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Elizabeth McPike
editor
Ruth Wattenberg
editor
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associate editor
Laura Baker
copy editor
Wanda Bailey
editorial assistant
Andrew Bornstein
design consultant
Cover illustrated by Robert Barkin

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America is what it is — its culture and democratic institutions are what they are—because our population has been comprised of so many people from so many different cultures and races. The story of how such a multicultural society came to be is a central one for our students to learn. And given the terrible condition of multiculturalism elsewhere (Lebanon, the Soviet Union, South Africa . . .), this country's relatively successful story has much to tell the world.

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In this Hamlet account, teacher Carol Pino describes how she turned reluctant readers—her ninth-grade reading improvement students—into enthusiastic, effective tutors of grade school children. Unfortunately, the experience didn't also turn her students into better readers. But she offers ideas about how it could.



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January 9

**Great Lakes,
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February 6

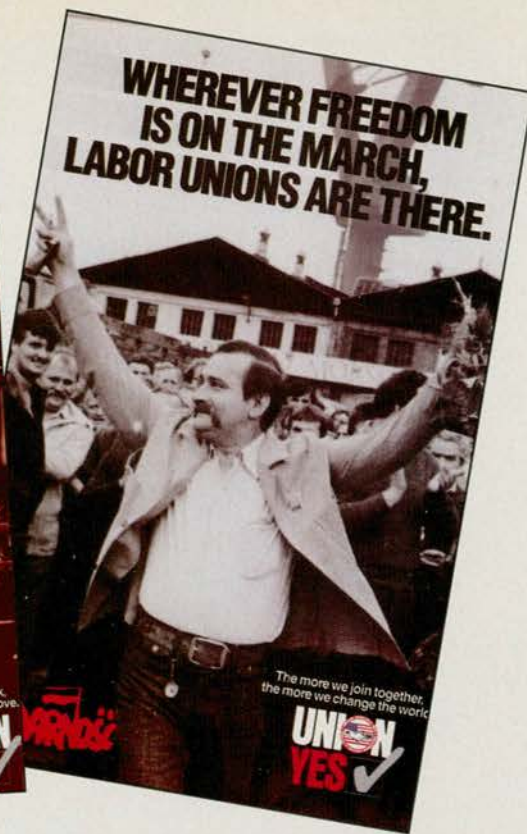
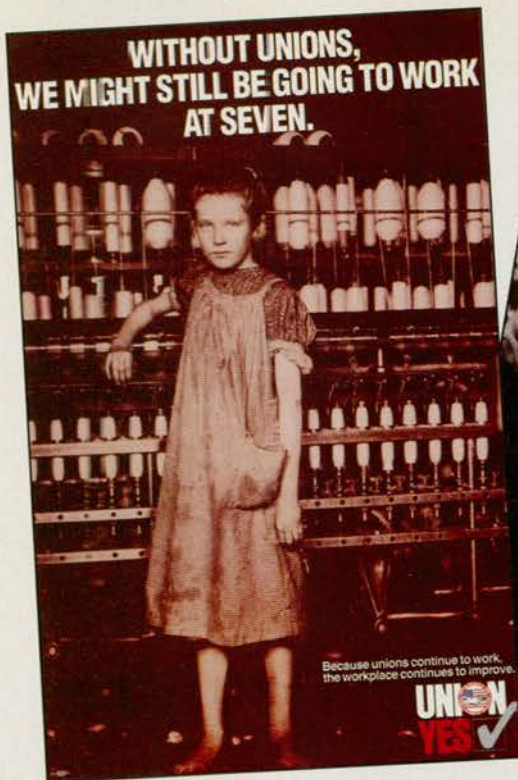
Splendid Stones

March 13

The Soul of Spain

May 15





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Course listings and application materials should be requested from Office of Publications and Public Affairs #406, NEH, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington DC 20506.

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LETTERS

CASTRO'S SCHOOLS

I have read with sadness the articles collected under the series "Emerging from Dictatorship" (*American Educator*, Fall 1990). Your articles discuss the extinct communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the nonextinct oppressive and racist regime in South Africa. But it doesn't even mention another existing, repressive communist dictatorship closer to home: that of Fidel Castro, in Cuba.

