums are now offering products and services that will make it easier for you to pursue hands-on science teaching:

Self-Contained Classroom Kits

- More than twenty of the Franklin Institute kits are now being marketed by Science Kit and can be ordered by schools and districts throughout the country. For a brochure, call 1-800-828-7777 or write to Science Kit, Inc., 777 East Park Drive, Tonawanda, New York 14150-6781. Prices range from \$100 to \$200 for a kit equipped with supplies for a class of thirty. To re-use the kit with a subsequent class, you will have to replace the consumable items; that cost should run about one-third the cost of the initial kit.

- Ohio's Center of Science and Industry (COSI) distributes its kits through Fun-in-Science. Sample kit activities include dissecting an owl pellet, raising a caterpillar, and examining the waterproof qualities of a duck's feather. When ordering thirty or more kits, the per-kit cost is \$3.50. For a catalogue, write FIS KITS, P.O. Box 16069, Columbus, Ohio 43216-6069.

GEMS Activity Guides

- The Lawrence Hall of Science, through its Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS) program, has developed teacher guides for over twenty captivating classroom science activities. Each one relies only on cheap, ordinary materials and can be conducted by a teacher with no special training in science. Among the available activities is one that involves children in analyzing a "strange, green substance named 'Oobleck,' said to come from outer space" and another that leads children to create a chemical reaction in a Zip-lock bag. Guides

cost \$4 to \$8. Activities are available for grades K through 10. For an order form or brochure, write GEMS, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Science-by-Mail

- Students from anywhere in the country may participate in the Boston Museum of Science's Science-by-Mail program (described in sidebar on page 26). For further information, call 1-800-729-3300. The cost for a group of four students to participate is \$40. Other museums around the country are also beginning their own Science-by-Mail programs, so check with your local museum as well.

Aerospace Hotline

- The Alamogordo Space Center in New Mexico provides a toll-free phone number to teachers and students who need information on aerospace topics. Students and teachers involved in science fair projects are particularly encouraged to call. Experts will help you identify needed materials and may even Xerox and send needed information to you. One student counseled by the Center won international recognition for his science fair project on producing oxygen for use in a space station. In New Mexico, call 800-634-6438. Elsewhere, dial 800-545-4021. Or write, P.O. Box 533, Alamogordo, New Mexico 88311-0533.

Science Shows

- Many museums, including The Franklin Institute, The Lawrence Hall of Science, and the Boston Museum of Science, will bring a flashy two- to three-hour science show to schools in their own and neighboring states. The cost is usu-

ally around \$300 for an assembly-sized group of students. A typical show might feature a laser light show, a demonstration of liquid nitrogen's incredible cooling power, or an exhibition of robotics. Contact your local science museum or the ASTC (see below) for information on shows that tour your area.

The Exploratorium Quarterly

- San Francisco's Exploratorium museum publishes a quarterly magazine packed with ideas for classroom experiments and with articles that give the experiments much more meaning. Each issue concentrates on one topic—amusement parks, ice, and dirt have been some of the recent topics—and explores it from various angles. In the "Dirt" issue, readers learned about the microorganisms that live in bedroom dust, the composition of moon dust and Martian soil, and the origins of backyard dirt. In the "Ice" issue, articles examined icebergs, ice crystals, the making of ice cream, and the mating habits of the Arctic's Emperor Penguins. (The penguins trek seventy miles inland to where there are few predators—and little food. The female lays an egg, the male warms it on his feet, the female begins her trek back to the coast—and food. When the female returns, the male, having lost half his body weight, will take his trip.) Individual subscriptions are \$15/year. Write Exploratorium Quarterly, 3601 Lyon Street, San Francisco, CA 94123.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers

- For information on the science museums in your area, write to ASTC, 1413 K St., N.W., Tenth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005. □



Two mirrors, bits of colored paper, and Denise Tassi-Kane can create a kaleidoscopic effect guaranteed to interest her students in the effects of light (top). A visitor to California's Exploratorium finds that the same air currents that can lift planes can keep her cool.

courses for teachers—one-third of all the teacher training in the county—in how to teach science.

OTHER SCIENCE museums do even more in the way of teacher training. The Pacific Science Center in Seattle has, in addition to workshops that trained twenty-five hundred teachers last year, a program to train what they call a cadre of science leaders. Each year, between four and eight teachers are hired by the museum to explain exhibits to the public, run the large auditorium shows (this year on lasers, last year on chemistry), and take hands-on science programs to classrooms around the state. They also develop science curricula, and at the end of the year they return to their schools.

"We want people who leave here to go back and become leaders in their schools," Andrea Maret, manager of the program, says. One graduate of this program is now the president of the Washington State Science Teachers Association, and another has gone on to receive a doctorate in science education. Graduates train fellow teachers and act generally as missionaries for the philosophy of hands-on science.

The Exploratorium in San Francisco, one of the country's best-known science centers, holds an annual summer institute for twenty-four highly motivated elementary school teachers. Not only do the teachers take ninety hours of classes, but afterwards a museum staffer will come to the teachers' schools for a total of twenty hours to help apply in the classroom the lessons learned at the institute.

Sending someone into the classroom with the newly trained teacher "gives a chance to discuss ideas with a colleague, to brainstorm," says Lynn Rankin, who heads the program at the Exploratorium. "It's one thing to come to the museum when you're all enthusiastic and you're engaged and excited, and then you return to the classroom to thirty students at different levels, and you're not really familiar with the materials until you've used them once. It's very difficult to do something new in isolation."

The Association of Science/Technology Centers' VanDorn argues that this kind of support is one of the reasons that science museums can be effective at training teachers. "Everybody knows the old saw about taking a two-week institute. No support, no materials, no follow-up." Science museums and centers, with their buildings and permanent staffs, are always available for extra help. "You can call and ask what it was you fed the mealworms."

Most important, however, is that the museums are nonthreatening. Because their main job is to teach science to the general public, they assume very little prior knowledge and encourage curiosity and inquisitiveness. They do not, as many university science courses do, act as screens to filter out those least likely to pursue science as a career.

This is especially important, science museum advocates say, in training elementary school teachers to teach science. "When you think of all the people who became elementary school teachers because they didn't like science," VanDorn says, "it seems silly to think of sending them back to the same place for more training."

□

New Host New Season



Join Susan Stamberg, nationally renowned broadcast journalist, for exciting, fast-paced discussions on the American Federation of Teachers' television program "Focus on Education." Focus's new season begins this September and airs on more than 100 public television stations coast to coast, as well as on The Learning Channel cable network and its 935 cable affiliates. Check local listings for details.

Stamberg, former co-host of National Public Radio's award-winning magazine "All Things Considered," was the first woman to anchor a national nightly radio news program in the United States. She is also the current host of NPR's "Sunday Weekend Edition."



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Good Teaching: Do You Know It When You See It?

Asksed to name the single most important factor contributing to the quality of schools, many people will respond "good teachers." The way to improve our schools seems simple enough—identify, encourage, and reward good teachers. Yet attempts by states and districts to institute career ladders, merit pay, and mentor or master teacher policies have frequently met with organized resistance from teachers themselves. "Who will judge our competence," teachers ask pointedly, "and by what criteria?"

Such skepticism is not surprising. In many districts, evaluation is a

hoop teachers must jump through for tenure, which then becomes simply another yearly ritual of school life. Too often, neither teachers nor administrators see the process as contributing to professional growth or school improvement. Some teachers even identify the evaluation procedures as demeaning and a cause of plummeting morale.

Principals and other administrators assess teachers' performance on the basis of short, infrequent visits to classrooms. Receiving little if any training for this role, they often rely on a rating system geared to a standardized checklist of teacher behaviors and skills. Furthermore, evaluators do not necessarily have backgrounds in the grade level or subject area of the teacher being evaluated.

Clearly, local systems for evaluating teachers need an overhaul. But this is more than a matter of mechanics. To be effective, an evaluation system must embody a definition of good teaching that teachers, administrators, parents, and students see as valid.

Effective Teaching Revisited

Mrs. Jones is well organized as she begins her math lesson. Efficiently moving her fifth-grade students through an opening homework check and review, she determines who completed the homework and

which aspects of the assignment gave students the most difficulty. She proceeds to address these difficulties in a brief presentation, after which she asks a series of simple and direct questions to check comprehension, then assigns several students who answered correctly to help her guide the class through a series of practice problems on the chalkboard.

In the last 15 years, researchers have established that certain practices and behaviors of teachers—like Mrs. Jones's briskly paced homework review—are associated with student gains as measured on standardized achievement tests. Taken together, these studies (often referred to as the teacher effectiveness research) emphasize the importance of well-managed classrooms where teachers spend most of their time actively instructing students and guiding their learning (see "Evaluating the Effective Teaching Research," *HEL*, November 1985).

Findings from these studies can be very helpful, points out Jere Brophy of Michigan State University, especially to beginning teachers and to veterans who have not enjoyed much success in boosting their students' achievement. But Brophy, a researcher who has helped generate, codify, and disseminate data on teacher effects, is very concerned about the misuses and abuses of

INSIDE:

A License to Teach

Teacher Portfolios

Welcoming Minority Teachers

EDITOR: **Adria Steinberg**. ASSISTANT EDITORS: **Mitchell Chester**, **Anna Romer**. EDITORIAL BOARD, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION: **Courtney B. Cazden**, Professor; **Jeanne S. Chall**, Professor; **Carol F. Gilligan**, Professor; **Patricia Albjerg Graham**, Charles Warren Professor of the History of American Education and Dean; **Harold Howe II**, Francis Keppel Senior Lecturer on Educational Policy and Administration; **Marya Levenson**, Principal, Newton No. High School; **Richard J. Light**, Professor; **Sara Lawrence Lightfoot**, Professor; **Kim Marshall**, Principal, The Mather School; **Jerome T. Murphy**, Professor and Associate Dean; **Arthur J. Rosenthal**, Director, Harvard University Press. NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD: **Gregory R. Anrig**, President, Educational Testing Service; **John Brademas**, President, New York University; **Constance E. Clayton**, Superintendent, School District of Philadelphia; **Lawrence A. Cremin**, Frederick A.P. Barnard Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; **Alonzo A. Crim**, Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools; **Andrew Heiskell**, Former Chairman of the Board, Time, Inc.; **Deborah W. Meier**, Principal, Central Park East Secondary School, N.Y.; **John Merrow**, Education Correspondent, MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour; **Albert Shanker**, President, American Federation of Teachers; **David Tyack**, Vida Jacks Professor of Education and Professor of History, Stanford University. GENERAL MANAGER: **Andrea Porth Graham**.



these data. The findings, he warns, should not be translated directly into rigid prescriptions for practice.

Most of the data relate the behavior of teachers to gains on achievement tests. We cannot assume that these same behaviors awaken curiosity, foster students' interest in the subject matter, or help them develop problem-solving and reasoning skills—important educational outcomes not generally measured on such tests. Brophy also emphasizes that while studies identify key differences between poor teachers and adequate ones, they provide little information on differences between average and outstanding teachers.

The Subject Matters

How can we develop a more complete portrait of the expertise involved in good teaching? One step, suggests Susan Stodolsky of the University of Chicago, is to expand the focus of classroom observation beyond teacher-led lessons and interactions and beyond the basic skill areas of math and reading.