In reading the account of what Romanian teachers faced, I couldn't help but think about my own Cuban experience and about the similarities between the regimes of Ceaucescu and Castro. For, as did Ceaucescu, Castro has used education as a tool and educators as pawns in his power game.

I studied and worked in Cuba until May of 1980, when I came to this country. Just to mention a few of the things that have occurred in Cuban education: Catholic teachers were dismissed, retired, or transferred to other positions outside of the classrooms during the early 1960s. Catholic students were not allowed to register in the School of Education and become teachers, (Nor were they allowed to become medical doctors or engineers.) This, in a country where 85 percent of the population declared itself Catholic in 1959, and where, in December of 1960, over a million people gathered in an open air mass, in Havana, to support the Catholic National Congress.

Marxism was taught as a require-

ment from secondary school on. And strict adherence to Marxism and Castro's government was, and still is, a first requirement for any kind of scholarship opportunity beyond the junior high.

In the past, in the *American Educator*, articles and advertisements against Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile have been published, and the pluralistic movement there has been actively encouraged, as it should be. But never have you exposed, or even discussed, the serious educational problems stemming from Castro's Cuban dictatorial regime.

—JORGE LUIS ROMEU

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, MATHEMATICS
SYRACUSE, NY

We agree with Mr. Romeu's assessment of education in Cuba. Unfortunately, we cannot run articles about the condition of education in every country. We have chosen to feature those countries in which the AFT has actually worked with the teachers and teachers unions. As Mr. Romeu says, Cuba is a closed, totalitarian country; there is no free teachers union with which AFT can work, and moreover it is effectively impossible for a U.S. trade union such as ours to gain entrance to Cuba, or once there to have any freedom of action.

—Editor

HISTORY FOR CHILDREN

The sample chapter of Joy Hakim's book (*History for Children*, Fall 1990), which deals with the debate between Hamilton and Jefferson,

does not even mention the major problem of those times—slavery.

In 1787, Gouverneur Morris declared that slavery was the major problem of the Constitutional Convention, and of the United States. A few years later the development of the cotton gin increased the demand for slave labor, in planting, cultivating, and picking cotton. Washington, Jefferson, and Madison held slaves, and probably Randolph did, too. Jefferson's views on slavery and the rights of free African-Americans have been ignored by most writers of American history textbooks.

—MARK K. STONE

CHAIR, HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

I am a retired teacher of high school social studies... and believe Joy Hakim's approach to teaching history is an excellent one. She puts flesh on the bones of history. From the samples given, it would seem that the subject matter is also valid and important and not some trivial but sensational "sidelight..."

But there are some notable sins of commission and omission:

(1.) Rep. Matt Lyon (Vt.), featured in the cartoon exemplifying the sharp conflict between Federalists and Republicans, *was* arrested, tried and jailed under the Sedition Act for criticizing President Adams' "...unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and selfish avarice." Harsh trials and imprisonments for similarly innocuous opinion are *not* uncommon in the history of the U.S. Yet Hakim claims that such "...has never happened in America"

(Continued on page 48)

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NATIONAL CURRICULUM AMERICAN STYLE

*Can It Be Done?
What Might It Look Like?*

BY MARSHALL S. SMITH, JENNIFER O'DAY, AND DAVID K. COHEN

1971

The U.S. Congress:

"No provision of any applicable program shall be construed to authorize any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, [or] administration . . . of any educational institution . . ."

1977

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano¹ (in his speech to the College Board, as recalled in his memoir):

"[Carter liked Pell's idea for a national test.] But my greatest concern was that 'in this country, control of curriculum has always rested with states and localities, not with Washington. Any set of test questions that the federal government prescribed should surely be suspect as a first step toward a national curriculum. . . . In its most extreme form, national control of curriculum is a form of national control of ideas.'"

President Carter (in a note to Califano):

" . . . I believe we need some national standard education achievement tests—to be used only optionally when states and/or local school systems want them. How do you suggest we do this—through HEW, or National Science Foundation? [signed] J.C."

1978

Califano (in his memoir):

" . . . Senator Pell . . . asked the conference audience of several hundred chief state school officers, representatives of parents and civil rights groups, teachers, and congressional staffers, 'How many of you agree with the idea of a national achievement test?' Two hands went up. Pell never introduced a bill on national testing. . . . He [the president] spoke to me [Califano] about testing only once again."

1989

21st Annual Gallup Poll²:

"Public opinion in these annual polls has generally supported the American tradition of local control of schools. . . . In 1982 a majority of respondents (54 percent) said that in the future they would like to see less federal influence on local educational programs. . . . These sentiments may still hold, but the current poll reveals that a majority of respondents believe there should be a national public school curriculum, national goals and standards, and a national testing program to measure the achievement of those goals and standards.

[Do you] Favor or oppose requiring . . . public schools in this community:

. . . to conform to national achievement standards and goals?

Favor 70%. Oppose 19%. Don't know 11%.

. . . to use a standardized national curriculum?

Favor 69%. Oppose 21%. Don't know 10%.

. . . to use standardized national testing programs to measure the academic achievement of students?

Favor 77%. Oppose 14%. Don't know 9%.

1990

"American public schools need a national curriculum to become competitive with school systems in other countries and to reverse plummeting public confidence in education, [said AFT president] Albert Shanker . . . during a panel discussion . . ."

Boston Globe, April 18, 1990, page 12.

VETERAN WASHINGTON observers are still shocked over what they view as an extraordinary change in the attitude of many national leaders and the American public toward the notion of a national curriculum in U.S. schools. For years, public leaders and edu-



cators discussed national tests and national curricula only in reference to the educational systems of other nations—the traditions of local control and state responsibility were thought to be the American way forever. These traditions promised variety, diversity, experimentation, decentralization, and local democracy. In contrast, we regarded the national curricula of other more centralized education systems to be “top-down,” rigid, uniform, and hierarchical.

Now, for better or worse, the discussion in Washington, D.C., and across the nation has changed. In private conversations, a variety of state and national leaders acknowledge that the country is moving toward a national curriculum and a national testing system, and some even suggest this might be a good step. In this article, we will discuss elements of the current interest and explore the various forms a U.S. national curriculum might take.

RECENT INITIATIVES

To begin with, it is important to distinguish between *national* and *federal*. For years when educational observers talked about national initiatives, they meant federally sponsored programs, projects, and reports such as Title I, the “Right to Read” program, P.L. 94-142, “A Nation at Risk,” and hundreds of others. These efforts were typically authorized and funded by Congress and administered by the Department of Education or another related agency, such as the National Science Foundation. There were few national education efforts that did not emanate from the federal government.

This changed in the middle 1980s. Suddenly, dozens of foundations; quasi-governmental organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS); and various business and education groups were sponsoring reports about the condition of education. They were also conceiving and financing initiatives (e.g. in teacher certification, testing, and curriculum reform) designed to change the character of American education.

Each of these initiatives grew out of a conviction that a particular problem in American education could not be addressed in a piecemeal, state-by-state, city-by-city way. The scope and severity of our educational problems seemed to demand national solutions.

It is also important to note that the authors of this article use the term *curriculum* in a broad sense. In the past, Americans were likely to define curriculum in a relatively narrow way, as meaning just the books, the scope and sequence guidelines, and other materials of instruction. But now curriculum is typically used in a more expansive sense to mean that which gets taught—the content, skills, intellectual orientation, etc.—no

Marshall S. Smith is the dean of the School of Education at Stanford and a professor of education. Jennifer O'Day is a fourth-year doctoral candidate and a research assistant at Stanford. David K. Cohen is a professor of education and the acting dean of education at Michigan State University. The authors wish to thank Susan Fuhrman for her helpful comments on early drafts of the paper and Elissa Hirsh and Rebecca Perry for their assistance in preparing this paper.

National leaders acknowledge that the country is moving toward a national curriculum and a national testing system, and some even suggest this might be a good step.



matter from where these materials and pedagogy come. In this broader view, the curriculum is seen as being a product of not just the curricular materials, but of teachers' knowledge and skills and of the tests that guide and drive teaching and learning. This latter, broader concept of curriculum encompasses, for example, the recent effort of the president and Congress to develop national standards and goals. In this section, we discuss how various national initiatives are contributing to the development of a national curriculum.