When they shifted what they were teaching, they also changed the way they taught.

Hypothesizing that teachers would approach an enrichment subject such as social studies differently from a basic skills subject, Stodolsky conducted a two-year study of math and social studies lessons in 39 fifth-grade classrooms. While one set of observers recorded detailed information regarding instructional goals, content, materials, pacing, and format (for example, teacher presentation, seatwork, recitation), others closely watched a sample of children, noting their behavior and task involvement.

Stodolsky's major finding is expressed in the title of the book describing her research: *The Subject Matters*. Fifteen of the teachers observed taught both math and social studies to the same children in the same physical settings. When they shifted *what* they were teaching, they also changed the *way* they taught.

Instruction, notes Stodolsky, is not as uniform as earlier studies suggested. She identified a variety of "activity segments" during the school day. These segments differed not only in goals, format, and content but also in who determined the pace of activity (teacher, student, or students collectively) and in the intellectual level of the work.

Specifically, the research team found more varied instructional arrangements in social studies than in math. In math lessons, teachers explained skills, algorithms, and occasionally concepts to the whole class, then assigned students to practice skills at their seats or at the board. In social studies, although teachers frequently led recitations based on the textbook, many also engaged students in research activities using reference sources, and some introduced cooperative activities or projects as well.

Looking carefully at student responses to differing activity segments, Stodolsky questioned the widely held assumption that in the classrooms of certain "good" teachers, students are always engaged. Rather, she found that certain kinds of activities, regardless of which teacher initiated them, elicited high levels of attentiveness. Students became most attentive and engaged when the intellectual challenges were greatest and when they collectively determined the pace of activity—conditions most likely to be met during the cooperative activities or projects in social studies classes.

Stodolsky's comparison of math and social studies is intriguing in light of recent assessments pointing to serious deficiencies in the math achievement of American children. Students tend to view math as more difficult than social studies. Yet the researchers found math activities to be less, not more, intellectually demanding.

Part of the problem, suggests Stodolsky, is that teachers rely mainly on presentation, practice, and review to teach math. Students learn to apply algorithms, but they do not learn how to think about or pursue the subject on their own. When they have difficulty with math their tendency is thus to give up, to decide they're simply "not good" at it (see "Taking More Math but Enjoying It Less," *HEL*, January 1986).

Ultimately, concludes Stodolsky, effective teaching may consist less in a generic set of skills or behaviors than in the ability to make considered choices among pedagogical practices and classroom activities. These choices can affect not only students' engagement in learning and the intellectual level of their efforts, but also what they come to understand about how to learn and their own capacity as learners.

From Novice to Expert

Like Stodolsky, Lee Shulman of Stanford University finds fault with the tendency in the research to focus on generic teaching skills and "to wall off the pedagogy from the content." A teacher not only must be a good classroom manager and have a firm grasp of the subject matter, states Shulman, but also must develop "pedagogical content knowledge"—an ability to select topics and ideas that are central to the content area, and to present them in ways that are comprehensible and interesting to students.

What fosters this ability? Certainly a deep knowledge of the

subject matter is important. In developing case studies of new teachers, Shulman found differences in the ways they taught subjects they had studied intensively and those with which they were less familiar. For example, Cathy, an anthropology major with an interest in archaeology, made creative use of maps and demographic information in her ninth-grade social studies course to emphasize how features of the land affect the development of the people and culture. When she had to teach

the history of a country, however, she relied strictly on the textbook.

As teachers like Cathy gain classroom experience, they become more adept at combining content and pedagogy with a third component of their professional knowledge—an understanding of how students learn. Good teaching practice, argues Shulman, involves making use of recent research on learning. Expert teachers understand what makes specific topics

easy or difficult to learn, and anticipate preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds may bring with them to the learning of these topics.

Lessons for Local Evaluation

Translating these complex views of good teaching into instruments and procedures for assessing teachers' performance will not be an easy task. Shulman points out that any

A License to Teach in Connecticut

Can the certification of teachers become less of a bureaucratic process and more of an educational one? In most states, a teaching certificate is based on an exam score and a transcript showing that the candidate completed the right number and type of college courses. In September 1989 the state of Connecticut will institute a very different approach.

All new teachers in Connecticut will participate in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program. Not until the end of their first year, after six independent evaluations by trained assessors, will teachers be eligible for provisional certification. The support component of the program will be provided by specially trained mentors—experienced teachers in the same school as the new teacher and, whenever possible, in the same subject area and grade level. Beginning teachers will have opportunities to observe their mentors in the classroom and to be observed by their mentors (who will receive release time for this purpose).

Assessors will use indicators, drawn from studies of effective teaching, to measure the teacher's ability to manage the classroom, present lessons, and interact with students. After every two visits, the teacher will receive a written profile of strengths and weaknesses, which he can then share with his mentor and principal to identify areas in which he needs additional support.

Educators in Connecticut have tried to design an assessment instrument that does not prescribe "one best way" to teach, but that does give assessors reliable guidelines for evaluating teaching. Thus the instrument itself does not contain checklists; assessors are expected to think about and interpret what they see.

But because licensing decisions are so important, steps have been taken to ensure that assessors will apply consistent standards in judging teachers' performance. To become an assessor, teachers and administrators must attend a 50-hour training program, where they view videotapes of beginning teachers and discuss how they would evaluate each teacher's performance on each of the indicators. By the end of the course they must

demonstrate—through the evaluation of a videotaped lesson—that their judgment is consistent with that reached by a panel of their peers experienced in the use of the instrument.

Connecticut educators are also developing ways to evaluate a new teacher's ability to combine an understanding of instruction with knowledge of the subject matter. Eventually, beginning teachers may be asked to come to an assessment center where they will participate in a series of tasks similar to those performed in planning or carrying out instruction.

One such exercise, developed for secondary mathematics teachers, involves structuring a unit on linear equations. The teacher receives ten index cards in random order, each naming a topic that typically is included in such a unit. The task is to organize the cards in an appropriate sequence, while explaining to the two observers (mathematics educators) why she is arranging the cards in this way.

The observers will not look for one right answer; rather, they will assess the extent to which the teacher's decisions are based on good mathematical and instructional reasoning. Does the teacher draw on her knowledge of the subject matter in explaining the grouping of topics? Can she anticipate how her chosen approach might affect learning and where students might experience difficulty?

Additional tasks will measure how teachers use curricular materials, how well they assess the effects of different teaching approaches on learning, and their ability to recognize and deal with students' misconceptions that might interfere with understanding of the subject matter.

If and when the assessment-center exercises are added to the current on-site support and evaluation components of the BEST Program, Connecticut will become the first state to incorporate new understandings of teaching and evaluation into a state certification program.

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one method will, of necessity, be inadequate. He proposes instead a "union of insufficiencies."

A number of current efforts bear watching. The Educational Testing Service has announced plans to replace the widely used National Teacher Examinations with a "radically different" series of tests. Connecticut is about to implement a new licensing procedure for teachers that will include extensive classroom observations (see "A License to Teach"). And the Teacher Assessment Project, under Shulman's direction, is investigating ways for experienced teachers to document and demonstrate their expertise (see "Teacher Portfolios Inform Assessment").

Meanwhile, school people face the formidable task of improving their own systems of evaluation. According to Arthur Wise, who directed a study of effective evaluation, time is a critical factor. Successful districts allow sufficient time—time to build evaluators' expertise, to encourage collaboration among teachers, and to develop evaluation goals and processes that are compatible with the district's overall educational mission. Teachers, cautions Wise, need to believe that the criteria are sound, and that they have some control over the conditions affecting their performance and hence their assessment.

Is it possible at the local level to develop procedures that reflect the realities and complexities of teaching? Jon Saphier of Research for Better Teaching believes the answer is yes. Saphier's team helps teachers and principals develop a common language and methodology for observing, describing, and discussing skillful classroom practice—without relying on a discrete list of skills or behaviors.

The research reviewed here suggests a number of key issues to consider in any reexamination of local evaluation.

1. It is a misuse of the research to create checklists of standardized practices for observing and evaluating teachers. Policymakers justify such instruments as a way to ensure that evaluators will employ consistent standards and procedures that

are based on valid principles of effective teaching. But as Brophy points out, classroom teaching involves dilemmas and trade-offs. What is appropriate in one situation, for achieving one instructional purpose, may be less appropriate in another. The instruments or forms used in an evaluation system must be flexible enough to allow for a variety of approaches to helping students learn. Adequate training for those carrying out the evaluation can help to address the important issue of consistency.

2. An observation of a teacher in the classroom provides very limited data about that teacher's skills and knowledge. As Stodolsky has found, teachers use different organizational and pedagogical arrangements in teaching different subjects. Thus fairness and accuracy demand that evaluation include more extensive observations of teachers in various contexts. Furthermore, teachers might find it useful to talk with an observer about how strategies they use in a subject area like social studies might become part of their repertoire in a very different subject area, such as math.

Stodolsky makes several suggestions for dealing with situations in which the number of observations remains small. The evaluator and teacher might acknowledge ahead of time that the classes observed will not necessarily be representative, selecting one area of instruction as a focus for observation. Or new teachers might be allowed to invite the evaluator to a "showcase" lesson, where the teacher would have an opportunity to demonstrate his or her own conception of good practice.

3. Teaching is a cognitive activity. Thus it is important not only to observe what teachers do but to understand how what they do relates to their instructional goals and how they think about and learn from their experiences. Pre- and post-observation conferences can be used as opportunities for reflection, not simply as times for teachers to hand over lesson plans or administrators to present their judgments.

How will the lesson build on what

came before and lay groundwork for what will come after? What are the teacher's goals for students, why has he selected these goals, and how will he assess whether they are met? If such questions precede the observation, then afterward the teacher and administrator can discuss whether the class proceeded as expected, and if not, how the teacher adjusted. A videotape of the lesson can give teachers an opportunity to observe their own actions and to reflect on what they did and why.

4. Even a carefully designed evaluation process is not a substitute for ongoing supervision and support. Nor are evaluation and supervision easily combined in one person's job description. Some schools are moving toward collegial forms of supervision, tied more to staff development than to evaluation. For example, teachers may observe and coach one another in implementing a new instructional approach. Or an experienced teacher may act as a mentor to a new teacher, helping the newcomer reflect regularly on elements of practice.

Such programs are important both for the support and supervision they provide and as vehicles for opening up conversation about good teaching. Ultimately, this conversation lays the groundwork not only for improving evaluation procedures but also for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

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Teacher Portfolios Inform Assessment

By Jay Sugarman

The Teacher Assessment Project (TAP) at Stanford University is investigating alternative ways of assessing the skills and knowledge of teachers. An intended audience for this research is the recently formed National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which plans to initiate a voluntary certification process for teachers, similar to the process of professional certification in other fields like medicine. In the following report, Jay Sugarman, a fourth-grade teacher from Brookline, Massachusetts, who was named a Christa McAuliffe fellow in 1988 and took a leave from teaching to work with the TAP, describes the project's field research on teacher portfolios.

At the end of the school day, Jane Martin looks over the fables her fourth graders have written and places these in folders with other, earlier samples of their work. She attaches brief notes to several students' fables, commenting on what each piece of work indicates about the child's literacy growth. Next, she looks over her plan for that day's reading groups and writes a brief account of what actually happened in the groups and what type of follow-up would be appropriate. Finally, she labels a videotape, taken that day, of her working with the whole class on making their fables into children's books.

This year, as part of the Teacher Assessment Project (TAP), approximately 40 teachers from the San Francisco Bay area are constructing portfolios of their work. Like Jane Martin, they draw mostly on documents they and their students produce as part of the normal activities of the school day, attaching to these documents explanatory comments that range from short captions to extended essays.

The goal of this year-long effort is to explore whether teacher portfolios can contribute to a richer, more contextual assessment of teaching. To get a sense of the range of situations in which portfolios might be appropriate, the project includes two very different groups of partici-

pants. A group of high school biology teachers are documenting their teaching in an introductory-level course. The second group—third- and fourth-grade teachers—are focusing on literacy instruction, and especially their use of children's literature in teaching comprehension and composition skills.

Each group of teachers receives a portfolio development handbook, which provides guidelines and suggestions about what to include. While every teacher's portfolio will be different, within each group portfolio entries will contain a similar range and number of documents. This structured approach sets this project apart from previous experiments with self-documentation. Furthermore, unlike most forms of assessment, portfolio development can be collaborative. In fact, teachers are encouraged to consult with peers in their schools, as well as with project staff, as they document and reflect on their practice.

Assessment Center Review

In June, the portfolios these teachers have developed will become the basis for their participation in special assessment-center activities. During the first phase of field research (1986–87), the Stanford team experimented with center-based assessment. Several dozen elementary mathematics and high school history teachers volunteered to come to the center for a week to participate in a series of exercises, which required them to demonstrate their skills in a number of typical situations—from teaching a sample lesson to analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of a particular textbook's presentation of content.

While the participating teachers felt that the exercises successfully simulated teaching situations, by the end of the field-test period both the teachers and the researchers agreed that on-site forms of documentation were also important. This led to the present research question: to what extent can documentation in port-

folios provide evidence of a teacher's knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

When this year's groups of teachers enter the assessment center, examiners already will have reviewed their portfolios and designed interviews and exercises based on the teachers' own documentation of their work. In addition, the teachers will participate in simulation exercises designed to assess both their knowledge of the specific domains of elementary literacy or high school biology and their ability to translate that knowledge into successful classroom practice.

Much More Professional

To quote one fourth-grade teacher: "I've learned more about the things I do and also about where I'd like to improve. You know these things, but when you write them down, it helps."

While it's still too early to know what role portfolios will play in the proposed National Board certification process or in state or district assessment programs, the teachers I have worked with this year have been very positive about the experience. Their comments indicate a number of immediate and practical uses for teacher portfolios:

- Students benefit greatly when we do a consistent and thorough job of documenting their growth and development. As one teacher put it, "This is making me look at my students more critically, and helping me look at what they individually need." In addition, this documentation can help us in describing students' progress to parents or other school personnel.
- Teachers spend a great deal of time developing materials and even inventing curricula. But many of these efforts are as transitory as the words on our chalkboards. By constructing portfolios, we can ensure that our efforts are recorded for our own future use or for adaptation by others. Some teachers have already discovered how useful a portfolio can be in applying for another teaching or administrative position. Port-

folios could also be used in local evaluation, enabling teachers to share specific examples of their work and accomplishments with principals and supervisors.

- A number of teachers participating in the field test have recognized the value of portfolio development for their professional growth. As one teacher said: "It made me feel professional, much more professional." Having several teachers at a school or in a system meet and discuss their

portfolios on a regular basis would be a wonderful way of sharing what they do in their classrooms. Such a process would promote both staff development and collegial relations.

- As I look forward to returning to my own fourth-grade classroom next September, I anticipate using a portfolio in my work with student teachers. My portfolio will become a basis for explaining how I go about teaching, why I do what I do, and what I hope the students' finished

work will look like at the end of a unit. I also plan to encourage the student teachers to develop their own portfolios, both as a learning tool and as a format for demonstrating knowledge and abilities to prospective principals.

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Welcoming Minority Teachers

For people from working-class and ethnic-minority backgrounds, teaching has long been a stepping-stone profession promising entry into the middle class. Yet black and Hispanic teachers make up only 11 percent of the current teaching force, and according to recent projections may account for fewer than 5 percent of all teachers by the year 2000.

The disappearance of minority teachers—at a time when the proportion of minority students continues to grow—is a cause for alarm. Some school-district hiring committees travel as far as Puerto Rico and even Spain to hire teachers, and engage in frantic competition for students coming out of traditionally black colleges. Even the most aggressive recruitment campaign will not result in a more diverse teaching force, however, if minority teachers continue to leave the profession as quickly as new candidates enter. And this, indeed, appears to be happening.

A recent Louis Harris Poll reveals the magnitude of the problem. The sixth in a series of surveys conducted for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, this poll focused on minority teachers. Of the black and Hispanic teachers surveyed, 41 percent, as compared to 25 percent of their white colleagues, said they would probably leave teaching in the next five years. That 41 percent included more than half the black and Hispanic teachers with less than

five years of experience. Among the comparable group of recent white entrants into the profession, slightly over one-third said they would probably leave.

School systems tend to blame such high turnover on the availability of new and more lucrative opportunities for minorities. One Harris finding—that even 21 percent of the minority teachers who report being "very satisfied" expect to leave the profession within five years—appears to support that contention. But several other recent studies indicate that the problem may be less the pull to other careers than working conditions that push people out of teaching.

For example, a report released recently by the Institute for Educational Leadership documents the difficult and sometimes deplorable conditions in many urban schools, where minority teachers are most likely to work. Focusing on 31 schools in 5 urban school districts, the report faults a lack of repairs and preventive maintenance (caused by a shortage of funds and a plethora of red tape) for deteriorating and dirty buildings. Furthermore, many urban teachers lack even the most basic resources needed for teaching—a classroom of their own, sufficient storage space, textbooks, access to copying machines or computers.

While this report does not analyze the data according to a teacher's race or number of years in teaching, it is easy to see how such conditions

could disproportionately affect newer teachers, including recent minority recruits. These teachers are most likely to be assigned to the least desirable buildings with the highest staff turnover, and least likely to be able to negotiate for classrooms of their own or more textbooks or other supplies. Added to the other difficulties of the first few years of teaching, the lack of basic resources may play an important role in convincing new minority teachers that they have chosen an impossible profession.

Acknowledging such problems as time, space, supplies, and salary, a recent report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching emphasizes the debilitating effect on teachers' morale of the lack of meaningful involvement in important decisions. This too is likely to have a disproportionate effect on new and minority teachers, who, of all the teachers in a school, probably feel the most removed from either formal or informal centers of power.

One implication of these reports is that a commitment to a culturally diverse teaching staff must extend beyond the hiring process. At the very least, school districts should be addressing the following kinds of questions:

- Are we giving minority teachers—particularly those who are new to teaching and those in urban schools—the opportunity to succeed? Specifically, how can we provide them with the basic physical conditions and resources they need?

- Are we doing enough to welcome new minority teachers and to introduce them to the school's expectations and culture? How can we provide both formal and informal networks of support to help them through the first few years of teaching?

- In discussions of the less tangible "working conditions" of schools—such as collegiality and teachers' input into decisionmaking—are we making every effort to include the views and concerns of minority teachers?

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For Your Education

What Students Expect

"You have Mr. Brown? He makes you work hard, but he really knows his stuff!" Teachers worry about the first impression they make on a new group of students. In fact, experienced teachers continue to offer novices advice like "Don't smile until Christmas." But what students expect from teachers may not be entirely in the teachers' control. Students absorb information about their teachers from many sources—peers, parents, and even other teachers and administrators in the school.

Recently researchers have raised the intriguing possibility that such information—and the expectations it creates in students—may have an important effect on students' behavior, and ultimately on their academic performance. In a twist on the classic Pygmalion experiment, in which teachers were told that certain students had tested very high on an IQ test that predicted they would be "late bloomers," David Jamieson and his colleagues at the University of Waterloo created the expectation among certain eleventh-grade students that their new English teacher would be especially competent and motivated.

The arrival of a new teacher in midyear created an opportunity to manipulate her students' expectations. The researchers created a pretext for telling two of the new teacher's classes that their peers, the research team, and the teacher herself all saw her as highly capable and motivated to teach the next three-week English unit. Students in her

other two classes did not receive this information.

Students' behavior in class, and their grades on tests and on the unit as a whole, differed significantly between the groups. In the classes with high expectations of the teacher, students paid more attention, talked out of turn less, and spent a higher percentage of their time on task than did those in the other classes. Furthermore, students in the high-expectation classes received better grades on objective tests and assignments and higher final marks for the unit (which included class participation as well).

The researchers suggest two dynamics that might have operated individually or in combination to create this effect. In the classes with high expectations, the teacher, in turn, might have begun to expect more of the students and changed her behavior accordingly. Secondly, students' beliefs may have directly affected their own motivation and conduct. Students who believed they were to be taught by a highly competent teacher may have perceived a greater potential for learning and set higher standards for their own achievement.

In either case, the group consensus of competence created in the two high-expectation classes may explain the differences. When the majority of students in a class share high expectations of the teacher, this in itself may be a powerful influence on the teacher's and/or the group's behavior. The researchers point out that although their creation of this shared expectancy was artificial, it resembles the real-life situation in schools, where teachers often have

well-developed reputations that precede them.

D. Jamieson, J. Lydon, G. Stewart, and M. Zanna, "Pygmalion Revisited: New Evidence for Student Expectancy Effects in the Classroom," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 79, no. 4 (December 1987): 461-466.

Picking Up the Pace

Whenever teachers fight for higher salaries, some politicians and citizens argue that teachers have it easy. Their job is not physically demanding or dangerous like construction work; nor is teaching a high-pressure profession like law or business. And they have shorter workdays and workyears than any other group. What, these critics ask, are teachers complaining about?

In an attempt to answer this question, Louise McDaniel-Hine, an administrator in a Pennsylvania district, and Donald Willower of Pennsylvania State University observed five elementary teachers, each from a different school district, for five consecutive days. Documenting both in-class and out-of-class time, they noted each time a teacher switched to a new activity, the duration of each activity, and any interruptions that occurred.

It is important to note that the researchers defined "activity" narrowly. If a teacher explained an assignment, asked or answered a question, and then walked over to a student to offer individual help, this would count as three activities. If on her way over to the student she stopped to answer another student's question, this too would be recorded

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A GIRL AND HER BOOKS

*Pulitzer prize-winning author
recalls how her childhood love affair with books
opened up the world to her.*

BY ANNIE DILLARD

I BEGAN reading books, reading books to delirium. I began by vanishing from the known world into the passive abyss of reading but soon found myself engaged with surprising vigor because the things in the books, or even the things surrounding the books, roused me from my stupor. From the nearest library I learned every sort of surprising thing—some of it, though not much of it, from the books themselves.