Curriculum Frameworks

Two sets of activities stand out here. The first consists of two reports written by then-secretary of education William Bennett. In 1987, he released a report entitled *James Madison High School*. The report set out his conception of the proper curriculum for U.S. high school students. A short time later, Bennett released *James Madison Elementary School*, which included his prescriptions for younger students. The effort was astonishing in its breadth, in the chutzpa of its author, and in the lack of consternation that it aroused. Had Shirley Hufstедler, the first secretary of education, released two such reports in 1980, the cries of federal control and dominance from both the right and the left would have been loud and long. Clearly, something had changed in the interim seven years. As the Gallup Poll results indicate, one change was the public's new appetite for such prescription.

The second set of activities has emanated from the education profession and is more dispersed and possibly more long lasting. Ten years ago, professional curriculum groups such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the broader professional organizations, such as the AAAS and the NAS, had little influence on educational policy. This is no longer the case. Concerned about the quality of the school curriculum, about the inherent conservatism of textbook publishers, and about educational governance in most states, professional educators and disciplinary scholars have taken it upon themselves to set forth their collective visions about what students should study during their K-12 years. Moreover, in some cases these groups have actively begun to promote their ideas throughout the nation.

Mathematics groups have led the movement. Both the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the NAS—in particular its Mathematical Sciences Education Board (MSEB)—have produced major reports setting out very similar expectations for K-12 mathematics instruction. The NCTM went the farthest, having developed a fairly specific framework that sets out the content, skills, and pedagogy it advocates for mathematics instruction in the nation's schools. The ideas in these reports reflect a hard-won substantive consensus of those professionals most active in the two groups. Although it is safe to say that the reports do not represent a consensus of all K-12 mathematics educators in the nation, the stride toward consensus is nonetheless considerable and the results striking. Consensus documents are ordinarily conservative, but these pose a significant challenge to the existing curricula and mode of instruction in the nation's schools.

Parallel reports recommending the content of science curricula have been issued by the AAAS, as part of its Project 2061, and by the NAS in the field of biology. Disagreement is greater in science than in math, but the intent of science educators to establish a challenging, engaging, and coherent curriculum for K-12 schools is the same as in mathematics. Professional curriculum groups in English and literature, in social studies/history, and in other content areas currently are considering standards and content frameworks to guide curriculum in their areas.* Moreover, there is now energetic conversation among the groups. Last August, representatives from fifteen national curriculum organizations met in Aspen, Colorado to consider ways they could work together to promote curricular reform.

It is worth noting here (we'll return to this issue later) that even the advanced and detailed NCTM and MSEB reports do not contain the content specificity that is common in the national curricula of other countries and in some of the state curricula in this country. The curricular specifications in these two math reports leave states, districts, schools, and teachers enormous room for unique local interpretation.

National Goals

The best-known effort in this area is the president's educational summit with the fifty state governors, the subsequent joint establishment of national goals, and the creation of a follow-up committee of governors, administration officials, and members of Congress, chaired by Colorado governor Roy Romer. Two of the seven national goals have a direct bearing on curriculum. Goal III calls for all American students to have "demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography" by the year 2000; Goal IV declares that "by the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement." While the framers of the goals were clear in their statement that "improving elementary and secondary student achievement will not require a national curriculum," neither did they rule out the possibility.

More to the point, both goals have undeniable implications for the curriculum of our nation's schools. The emphasis on "challenging subject matter" in specified disciplines—and in the finer print on the need for students to "demonstrate the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively" and for the nation to "substantially increase the percentage of students who are competent

*A third set of voices comes from the states. Across the nation, a number of states have published well-developed curriculum frameworks to guide the K-12 curriculum in local communities. Though states in the past have set out general guidelines for K-12 curriculum, including the prescription of required high school courses, the more recent curricular frameworks have greater and more complete delineation of curricular content and implied or suggested instructional strategies. Though these state frameworks vary in specificity, a common pedagogical orientation and level of specificity may be emerging. This seems particularly true in mathematics where state frameworks seem to be moving in the direction of the NCTM guidelines. Among the leading states is California, which by its size and degree of activity will heavily influence other states.

in more than one language”—sounds like the beginning of curriculum specifications. And simple logic says that we cannot assess whether “American students” show “demonstrated competence” or are “first in the world” unless we first stipulate what we mean by “competence” and “what” we wish to be “first” in. To evaluate this competence we need appropriate assessment tools, which in turn require that we specify content and related pedagogy. Is it any surprise that the dominant topic in the first meetings of the Romer Committee has been the question of a national assessment instrument?