The Homewood branch of Pittsburgh's Carnegie Library system was in a Negro section of town—Homewood. This branch was our nearest library; Mother drove me to it every two weeks for many years, until I could drive myself. I only very rarely saw other white people there.

I understood that our maid, Margaret Butler, had friends in Homewood. I never saw her there, but I did see Henry Watson.

I was getting out of Mother's car in front of the library when Henry appeared on the sidewalk; he was walking with some other old men. I had never before seen him at large; it must have been his day off. He had gold-rimmed glasses, a gold front tooth, and a frank, open expression. It would embarrass him, I thought, if I said hello to him in front of his friends. I was wrong. He spied me, picked me up—books and all—swung me as he always did, and introduced Mother and me to his friends. Later, as we were climbing the long stone steps to the library's door, Mother said, "That's what I mean by good manners."

The Homewood Library had graven across its enormous stone facade: FREE TO THE PEOPLE. In the evenings, neighborhood people—the men and women of Home-

wood—browsed in the library and brought their children. By day, the two vaulted rooms, the adults' and children's sections, were almost empty. The kind Homewood librarians, after a trial period, had given me a card to the adult section. This was an enormous silent room with marble floors. Nonfiction was on the left.

Beside the farthest wall, and under leaded windows set ten feet from the floor, so that no human being could ever see anything from them—next to the wall, and at the farthest remove from the idle librarians at their curved wooden counter, and from the oak bench where my mother waited in her camel's-hair coat chatting with the librarians or reading—stood the last and darkest and most obscure of the tall nonfiction stacks: NEGRO HISTORY and NATURAL HISTORY. It was in Natural History, in the cool darkness of a bottom shelf, that I found *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*.

The Field Book of Ponds and Streams was a small, blue-bound book printed in fine type on thin paper, like *The Book of Common Prayer*. Its third chapter explained how to make sweep nets, plankton nets, glass-bottomed buckets, and killing jars. It specified how to mount slides, how to label insects on their pins, and how to set up a freshwater aquarium.

One was to go into "the field" wearing hip boots and perhaps a head net for mosquitoes. One carried in a "ruck-sack" half a dozen corked test tubes, a smattering of screwtop baby-food jars, a white enamel tray, assorted pipettes and eyedroppers, an artillery of cheesecloth nets, a notebook, a hand lens, perhaps a map, and *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*. This field—unlike the fields I had seen, such as the field where Walter Milligan played football—was evidently very well watered, for there one could find, and distinguish among, daphniae, planaria, water pennies, stonefly larvae, dragonfly nymphs, salamander larvae, tadpoles, snakes, and turtles, all of which one could carry home.

That anyone had lived the fine life described in Chapter 3 astonished me. Although the title page indicated quite plainly that one Ann Haven Morgan had written *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*, I nevertheless imagined, perhaps from the authority and freedom of it, that its author was a man. It would be good to write him

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and assure him that someone had found his book, in the dark near the marble floor at the Homewood Library. I would, in the same letter or in a subsequent one, ask him a question outside the scope of his book, which was where I personally might find a pond, or a stream. But I did not know how to address such a letter, of course, or how to learn if he was still alive.

I was afraid, too, that my letter would disappoint him by betraying my ignorance, which was just beginning to attract my own notice. What, for example, was this noisome-sounding substance called cheesecloth, and what do scientists do with it? What, when you really got down to it, was enamel? If candy could, notoriously, "eat through enamel," why would anyone make trays out of it? Where—short of robbing a museum—might a fifth-grade student at the Ellis School on Fifth Avenue obtain such a legendary item as a wooden bucket?

The Field Book of Ponds and Streams was a shocker from beginning to end. The greatest shock came at the end.

When you checked out a book from the Homewood Library, the librarian wrote your number on the book's card and stamped the due date on a sheet glued to the book's last page. When I checked out *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* for the second time, I noticed the book's card. It was almost full. There were numbers on both sides. My hearty author and I were not alone in the world, after all. With us, and sharing our enthusiasm for dragonfly larvae and single-celled plants, were, apparently, many Negro adults.

Who were these people? Had they, in Pittsburgh's Homewood section, found ponds? Had they found streams? At home, I read the book again; I studied the drawings; I reread Chapter 3; then I settled in to study the due-date slip. People read this book in every season. Seven or eight people were reading this book every year, even during the war.

Every year, I read again *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*. Often, when I was in the library, I simply visited it. I sat on the marble floor and studied the book's card. There we all were. There was my number. There was the number of someone else who had checked it out more than once. Might I contact this person and cheer him up? For I assumed that, like me, he had found pickings pretty slim in Pittsburgh.

The people of Homewood, some of whom lived in visible poverty, on crowded streets among burned-out houses—they dreamed of ponds and streams. They were saving to buy microscopes. In their bedrooms they fashioned plankton nets. But their hopes were even more vain than mine, for I was a child, and anything might happen; they were adults, living in Homewood. There was neither pond nor stream on the streetcar routes. The Homewood residents whom I knew had little money and little free time. The marble floor was beginning to chill me. It was not fair.

I had been driven into nonfiction against my wishes. I wanted to read fiction, but I had learned to be cautious about it.

"When you open a book," the sentimental library posters said, "anything can happen." This was so. A book of fiction was a bomb. It was a land mine you wanted to go off. You wanted it to blow your whole day. Unfor-

tunately, hundreds of thousands of books were duds. They had been rusting out of everyone's way for so long that they no longer worked. There was no way to distinguish the duds from the live mines except to throw yourself at them headlong, one by one.

The suggestions of adults were uncertain and incoherent. They gave you Nancy Drew with one hand and *Little Women* with the other. They mixed good and bad books together because they could not distinguish between them. Any book that contained children, or short adults, or animals, was felt to be a children's book. So also was any book about the sea—as though danger or even fresh air were a child's prerogative—or any book by Charles Dickens or Mark Twain. Virtually all British books, actually, were children's books; no one understood children like the British. Suited to female children were love stories set in any century but this one. Consequently one had read, exasperated often to fury, *Pickwick Papers*, *Désirée*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Lad, a Dog*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Nordhoff* and *Hall's Bounty* trilogy, *Moby-Dick*, *The Five Little Peppers*, *Innocents Abroad*, *Lord Jim*, *Old Yeller*.

The fiction stacks at the Homewood Library, their volumes alphabetized by author, baffled me. How could I learn to choose a novel? That I could not easily reach the top two shelves helped limit choices a little. Still, on the lower shelves I saw too many books: Mary Johnson, *Sweet Rocket*; Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*; James Jones, *From Here to Eternity*. I checked out the last because I had heard of it; it was good. I decided to check out books I had heard of. I had heard of *The Mill on the Floss*. I read it, and it was good. On its binding was printed a figure, a man dancing or running; I had noticed this figure before. Like so many children before and after me, I learned to seek out this logo, the Modern Library colophon.

The going was always rocky. I couldn't count on Modern Library the way I could count on, say, *Mad* magazine, which never failed to slay me. *Native Son* was good, *Walden* was pretty good, *The Interpretation of Dreams* was okay, and *The Education of Henry Adams* was awful. *Ulysses*, a very famous book, was also awful. *Confessions* by Augustine, whose title promised so much, was a bust. *Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau was much better, though it fell apart halfway through.

In fact, it was a plain truth that most books fell apart halfway through. They fell apart as their protagonists quit, without any apparent reluctance, like idiots diving voluntarily into buckets, the most interesting part of their lives, and entered upon decades of unrelieved tedium. I was forewarned, and would not so bobble my adult life; when things got dull, I would go to sea.

Jude the Obscure was the type case. It started out so well. Halfway through, its author forgot how to write. After Jude got married, his life was over, but the book went on for hundreds of pages while he stewed in his own juices. The same thing happened in *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, which Mother brought me from a fair. It was simply a hazard of reading. Only a heartsick loyalty to the protagonists of the early chapters, to the eager children they had been, kept me reading chronological narratives to their bitter ends.

Books swept me away, one after the other, this way and that; I made endless vows according to their lights, for I believed them.



Perhaps later, when I had become an architect, I would enjoy the latter halves of books more.

This was the most private and obscure part of life, this Homewood Library: a vaulted marble edifice in a mostly decent Negro neighborhood, the silent stacks of which I plundered in deep concentration for many years. There seemed then, happily, to be an infinitude of books.

I no more expected anyone else on earth to have read a book I had read than I expected someone else to have twirled the same blade of grass. I would never meet those Homewood people who were borrowing *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams*; the people who read my favorite books were invisible or in hiding, underground. Father occasionally raised his big eyebrows at the title of some volume I was hurrying off with, quite as if he knew what it contained—but I thought he must know of it by hearsay, for none of it seemed to make much difference to him. Books swept me away, one after the other, this way and that; I made endless vows according to their lights, for I believed them.

* * *

AFTER I read *The Field Book of Ponds and Streams* several times, I longed for a microscope. Everybody needed a microscope. Detectives used microscopes, both for the FBI and at Scotland Yard. Although usually I had to save my tiny allowance for things I wanted, that year for Christmas my parents gave me a microscope kit.

In a dark basement corner, on a white enamel table, I set up the microscope kit. I supplied a chair, a lamp, a batch of jars, a candle, and a pile of library books. The microscope kit supplied a blunt black three-speed microscope, a booklet, a scalpel, a dropper, an ingenious device for cutting thin segments of fragile tissue, a pile of clean slides and cover slips, and a dandy array of corked test tubes.

One of the test tubes contained "hay infusion." Hay infusion was a wee brown chip of grass blade. You added water to it, and after a week it became a jungle in a drop, full of one-celled animals. This did not work for me. All I saw in the microscope after a week was a wet chip of dried grass, much enlarged.

Another test tube contained "diatomaceous earth." This was, I believed, an actual pinch of the white cliffs of Dover. On my palm it was an airy, friable chalk. The booklet said it was composed of the siliceous bodies of diatoms—one-celled creatures that lived in, as it were, small glass jewelry boxes with fitted lids. Diatoms, I read, come in a variety of transparent geometrical shapes. Broken and dead and dug out of geological deposits, they made chalk, and a fine abrasive used in silver polish and toothpaste. What I saw in the microscope must have been the fine abrasive—grit enlarged. It was years before I saw a recognizable, whole diatom. The kit's diatomaceous earth was a bust.

All that winter I played with the microscope. I prepared slides from things at hand, as the books suggested. I looked at the transparent membrane inside an onion's skin and saw the cells. I looked at a section of cork and saw the cells, and at scrapings from the inside of my cheek, ditto. I looked at my blood and saw not much; I looked at my urine and saw long iridescent crystals, for the drop had dried.

All this was very well, but I wanted to see the wildlife I

had read about. I wanted especially to see the famous amoeba, who had eluded me. He was supposed to live in the hay infusion, but I hadn't found him there. He lived outside in warm ponds and streams, too, but I lived in Pittsburgh, and it had been a cold winter.

Finally late that spring I saw an amoeba. The week before, I had gathered puddle water from Frick Park; it had been festering in a jar in the basement. This June night after dinner I figured I had waited long enough. In the basement at my microscope table I spread a scummy drop of Frick Park puddle water on a slide, peeked in, and lo, there was the famous amoeba. He was as blobby and grainy as his picture; I would have known him anywhere.

Before I had watched him at all, I ran upstairs. My parents were still at the table, drinking coffee. They, too, could see the famous amoeba. I told them, bursting, that he was all set up, that they should hurry before his water dried. It was the chance of a lifetime.

Father had stretched out his long legs and was tilting back in his chair. Mother sat with her knees crossed, in blue slacks, smoking a Chesterfield. The dessert dishes were still on the table. My sisters were nowhere in evidence. It was a warm evening; the big dining-room windows gave onto blooming rhododendrons.

Mother regarded me warmly. She gave me to understand that she was glad I had found what I had been looking for, but that she and Father were happy to sit with their coffee, and would not be coming down.

She did not say, but I understood at once, that they had their pursuits (coffee?) and I had mine. She did not say, but I began to understand then, that you do what you do out of your private passion for the thing itself.

I had essentially been handed my own life. In subsequent years my parents would praise my drawings and poems, and supply me with books, art supplies, and sports equipment, and listen to my troubles and enthusiasms, and supervise my hours, and discuss and inform, but they would not get involved with my detective work, nor hear about my reading, nor inquire about my homework or term papers or exams, nor visit the salamanders I caught, nor listen to me play the piano, nor attend my field hockey games, nor fuss over my insect collection with me, or my poetry collection or stamp collection or rock collection. My days and nights were my own to plan and fill.

When I left the dining room that evening and started down the dark basement stairs, I had a life. I sat next to my wonderful amoeba, and there he was, rolling his grains more slowly now, extending an arc of his edge for a foot and drawing himself along by that foot, and absorbing it again and rolling on. I gave him some more pond water.

I had hit pay dirt. For all I knew, there were paramecia, too, in that pond water, or daphniae, or stentors, or any of the many other creatures I had read about and never seen: volvox, the spherical algal colony; euglena with its one red eye; the elusive, glassy diatom; hydra, rotifers, water bears, worms. Anything was possible. The sky was the limit.

SINCE WE had moved, my reading had taken a new turn.

She did not say, but I began to understand then, that you do what you do out of your private passion for the thing itself. I had essentially been handed my own life.



Books wandered in and out of my hands, as they had always done, but now most of them had a common theme. This new theme was the source of imagination at its most private—never mentioned, rarely even brought to consciousness. It was, essentially, a time, and a series of places, to which I returned nightly. So also must thousands, or millions, of us who grew up in the 1950s, reading what came to hand. What came to hand in those years were books about the past war: the war in England, France, Belgium, Norway, Italy, Greece; the war in Africa; the war in the Pacific, in Guam, New Guinea, the Philippines; the war, Adolf Hitler, and the camps.

We read Leon Uris's popular novels, *Exodus*, and, better, *Mila 18*, about the Warsaw ghetto. We read Hersey's *The Wall*—again, the Warsaw ghetto. We read *Time* magazine, and *Life*, and *Look*. It was in the air, that there had been these things. We read, above all, and over and over, for we were young, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. This was where we belonged; here we were at home.

I say "we," but in fact I did not know anyone else who read these things. Perhaps my parents did, for they brought the books home. What were my friends reading? We did not then talk about books; our reading was private, and constant, like the interior life itself. Still, I say, there must have been millions of us. The theaters of war—the lands, the multiple seas, the very corridors of air—and the death camps in Europe, with their lines of starved bald people . . . these, combined, were the settings in which our imaginations were first deeply stirred.

Earlier generations of children, European children, I inferred, had had on their minds heraldry and costumed adventure. They read *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*. They read about King Arthur and Lancelot and Galahad; they read about Robin Hood. I had read some of these things and considered them behind me. It would have been pleasant, I suppose, to close your eyes and imagine yourself in a suit of armor, astride an armored horse, fighting a battle for honor with broadswords on a pennanted plain, or in a copse of trees.

But of what value was honor when, in book after book, the highest prize was a piece of bread? Of what use was a broadsword, or even a longbow, against Hitler's armies that occupied Europe, against Hitler's Luftwaffe, Hitler's Panzers, Hitler's U-boats, or against Hitler's S.S., who banged on the door and led Anne Frank and her family away? We closed our eyes and imagined how we would survive the death camps—maybe with honor and maybe not. We imagined how we would escape the death camps, imagined how we would liberate the death camps. How? We fancied and schemed, but we had read too much, and knew there was no possible way. This was a novel concept: Can't do. We were in for the duration. We closed our eyes and waited for the Allies, but the Allies were detained.

Now and over the next few years, the books appeared and we read them. We read *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, *The Young Lions*. In the background sang a chorus of smarmy librarians:

The world of books is a child's
Land of enchantment.

When you open a book and start reading
You enter another world—the world
Of make-believe—where anything can happen.

We read *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, and *To Hell and Back*. We read *The Naked and the Dead*, *Run Silent, Run Deep*, and *Tales of the South Pacific*, in which American sailors saw native victims of elephantiasis pushing their own enlarged testicles before them in wheelbarrows. We read *The Caine Mutiny*, *Some Came Running*.

I was a skilled bombardier. I could run a submarine with one hand, and evade torpedoes, depth charges, and mines. I could disembowel a soldier with a bayonet, survive under a tarp in a lifeboat, and parachute behind enemy lines. I could contact the Resistance with my high-school French and eavesdrop on the Germans with my high-school German:

"Du! Kleines Mädchen! Bist du französisches Mädchen oder bist du Amerikanischer spy?"

"Je suis une jeune fille de la belle France, Herr S.S. Officer."

"Prove it!"

"Je suis, tu es, il est, nous sommes, vous êtes, ils sont."

"Very gut. Run along and play."

What were librarians reading these days? One librarian pressed on me a copy of *Look Homeward, Angel*. "How I envy you," she said, "having a chance to read this for the very first time." But it was too late, several years too late.

At last Hitler fell, and scientists working during the war came up with the atomic bomb. We read *On the Beach*, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*; we read *Hiroshima*. Reading about the bomb was a part of reading about the war: these were actual things and events, large in their effects on millions of people, vivid in their nearness to each man's or woman's death. It was a relief to turn from life to something important.

At school we had air-raid drills. We took the drills seriously; surely Pittsburgh, which had the nation's steel, coke, and aluminum, would be the enemy's first target.

I knew that during the war, our father, who was 4-F because of a collapsing lung, had "watched the skies." We all knew that people still watched the skies. But when the keen-eyed watcher spotted the enemy bomber over Pittsburgh, what, precisely, would be his moves? Surely he could only calculate, just as we in school did, what good it would do him to get under something.

When the air-raid siren sounded, our teachers stopped talking and led us to the school basement. There the gym teachers lined us up against the cement walls and steel lockers, and showed us how to lean in and fold our arms over our heads. Our small school ran from kindergarten through twelfth grade. We had air-raid drills in small batches, four or five grades together, because there was no room for us all against the walls. The teachers had to stand in the middle of the basement rooms: those bright Pittsburgh women who taught Latin, science, and art, and those educated, beautifully mannered European

women who taught French, history, and German, who had landed in Pittsburgh at the end of their respective flights from Hitler, and who had baffled us by their common insistence on tidiness, above all, in our written work.

The teachers stood in the middle of the room, not talking to each other. We tucked against the walls and lockers: dozens of clean girls wearing green jumpers, green knee socks, and pink-soled white bucks. We folded our skinny arms over our heads, and raised to the enemy a clatter of gold scarab bracelets and gold bangle bracelets.

If the bomb actually came, should we not let the little kids—the kindergartners like Molly, and the first and second graders—go against the wall? We older ones would stand in the middle with the teachers. The European teachers were almost used to this sort of thing. We would help them keep spirits up; we would sing “Frère Jacques,” or play Buzz.

Our house was stone. In the basement was a room furnished with a long wooden bar, tables and chairs, a leather couch, a refrigerator, a sink, an ice maker, a fireplace, a piano, a record player, and a set of drums. After the bomb, we would live, in the manner of Anne Frank and her family, in this basement. It had also a larger set of underground rooms, which held a washer and dryer, a workbench, and, especially, food: shelves of canned fruits and vegetables, and a chest freezer. Our family could live in the basement for many years, until the radiation outside blew away. Amy and Molly would grow up there. I would teach them all I knew, and entertain them on the piano. Father would build a radiation barrier for the basement’s sunken windows. He would teach me to play the drums. Mother would feed us and tend to us. We would grow close.

I had spent the equivalent of years of my life, I thought, in concentration camps, in ghettos, in prison camps, and in lifeboats. I knew how to ration food and water. We would each have four ounces of food a day and eight ounces of water, or maybe only four ounces of water. I knew how to stretch my rations by hoarding food in my shirt, by chewing slowly, by sloshing water around in my mouth and wetting my tongue well before I swallowed. If the water gave out in the taps, we could drink club soda or tonic. We could live on the juice in canned food. I figured the five of us could live many years on the food in the basement—but I was not sure.

One day I asked Mother: How long could we last on the food in the basement? She did not know what I had been reading. How could she have known?

“The food in the basement? In the freezer and on the shelves? Oh, about a week and a half. Two weeks.”

She knew, as I knew, that there were legs of lamb in the freezer, turkeys, chickens, pork roasts, shrimp, and steaks. There were pounds of frozen vegetables, quarts of ice cream, dozen of Popsicles. By her reckoning, that wasn’t many family dinners: a leg of lamb one night, rice, and vegetables; steak the next night, potatoes, and vegetables.

“Two weeks! We could live much longer than two weeks!”

“There’s really not very much food down there. About two weeks’ worth.”

I let it go. What did I know about feeding a family? On the other hand, I considered that if it came down to it, I would have to take charge.

It was clear that adults, including our parents, approved of children who read books, but it was not at all clear why this was so. Our reading was subversive, and we knew it. Did they think we read to improve our vocabularies? Did they want us to read and not pay the least bit of heed to what we read, as they wanted us to go to Sunday school and ignore what we heard?

I was now believing books more than I believed what I saw and heard. I was reading books about the actual, historical, moral world—in which somehow I felt I was not living.

The French and Indian War had been, for me, a purely literary event. Skilled men in books could survive it. Those who died, an arrow through the heart, thrilled me by their last words. This recent war’s survivors, some still shaking, some still in mourning, taught in our classrooms. “*Wir waren ausgebombt*,” one dear old white-haired Polish lady related in German class, her family was “bombed out,” and we laughed, we smart girls, because this was our slang for “drunk.” Those who died in this war’s books died whether they were skilled or not. Bombs fell on their cities or ships, or they starved in the camps or were gassed or shot, or they stepped on land mines and died surprised, trying to push their intestines back in their abdomens with their fingers and thumbs.

What I sought in books was imagination. It was depth, depth of thought and feeling; some sort of extreme of subject matter; some nearness to death; some call to courage. I myself was getting wild; I wanted wildness, originality, genius, rapture, hope. I wanted strength, not tea parties. What I sought in books was a world whose surfaces, whose people and events and days lived, actually matched the exaltation of the interior life. There you could live.