National Tests

Members of the Romer Committee are not the only ones discussing national tests. In the industrialized world, it is the rare country that has no common national examinations. Such tests are given to almost all students at some time in their lives; and they allow students, policymakers, parents, and others to judge the quality of their children’s achievement. The lack of a national test in this country is increasingly frustrating to some people who want to understand and improve what’s going on in the nation’s schools. In addition, many people think tests exert a great deal of influence on curriculum. They believe that a well-conceived national test could be an important lever for upgrading what’s taught (and learned) in the schools. For these reasons a number of national test ideas are now percolating.**

The President’s Advisory Committee on Education,

**The relationship between tests and teaching and learning is at present a great puzzle in the U.S. Some scholars believe the link to be tight, while others think it is quite loose. Whatever the uncertainty among scholars, however, national reformers seem to have high hopes for the potential impact of tests on curriculum.

for example, chaired by ALCOA CEO Paul O’Neill, is considering the appropriateness and feasibility of a national test that would be administered to all U.S. students at two or three grade levels. One version of the proposed test would have it normed to international standards in the hope that the poor performance of U.S. students as compared to their international counterparts would ring alarm bells and stimulate greater public interest in dramatic education reforms. Other versions of the proposal would base the content of the examinations on explicated syllabi and would give test results importance in students’ lives—by making the results available to future employers or college admissions officers, for example. Either kind of national test, but especially the latter, would imply the existence of a well-developed content framework, one that implicitly would serve as a national curriculum framework.

But we need not wait for one of these tests in order to feel the effect of a national test on the curriculum. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), has, for twenty-five years, been providing periodic assessments of student achievement in a number of subjects, using national samples of students from three age/grade levels. The data from these assessments have formed the only consistent national achievement trend lines that we have. Yet, until the 1980s, NAEP results attracted little public attention. Today, due largely to an explosion of concern about education, NAEP results are closely tracked by the press and regularly used as ammunition by policymakers seeking to challenge current educational practices.

Two important changes in NAEP will likely catapult this test—and its subject frameworks—to yet greater importance. First, NAEP’s developers have broadly publicized—and thus opened wide to public scrutiny—the “content frameworks” and “proficiency standards” upon

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

In the past twenty-five years African-American and low-income children have taken enormous strides towards closing the achievement gap that separated them from their white and higher-income peers. This closing is the result of changes in the nation’s social and economic conditions as well as an increased national focus on basic skills education, a focus brought about by Americans’ belief that this was the best way to pursue educational equity. Now this basic skills emphasis is being legitimately criticized: It has produced students who lack the rich knowledge base and the complex skills that are necessary in our technologically advanced society.

Many local school districts and schools are now instituting reforms that will emphasize higher-order thinking and put into place more

challenging curricula. As educationally worthwhile as these reforms may be, it is important to recognize that, relatively speaking, they will probably place minorities and the poor at a new disadvantage. Districts and schools with large numbers of poor and minority students often have less discretionary money with which to stimulate reform; and they have a range of day-to-day problems that drain administrative and teacher energy. It is these districts that typically are the last to benefit from locally-generated school reforms, if they ever benefit at all.

A national curriculum structure could help minimize this new gap and foster educational equity; ideally the national curriculum and its support structures (teacher training, materials development, etc.) would incorporate improved

approaches to teaching and learning and thus make them available to all groups on a more or less equal basis, without requiring localities to make enormous investments of time and money. Moreover, if the core of the curriculum was common throughout the nation, and if teachers and students alike were held to common sets of expectations, then advantaged and disadvantaged students would be less likely to receive radically different curricula, which is too often the case now.

Also, a national exam that produced hard, stark data showing which districts, schools, and students were most in need of help could stimulate a new federal interest in providing additional resources to schools in poor areas.

—M.S., J.O., D.C.