Those of us who read carried around with us like martyrs a secret knowledge, a secret joy, and a secret hope: There is a life worth living where history is still taking place; there are ideas worth dying for, and circumstances where courage is still prized. This life could be found and joined, like the Resistance. I kept this exhilarating faith alive in myself, concealed under my uniform shirt like an oblate’s ribbon; I would not be parted from it.

We who had grown up in the Warsaw ghetto, who had seen all our families gassed in the death chambers, who had shipped before the mast, and hunted sperm whale in Antarctic seas; we who had marched from Moscow to Poland and lost our legs to the cold; we who knew by heart every snag and sandbar on the Mississippi River south of Cairo, and knew by heart Morse code, forty parables and psalms, and lots of Shakespeare; we who had battled Hitler and Hirohito in the North Atlantic, in North Africa, in New Guinea and Burma and Guam, in the air over London, in the Greek and Italian hills; we who had learned to man minesweepers before we learned to walk in high heels—were we going to marry Holden Caulfield’s roommate, and buy a house in Point Breeze, and send our children to dancing school? □

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CHINA'S UNTOLD STORY

(Continued from page 15)

means for observing, shaping and controlling the lives of the people are provided by the work units and street committees.

As all urban Chinese know, the street committee is a funnel of information and control employed by the police. Nominally elected, members of street committees have their names put forward by the government's neighborhood office, and the voting that follows is not secret. Everyone knows how he is expected to vote.

"Their most terrifying power is that they can search your house whenever they want," confided one young couple, Hong and Weidong, to Fox Butterfield, the *New York Times* correspondent who wrote *China: Alive in the Bitter Sea* (Time Books 1982). "The police are supposed to have a warrant, but the street committee cadres can come in when they please." Usually middle-aged women, they may barge into one's apartment after midnight without knocking, to check on whether some relative from the countryside is sleeping over (not permitted) or to query guests invited to dinner or check on books or other articles one may own. "It's very humiliating," said Hong, the wife, regarding the chief committee woman's arrogance and power. "If you don't cooperate, she can call the police and they will come over and ask the same questions. . . . She even watches what time we go to bed," Hong complained. "We are like caged animals."

With the tough new birth-control policy, street committees even decide who may have a baby. "We assign a person to keep track of each woman's menstrual cycle," a street committee woman explained to Butterfield. "If someone misses her period and isn't scheduled to have a baby, we tell her to have an abortion."

As in most of the texts that even discuss the subject, *The World Today* (Heath Social Studies) describes the street committee in benign terms as persons who "put up posters to tell parents about shots that protect children from measles." In *Teaching about World Cultures* (CTIR), this instrument of social control is celebrated. In one of its activities titled: "Grassroots Government: The Neighborhood Committee," students are invited to solve problems the Chinese way. Nothing is said about the street committee's surveillance or control function. Instead, students are told that the street committee is a replacement for the extended family and is compared to "similar institutions in American culture" such as "neighborhood groups, churches, etc." So wonderful is the street committee that "other developing countries" with "similar social problems as a result of weakening family and tribal ties" ought to be encouraged, students are told, to follow the Chinese Communist way.

ONLY A handful of materials make any negative comment about the Communists' attack on the traditionally honored Chinese family. Several make benign reference to the change. As one guide (*All in the Family: China Old and New*, SPICE) says, "the family's functions have been reduced because of what the Communists felt to be an incompatibility between the building of a socialist industrial society and the traditional kinship orientation of the Chinese family." This guide

notes that Chinese parents have less authority than they once did and that the model Chinese child "serves the people" and works for the betterment of the larger society." It does not note that these model children have been encouraged to publicly denounce and cause the imprisonment or even execution of their parents. *Exploring World Cultures* (Ginn and Co.) in a sidebar includes a "self-criticism" by a college student who showed hesitation in denouncing his father. The textbook then goes on to issue this singular judgment: "Several other changes made by the Communists also weakened the father's authority. . . . Children were encouraged to report parental disloyalty to the new China. Women and youth gained the most from these changes."

One of the most cruel assaults on family life—one that has continued under the rule of Deng Xiaoping—has been the government's indifference to the ties of marriage. Husband and wife may be assigned jobs in different parts of the country. Fox Butterfield met a man who had fallen in love with another university student and married her. They had lived together all of one month when the state labor bureau assigned them jobs in different cities. Even the birth of a child would not make the authorities relent. Once a year the man is granted two weeks, which he combines with the six national holidays to see his wife and nine-year-old daughter. "My prime is passing me by," he confided, "and I'm still separated. My daughter knows me only as the man who brings presents once a year. How many years does one have to live?" A left-wing magazine in Hong Kong once estimated that some 8 million spouses in China are compelled by the state to live apart, merely from a Communist belief that private life and happiness are irrelevant beside the needs of the state. No text discusses this fact of Chinese life, not even the two teaching units that are solely devoted to teaching about "families."

With the tough new birth-control policy, street committees even decide who may have a baby.

“EQUALITY” IS often cited as a virtue that Mao’s policies helped institutionalize. *People and Nations: A World History* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) by Mazour, Peoples and Rabb, is typical. The student learns that the Chinese Communists “wanted to create a classless society in which people worked for common goals, not for their private gain.”

The truth of China’s class system is rather different and is one of the best-kept secrets in the materials under review.

Simon Leys, a scholar who has reported on the horrors inaugurated by the Chinese Communists, notes in *Chinese Shadows* (Viking 1977) that in the sixth century B.C.E. China’s social hierarchy, as described in the *Tso Chuan*, had only ten degrees. It now has twenty-four within the Communist Party alone, each with its special advantages and privileges as one goes up the ladder. The top rank gets ten times the salary of the bottom rank, but that is the least of it. As in other Communist countries, higher party officials have access to special stores for food, clothing, and appliances, stocked with items that ordinary Chinese only dream about. (One of the ways that the children of the party elite are identified by ordinary Chinese is that they are often taller than the average, thanks to the milk, meat, fruit, and vegetables their families have access to.) Special housing, sometimes on luxurious estates behind high walls, is provided the upper Communist crust. Cars are reserved exclusively for important persons and are used as a badge of privilege to enter places like the large hotels or special stores that are closed to ordinary Chinese.

This officially sanctioned inequality is exacerbated by the dismal output of China’s centrally planned economy, wracked as it is by awesome waste and inefficiency.* Goods and services are often accessible only through the “back door,” as the Chinese call it. The resulting resort to bribes has become a way of life, extending even to medicine, which is state controlled and supposed to be equally accessible to all. “Patients in my hospital have to line up three times,” a physician told Butterfield. “You can spend the whole morning just waiting.” He continued:

Many doctors are so busy they just make a casual examination of the patient and then scribble something out. It’s not good medicine and the patients know it. So many of the patients use the back door. If you know a doctor, you don’t have to line up for him but just walk right into his room. He will give you better attention. Patients who have an even closer relationship with the doctor will go to see him at home, after hours. That’s where the best care is. Of course, in exchange, the patients must give presents to the doctors.

Perhaps the most odious feature of China’s class system has been the “bloodline” principle, by which children were branded for life according to classifications given their parents. A “good” class background is having parents who were poor peasants, workers, or best of all, Communists before the revolution. A “bad” class background is having parents who studied abroad, were

*Revealing details about apartment complexes that are unusable and empty, about new factories that stand incomplete or do not operate or operate one or two days a week can be found in Fox Butterfield’s book on China.

landlords, business people, or had anything to do with the Nationalist Kuomintang. One’s family background is traced for three generations (not unlike Nazi practice) and becomes part of a confidential dossier that the personnel section of every work unit maintains. Access to a university education, or to any of the better jobs, was long blocked by a “bad” class background. And yet some of the listings were absurd, with peasants who once owned a mere four acres and two pigs labelled “rich peasants” or even “landlords,” their children’s future thereby permanently damaged. Moreover, anonymous charges made for personal reasons can enter one’s dossier and never be removed. Under Deng Xiaoping, through most of the 1980s, class background was disregarded and the dossier system, while never abandoned, was less harshly employed. With the recent political clampdown, however, the dossier system is in place and the bloodline information available whenever the government might wish to use them.

In none of the textbooks or teacher’s guides are these forms of officially sanctioned inequality communicated to American students. Perhaps the textbook authors assume that the Chinese people, being “different” from ourselves, are not offended by such a range of institutionalized inequalities that border on a caste system. Yet at Fudan University in Shanghai, some brave journalism students locked the library and distributed questionnaires. To the question—“What is China’s worst problem?”—60 percent listed *te-quan*. Special privileges.

MOST OF the materials cite equality for women as a progressive feature of Communist rule. For example, *World History* (Prentice-Hall) states, “In 1950, the government adopted a new marriage law that guaranteed women full equality.” Even in the typical small village, one learns in *China* (Dushkin Group), “women no longer earn less than the men,” and “79 percent of the wives have become the leading persons in their families.”

The facts are somewhat at variance with this happy picture. It is true that backward conditions for women prevailed until 1950, when the new regime passed a liberal family law giving women freedom of choice in marriage, property rights, and the right to sue for divorce. Article 53 of the Constitution declares women equal to men in all respects. Most American textbooks suggest that this translates into genuine equality for women. Yet the Communist Party, which controls the entire society, had in 1981 a membership of three men for every woman, and the women are disproportionately at the bottom. Higher education is the only other ladder of meaningful social mobility, yet China’s own Ministry of Education in the early 1980s found that while girls made up 50 percent of the primary school population, that figure dropped to 40 percent in high school and 30 percent by college. In 1980, according to the official New China News Agency, only 23 percent of Beijing University’s incoming class was female.

The head of the All-China Women’s Federation once complained at a meeting that 80 percent of China’s illiterates were women, and that twice as many unemployed young women than men waiting for jobs were passed over.

Chinese women cannot choose to stay at home and

raise their children. By law they must work. Yet day care is available only to a minority of parents. The law assures equal pay for equal work. But on visits to a dozen communes, Fox Butterfield found that men received about ten work points per day for work that paid women only seven or eight. Women are usually given the most backbreaking jobs while men serve as cadres or run the rare tractors. An American sociologist who lived on a commune in Hebei province, Steven Butler, estimated that women did 80 percent of the fieldwork.

To get married, a woman must first get approval from her work unit, or *danwei*. (The groom must get permission from his unit as well.) This all-powerful work unit, together with the street committee, is what gives the government such control over everyone. The right to live in a certain place or to travel or even to buy a bicycle is determined by the leaders of one's work unit, with favoritism rife.

ANOTHER CRUCIAL instrument of social control is China's system of residence permits. Only two texts inform students that freedom of movement is not extended to the people of China. The others wholly ignore the issue, leaving students to assume (why should they assume otherwise?) that their Chinese counterparts enjoy this basic right.

The "Follow-up Activity" offered at the end of the China section in Heath's *The World Today* reveals the ignorance or willful blindness of those who prepared it: "Tell students to imagine that they are young Chinese people about to finish high school. Ask them to write a paragraph describing the kind of work they would like to do and where they would like to live." We take such choices for granted. But in China, these rights do not exist. Individuals cannot choose where to live. They cannot even choose their work.

CTIR's *Teaching about World Cultures* concedes these facts, then in its lyrically titled exercise "How Are You Going To Keep Them Down on The Farm," actually supports the Chinese system. Noting that "massive rural-urban migration" is observed in most developing countries, students are presented with "a case study and statistical data to make conclusions about the pull-push factors for the migration of Chinese peasants to the cities." Several alternative programs are presented for discouraging migration, and students are asked to choose one program and defend it. None of the proposed options respects the basic right of free movement, and students are not encouraged to consider options that do.

In short, students are asked to play the role of all-powerful party officials in a totalitarian state. Cities in the less-developed world are repeatedly cited as having endless problems due to the influx of peasants—in Mexico, India, Egypt, Brazil, Nigeria, and Japan—serving to steer the student toward the "sensible" solution of residence permits. (Significantly, South Africa is not mentioned, having a system of residence permits not unlike China's, but lacking the same "good image.") Students are not reminded that the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state." Only after the decision has been made, and as a sort of afterthought,

are the students asked whether a government is entitled to prohibit movement in order to avoid "the problems of a Calcutta or a Mexico City."

(A question that might be asked, but never is, is: "Why did the democracies not need totalitarian measures to handle the urban influx, when a far greater shift from rural to urban living took place in the process of modernization?")

While the CTIR program represents an extreme, most of the texts reveal a troubling spirit of indifference to human rights in China. Few of their educated authors (most of them are university professors) seem aware of an organization called Amnesty International. The bulletins of Amnesty International make clear that China to this day has among the worst human rights abuses in the world, that persons are routinely sent to labor camps without trial, that execution often follows within days of arrest (rendering appeals impossible), that the present regime has sought to *speed up* the judicial process (when it occurs at all), that labor camps routinely "retain" a prisoner after the sentence is completed, using the "released" inmate as forced labor to help operate the camp. Not one of the twenty-eight texts properly describes these realities. Only three so much as glide over the subject.

Instead, several—including *China Mosaic* (East Asia Resource Center, University of Washington)—urge children to compare the American Bill of Rights with the rights afforded the Chinese under their Constitution. Since the latter includes (on paper, at any rate) "freedom of speech, of the press, of association, of procession and of demonstration" (Article 35), freedom of religion (Article 36), freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention (Article 37), and other basic rights, children are made to believe that in the realm of rights, the two nations differ little. Nothing is said regarding actual practice, except in this paragraph for the teacher:

Guide the students to an understanding that the American and Chinese Constitutions state ideals. Ask if they know of situations where the ideals have not been put into practice. An example would be the historic denial of voting rights to black Americans.

AFTER THE death of Mao Zedong in 1976, and with the rise of the current leader, Deng Xiaoping, aspects of the Cultural Revolution were denounced, the cult-worship of Mao was ended, the "Gang of Four," allegedly responsible for the extremism of the Maoist era, were tried as scapegoats, and class struggle was de-emphasized. These events and the economic changes inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping—greater scope for private initiative in small business and farming, a return to formal schooling to educate doctors and engineers, greater openness to the outside world in order to modernize Chinese industry—are reported in most texts as sensible developments.

In addition, during much of the 1980s, there was a relaxation of many government controls. The dossiers, the neighborhood committees, self-criticisms, denunciations, and other tools of coercion were less frequently used. Policy toward the family was less hostile. Some greater freedom of expression was allowed. But the controls were never dismantled. When an invisible line was overstepped, the government could, and did,

These ongoing features of political repression go unnoticed in most of the texts for the simple reason that the whole subject in most cases has been ignored.

jerk the longer leash; those who had been outspoken would be dismissed from their posts or jailed, and other Chinese would find that much of the totalitarian machinery that had been switched to low-gear was once again fully operating.

These ongoing features of political repression go unnoticed in most of the texts for the simple reason that the whole subject in most cases has been ignored. The impression is left that a great deal more has been reformed than is in fact the case. Simon Leys in the *Burning Forest* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1986) wrote in 1981 about the changes wrought by Deng Xiaoping:

The downfall of the "Gang of Four," however momentous, was, after all, a mere episode in the power struggle within the system—it did not bring a significant modification of the system. . . . At no stage was any *politically meaningful* criticism and analysis allowed to develop; the basic questions (From where did the "Gang" derive its power? What kind of regime is it that provides opportunities for such characters to reach supreme power? How should the system be reformed to prevent similar occurrences in the future?) cannot be raised; whenever clear-sighted and courageous people dare to address these issues (Wang Xizhe, Wei Jingsheng), they are immediately gagged and disappear into the Chinese "Gulag."

THE FAILURE to ask questions about freedom, democracy, and human rights displayed by most materials is stunning and bewildering and constitutes very poor education. The indifference of the authors and publishers involved to matters of basic rights has caused them to miss one of the great stories of our time: the outbreak of the Democracy Movement in China.

● On April 5, 1976, 100,000 people in Beijing's Square of the Gate of Heavenly Peace turned the commemoration of Zhou Enlai into a massive protest against the government.

● On Dec. 5, 1978, Wei Jingsheng, then China's best-known dissident, posted a sensational document on the short-lived Democracy Wall in Beijing entitled "The Fifth Modernization: Democracy" (taking off on Deng's Four Modernizations). It said such things as:

The people need democracy. When they demand democracy, they simply demand that which originally belonged to them.

Go and ask the workers: "Apart from the wretched salary that you are given every month, just to prevent you from starving, what rights do you have? What power do you have? Whose masters are you? Alas, you can control nothing—not even your own marriage!"

The struggle of modern times is a struggle to achieve the maximum degree of freedom and democracy that mankind can contemplate.

Wei was given a one-day trial and disappeared into the Chinese gulag.

● In the autumn of 1980, a brief political thaw occurred when it seemed that Deng would allow the people to have serious, contested elections at the local level. As with a comparable thaw under Mao (the brief One Hundred Flowers Period), repression followed soon afterward. But in the interval, telling incidents revealed the deeper aspirations of the Chinese. At Beijing University, a former Red Guard named Fang Zhiyuan held a campaign rally where 500 students packed a room intended for 200 and provoked applause by saying that he didn't think China was a socialist country. Public ownership of the means of production is not enough, said Fang. "To say something is truly publicly owned, we must see if the leaders represent the interests of the people. To have this, you need a system, and that system is democracy." The audience erupted in wild approval.

● At the Hunan Normal College in Changsha, Liang Heng (who later with his American wife Judith Shapiro wrote a remarkable book, *Son of the Revolution*, Vintage 1984), publicly campaigned on statements that he no longer believed in Marxism. Seeing that he would win, the government tried to rig the election, which provoked a hunger strike of eighty students at the college with another 5,000 joining in a sit-in demonstration at the Changsha Party headquarters. They were protesting standard Party interference in the election of deputies at the college. Many of the protesters were shouting, "Down with bureaucracy, down with feudalism, long live democracy!"

● In December 1986, thousands of students in Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities across China demonstrated in the streets calling for some measure of political democracy.

These events, whose historical importance is obvious, are referred to briefly in three books and are wholly absent from the other twenty-five. These protests, which began in 1976, make the recent demonstration of this spring in Tiananmen Square fully comprehensible. The original aim of the students is too easily forgotten: They wanted to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Beijing student demonstration of May 4, 1919, calling for democracy and triggering similar student demonstrations all over China.

HOW COULD textbook authors miss this story? What inspires such an omission?

As noted earlier, the field of international/global education is animated by doctrines that denounce "ethnocentrism" and encourage students to lay aside their own values as they study other cultures. Typical is the grade-seven text *World Cultures and Geography* (The Center for Learning by Artis, Costello and Miltner 1987), which tells teachers in the section titled "Ethnocentricity" that "it is helpful to assist students in emptying their minds of the cultural perspective that they bring to such a study." In *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* (CTIR), Gary Smith and George Otero underline that human diversity means "that we cannot simply develop a codebook for any culture's behavior," that "to assume that there is one proper way to behave toward all human beings is both naive and unworkable."

The Education Department of the State of New York published last year *Social Studies 9-10: Global Studies*, a preliminary syllabus for teachers, which includes in its directives the requirement that "each student will develop the ability to understand, respect and accept people of different . . . political, economic and social background, *and their values, beliefs and attitudes*" (emphasis added). Yet students are also required to learn the values "necessary to participate in democratic self-government." The authors, apparently, do not see the contradiction. The problem lies in the fact that most societies in this world are not democratic.

International education should be animated by the ideals of freedom and democracy on which our society rests and to which people everywhere aspire.

The San Diego school system also publishes guidelines for global education: "Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for the fact that individual cultures and societies, past and present, have developed lifestyles and viewpoints that are appropriate to their particular needs, wants, and desires."⁷ Did the authors think of South Africa when they wrote that? Of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge?

There is no doubt that children are prone to look askance at whatever they find strange, including cultural differences in dress, cooking, and accepted manners. For many reasons—not least those of ethnic and religious pluralism that define the United States as a culture—the cosmopolitan values of tolerance and appreciation of differences are plainly values that our schools should encourage. But there is a line that we draw when different "customs" and different cultural "tastes" pass over into barbarous practice. As former U.S. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick has said, few will agree "that cannibalism is only a matter of taste, that Auschwitz reflects an alternative approach to race relations, that infanticide is a somewhat archaic but nonetheless effective mode of family planning, that slavery is an alternative view of how to get a society's work done."

Some educators make the argument that democratic rights are a luxury that poor nations cannot afford. But the evidence by now is overwhelming that this is an absurd dichotomy. Freedom and democracy do not cost a people food and clothing and prosperity; they *generate* the goods that constitute prosperity. Simon Leys has aptly put it in *The Burning Forest*: "Totalitarianism, far from being a drastic remedy that could be justified in a national emergency, appears on the contrary to be an extravagant luxury which no poor country can afford with impunity."

BUT NEITHER of these rationales fully explains the silence on human rights and the struggle for democracy in China that goes back at least to Sun Yat-sen. The very textbooks that say nothing about the absence of basic rights in China have no difficulty judging Nazi Germany or denouncing the absence of basic rights in South Africa today. *People and Our World* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston) accurately informs the student that "under apartheid, Blacks are not allowed to vote in elections or hold any important or high governmental or business positions," that in 1974 "the South African government had an estimated 800 political prisoners in its jails." Why, suddenly, is an exception made to the doctrine that nations have constructed systems "appropriate to their particular needs"? What about such matters as they apply to China? This double standard also obtains in *People and Nations* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) where, as in the Holt Rinehart textbook, Cuba is treated kindly—despite being a dictatorship with a deplorable human rights record—whereas Chile under Pinochet, like South Africa, is judged by democratic standards. Are tyrannies of the left—at least those still idealized by utopia-seekers—immune from standards applied to tyrannies of the right? So it seems.

Whatever their reasons, by suggesting that some people in other places are less desirous or deserving of democratic rights, these creators of global/international

education materials are, quite simply, repudiating the universal basis of human rights. They are repudiating the terms of the Declaration of Independence, which affirms that all men are created equal. They are repudiating France's Declaration of the Rights of Man, not to mention the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Oddly enough, there is something perversely ethnocentric in the idea that human rights are a peculiarity of Americans, British, French, and West Germans. As Simon Leys has put it, this "amounts to saying: 'Human rights are one of those luxuries that befit us wealthy and advanced Westerners; it is preposterous that mere natives of exotic countries could qualify for a similar privilege, or would even be interested in it.'" There is enormous condescension, bordering on racism, in the theory that people in other places do not have the same aspirations to speak their mind, travel, move, work at what they wish, marry, have children, be judged as individuals and not for the alleged crimes of their parents, and finally, to choose their leaders and the form of government under which they will live.