The lack of a national test is increasingly frustrating to some people who want to understand and improve what's going on in the nation's schools.

which the national assessment is based. These frameworks and standards could be viewed as the beginnings of national curriculum frameworks, for they set out the academic and intellectual substance of the only national educational assessments we have.

Second, NAEP will now report its findings for each interested state, not just for the nation at large. Until 1990, NAEP was only allowed to draw a national sample and report national "grades." A new federal law permitted a 1990 experiment, which extended the eighth-grade mathematics assessment to include national samples *and* samples from any states interested in being involved. Thirty-seven states participated. (The results will be published in the summer of 1991.) In 1992, the federally sponsored experiment will probably expand and assess fourth- and eighth-grade mathematics in as many states as wish to participate. If this second phase of the experiment is successful, and if the political climate stays positive, all future NAEP assessments will likely take state (at the state's option) as well as national samples.

Why are these two changes so significant? Because taken together, they could increase pressure on state policymakers to bring their state curricula in line with NAEP's "national frameworks." Consider the following.

Today, the only student test scores that permit state-by-state comparisons are the two college entrance examinations, the SAT and the ACT. Thus, these test scores are the grist for the U.S. Department of Education's annual "wall chart," which purports to compare educational quality in different states and which has led to some public pressure to improve scores and, thus, schools. But, the validity of these scores as indicators of the comparative quality of state school systems is severely limited by three factors: The samples are not representative of even the college-going population in any state, because different colleges require different tests, and some require none at all; the tests are administered only to late secondary school students and thus have little bearing on the schooling of younger students; and the SAT test is—by design—insensitive to the curriculum of the schools. Given these problems, it is likely that within the next few years the wall chart will begin using NAEP's state-by-state data instead of the SAT and ACT scores.

If this happens, chief state school officers and their colleagues in the state legislatures and governors' mansions may be under greater pressure to improve NAEP scores than they have been to increase SAT and ACT scores. After all, the NAEP comparisons will be more legitimate; they will reflect the performance of a truly representative sample of the state's students. Also, NAEP is explicitly curriculum-sensitive; it directly reflects whether students have learned the content set forth in the NAEP frameworks. Moreover, concerned citizens will be able to read the frameworks and see precisely what it is in math, science, reading, etc., that their students don't know.

If students do poorly, critics of school policy will be able to explicitly compare a state's curriculum with the curriculum implied and described by the "national" frameworks that shape NAEP. It is likely that the better the fit between a state's curriculum and the NAEP frameworks, the better the state will look on the assessments.



The pressure upon state policymakers to bring their state curricula into conformity with the "national" frameworks may be small at first, but will surely grow over time in those states that fare badly.

National Teacher Standards

A final area of national attention that bears on the issue of national curriculum is the reform of teacher education and selection. The most germane example is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), a foundation-initiated group funded by private and public sources and governed by teachers, teacher educators, business people, and state and local government officials. The purpose of the board is to establish standards for teaching practice that would then serve as the basis for a voluntary national exam, the passage of which would entitle a teacher to an advanced board certification credential. [See "Creating a Profession of Teaching: The Role of National Board Certification," *American Educator*, Summer 1990.] Opportunity for certification will be available throughout the country, and the board's intention is that the exam and the certification standards will be the same for all applicants.

If teachers across the nation are to have equal opportunities to prepare for the assessments, the framework on which the exam is based must be made public; that is, teachers must be informed in advance of what they must know about pedagogy and their subject-matter area. The board expects teachers to study and otherwise prepare themselves for the assessments. (Education schools likely will begin to offer relevant preparatory courses.) This begins to smack of a national curriculum—albeit for teachers.