International education should be animated by the ideals of freedom and democracy on which our society rests and to which people everywhere aspire. These ideals and principles order our civic life, and yet they are not biologically innate. They are learned ideals. If governments by and for the people are to last, schools must teach successive generations what these principles mean. There is nothing uniquely "white" or "English" about them. They are universal in significance and are cherished by people of every color, faith, and background. To call them "ethnocentric" is an affront to our diverse population that came to these shores, often in flight from persecutions and pogroms, from every corner of the globe.

International education belongs in any meaningful curriculum. Surveys show that American students are lamentably ill-informed about the world. But if other areas of the world are as badly handled as China (and there is reason to fear they are), a wholesale review of the field's operating assumptions is very much overdue.

* * *

In late 1978, Fox Butterfield entered China on a tourist visa, during the early stages of the Democracy Movement. On the People's Square in downtown Shanghai, a crowd of ten thousand people surged around three sides of an empty building. Its walls were covered with posters. The crowd moved "excitedly, almost euphorically" around the building like a surf "carrying me from one spot to another. Every time I tried to get close enough to read a poster, I would be swept off in another direction." Some posters were on single sheets torn from a school notebook, others were on old newspaper pages. The largest was on twenty-nine sheets of white paper fifteen feet tall, bearing the title, "Human Rights and Democracy." As Butterfield was reading the start of it, a young man grabbed his arm—Was he an American? Then he should see this, as he pulled the correspondent to a subsequent sheet of the poster.

The phrases seemed oddly familiar, as if I had heard them before, but it took several minutes to translate the Chinese back into its original English. It was the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. . . .

"In 1776 in the American Revolution," the poster went on, "the Declaration of Independence for the first time in the history of mankind spoke about people's right to live as human beings. We ought to have these rights too, not to be the emperor's slaves."

Do the Chinese have something to teach us? Yes, they do. They remind us that armed frontiers cannot stop the democratic ideal and that the desire for human rights is universal. This is a lesson plain from China to Poland to South Africa. When textbook authors and publishers learn it, our children will get the schoolbooks they deserve. □

¹*Approaches to World Studies: A Handbook for Curriculum Planners*, Allyn and Bacon 1979. Edited by Robert B. Woyach and Richard C. Remy.
²*China Mosaic* and *Letters from Chengdu*, published by the University of Washington's East Asia Resource Center, and *A Children's Palace* published by the University of Illinois' Center for Asian Studies.

³The twenty-two books, arranged alphabetically by publisher, are: *Changing Images of China* (Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver 1986) by Michelle Sanborn, Rachel Roe, and Heidi Hursh; *Teaching About World Cultures* (CTIR 1986) by John Beneger, Jacquelyn Johnson, and Huang Teh-ming; *China Workbook* (Columbia University East Asian Curriculum Project; *China Connections* (Community Learning Connections, Boston, Mass. 1985); *The World Today* (D.C. Heath & Co. 1987) by Gloria Hagan, Barbara Reque, and Richard Wilson; *Exploring World Cultures* (Ginn & Co. 1988) by Esko E. Newhill and Umberto La Paglia; *People and Nations: A World History* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1987) by Anatole Mazour, John Peoples, and Theodore Rabb; *The World: Past and Present* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1988) by Stephanie Hirsh and Phillip Bacon; *People and Our World* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1984) by Allan Kownslar and Terry Smart; *The World* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1986) by JoAnn Cangemi; *Global Insights* (Merrill Publishing 1987) by Hantula, Flickema, Farah, Karls, Johnson, Thuermer, Resnick, and Kane; *World History: Patterns of Civilization* (Prentice Hall 1988) by Burton F. Beers; *Eastern Hemisphere* (Scott, Foresman and Co. 1986) by Joan Schrieber, William Stepien, John Patrick, Richard Remy, Geneva Gay, Alan Hoffman; *All in the Family: China Old and New* (Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education, SPICE); *Contemporary Family Life in China* (SPICE 1982); *Economic Choices: China After Mao* (SPICE 1988); *Education in The People's Republic of China* (SPICE 1982); *Rural Development in China* (SPICE 1987) by Michael Chang, Patricia Irle, Charles Lewis, Bing Shaw, and Helen Strate; *Teaching About a Changing China* (SPICE reprint of February 1986 edition of *Social Education*.) *A Children's Palace* (Center for Asian Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana 1986) by Michele Shoresman and Roberta Gumpert; *China Mosaic* (University of Washington, East Asia Resource Center 1988) by Mary Bernson; *Letters from Chengdu* (University of Washington, East Asia Resource Center 1989) by Richard Moulden and Mary Bernson.

⁴Scholar Jürgen Domes in *The Internal Politics of China 1949-1972* (Praeger 1973) states that "in the course of the land reform movement" alone, "cautious estimates put the dead at no less than 5 million."

⁵*The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge University Press 1987) Volume 14 cites the study by Ansley Coale, *Rapid Population Change in China 1952-1982* (National Academy of Sciences), which estimates the deaths at 27 million; Jürgen Domes in *The Government and Politics of the PRC* (Westview Press 1985) cites the estimate of Roderick MacFarquhar in *The Great Leap Forward* (Oxford University Press) of 16.5 to 29.4 million deaths.

⁶In January 1976, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ch'en Yi, in a "self-criticism" speech, said that in the summer and autumn of 1967 alone more than four hundred thousand members of "work teams" had been executed (Domes, *The Internal Politics of China*). Both Roger Garside in *Coming Alive: China After Mao* (McGraw-Hill 1981) and Fox Butterfield in *China: Alive in the Bitter Sea* (Times Books 1982) cite an official government source reported by *Agence France Presse* in February 1979 as giving the figure of four hundred thousand deaths.

⁷*Gloped: Comparative Political and Economic Systems* (San Diego City Schools 1986) by Robert Borntrager and Duenise Shute.

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LETTERS

MORE ON CHOICE

Bravo for Bella Rosenberg ("Public School Choice: Can We Find the Right Balance," Summer 1989) for successfully tackling that difficult subject—choice—and zeroing in on the critical pros and cons. I'd like to amend one of her examples, and in doing so, make an additional point about why teachers will need to be advocates of choice, and therefore MUST play a role in shaping the manner in which it is implemented.

District 4's story—significant because it is one of the few large-scale inner-city efforts to engage in public schools of choice for all—needs to be told more fully and accurately than Rosenberg's story did. It has not been a story of perfect success, and there are aspects of what we did that were (in retrospect at least) unwise.

But our success is far less ambiguous than Bella Rosenberg suggests. The data on test scores (my least favorite kind of evidence) leaves no room for her suggestion that it might have been out-of-district students who upped our scores. In fact, we tested the data for this hypothesis years ago. If anything, we found that scores were slightly lower due to out-of-district enrollment. Middle-class white students did come into district 4. But of the out-of-district students who came, 80 percent or more were low-income African-American or Latino kids, many desperate for some alternatives. We took in a lot of kids, in short, who came to us because they were in trouble—some came on their own, others got referred by helping agencies. Our success with them showed up in lots of statistics—attendance and later high school records included.

Rosenberg is right that the most important thing about District 4's

story is NOT choice for parents and kids. This was the inevitable and necessary consequence of the real innovation—that District 4 offered choices for professionals. Individuals or groups of teachers were able to organize schools and teaching according to their own favorite ideas. With active help from the administration, teachers found ways to create needed time, resources and flexibility so that something different could happen. After ten years, we now have fifty different schools, all operating within the same nineteen school buildings that we have always had.

The logic is simple: If teachers have a significant voice in what goes on in their own schools, then we're going to have to acknowledge diversity. And if we are to have diversity, then both teachers and parents need to be able to choose their schools. But, of course, as Bella Rosenberg says, such preferences also need monitoring and controls. There will be inequities, as there are now, but real equity requires more effective schooling for all. I believe this can only occur as schools begin to reflect the expertise of those who work in them. Thus a thoughtful system of choice is a necessary (however insufficient) ingredient if our goal is professionals with a legitimate role in shaping the life of their school.

—DEBORAH MEIER

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I have only three regrets about Bella Rosenberg's excellent article.

The first is that I didn't write it myself! Nearly twenty years of seeking, as a state education official, to promote equity and its essential companion, excellence, in urban public schools have convinced me that increased parental choice is

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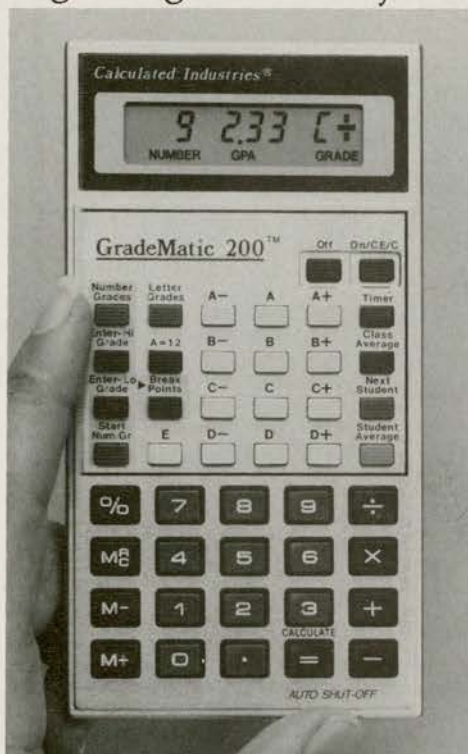
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essential to real reform. Justice demands, in addition, that the right that the middle class already enjoys, to choose a school through decisions about where to live or by paying tuition, be extended to those who cannot afford those alternatives. Rosenberg presents with admirable clarity the arguments for choice that I would have made myself, and I must accept the fairness of her reservations.

"Controlled choice," which she discussed in generally positive terms, is a strategy that evolved out of our concern to move beyond magnet schools, with their implication of self-selection and thus of a dual educational system. Seven Massachusetts cities have universalized choice, challenging every school to be effective and responsive to the concerns of parents.

My second regret is that Rosenberg does not discuss at more length the need for effective counselling of parents about the options available. We have found in Massachusetts, where more than half of the low-income and minority pupils attend public "schools of choice," that such counselling is essential—and pays major dividends in increased understanding of and participation in the subsequent educational process. At present, we provide state funding to support ten parent information/choice centers, an effort that we plan to expand as funds become available.

My third regret is that Rosenberg does not stress that, in a democracy, educational diversity may have merits that go beyond the opportunity to experiment with different pedagogical strategies until the best one has been identified. There is a good case to be made for schools that respond to different visions of what education is all about, so long as there is clarity about what skills and knowledge, what aspects of civic virtue, all pupils should acquire.

But like any strong medicine, choice must be used correctly, with safeguards to protect equal access and integration. Without such safeguards, it will inevitably widen the gap that already exists between those well and those poorly served by public education.

—CHARLES GLENN

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