What is the relationship between national certification for teachers and a national curriculum for students? They are linked by the subject-matter content we expect teachers to be able to teach. At the very least, the NBPTS certification exam will assess teachers' ability to teach appropriate content to their students. The knowledge the board would expect teachers to have would include the substance of the curriculum it expected them to teach. Thus, the NBPTS assessment would have to assume that students across the country would be learning a common core of knowledge and skills.³

ONE BEAUTY of the American education system is that it encourages the outpouring of creative and potentially effective initiatives just described. Unfortunately, it does not provide the glue to bind these efforts together; and the sponsors of these various activities have made only a few deliberate attempts to coordinate them.⁴ Without such coordination, letting a dozen flowers bloom could be counterproductive. Imagine, for example, that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the AAAS, and NAEP all based their efforts on different conceptions of what the curriculum's core science content should be. The result could be textbooks based on AAAS guidelines, teachers who studied a different body of material in order to become board-certified, and a national test that held students and schools accountable for learning yet a third body of science knowledge. (We might suggest that this is not too different from how things function now—but more of the same also seems unlikely to result in dramatic

improvement.) This lack of clear linkage among the various parts of the system, we would argue, threatens to limit, even undermine, the best and most promising reform efforts.

The move towards a more national curriculum clearly is under way, although it is certainly not irreversible. It is time to consider the costs and benefits of what could be a sea change in American education and to explore how we might structure a national curriculum so as best to meet the needs and traditions of this country.

WHAT MIGHT A NATIONAL CURRICULUM LOOK LIKE?

Must a national curriculum mean an end to teacher creativity? To local control of schools? Must it mean an end to the very American idea of "second chances"? Will our schools assign kids to a rigid track at age 13, based on a single test score? Does a national curriculum mean one set of textbooks would be used throughout the country?

The fact is *national curriculum* can mean different things—and in fact it does have different meanings in different countries. In this section we look at the range of possibilities in four areas: the extent of curriculum specificity; the quality and variety of curriculum materials; the role of national examinations; and the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation.

In considering which variants of a national curriculum we find the most promising for this country, we must acknowledge three biases: First, we find it very difficult to imagine a reason for having a national curriculum framework that is uncoordinated with systems of assessment, teacher training, instructional materials and other school resources, and policies that support teaching and learning. Second, the purpose of such an important change in the educational governance of U.S. schools should be to improve the quality of teaching and learning. If we are to have a national curriculum, it should—through the support and direction it gives to framework development, materials development, a national examination, and teacher training—stimulate teachers and other school people to actively engage all of our children with rich content that is creatively taught. We already are moving toward a de facto national basic-skills curriculum—there is no need for a new effort if we simply want more of the same. Third, we have a great affection for the U.S. system of "second chances" in education. We would not like to see this important feature lost.

Nature of the Curriculum Specifications

Many of the questions raised by the prospect of a national curriculum center on how detailed its content, skills, pedagogical, and sequence requirements would be. (Similar questions recently have been raised about the curriculum frameworks of many state systems.) These questions often take the following form: Will the curriculum require all fourth-grade teachers in the state or nation to teach the same unit on adding fractions during the tenth week of the school year? Underlying this question are others: Would such a curriculum stifle teacher initiative and creativity? Would it give teachers adequate leeway to try new methods and to pursue their

We already are moving toward a de facto national basic-skills curriculum—there is no need for a new effort if we simply want more of the same.



favorite interests in such areas as science or social studies, for example?

There is no simple or single answer to such questions. Much will depend on how the national curriculum frameworks are designed. Four elements of the design are especially important.

- The first concerns how much detail the curriculum frameworks will specify. Does the English literature framework specify the particular novels to be read? Are certain kinds of experiments required in the elementary school framework, as they are in Japan, for example? The NCTM standards and the 1984 California mathematics frameworks represent the flexible end of this continuum. Both emphasize student outcomes to be accomplished rather than the specific topics to be covered and instructional strategies to be employed. For example, the California math framework requires that between kindergarten and third grade, students learn such things as to “count by ones, twos, fives, and tens” and to “recognize and count money.” California has augmented its math framework with model curriculum guides that provide somewhat more specificity and guidance to teachers who elect to use them.

More recent California frameworks, such as those in science and history/social science, are more specific. They provide greater direction and detail through carefully stating what is important about the issues to be covered and what must be covered at each grade level. But they continue to give local districts, schools, and teachers great latitude in tailoring their courses of study.⁵ The California history/social science framework, for example, offers a five- to ten-page essay describing the content that should be covered in each of its required yearlong courses. The guidance materials in Japan, while not so lengthy, are even more prescriptive in setting out required topics, curricular objectives, and even some instructional tasks.

- A second and closely related element is the specification of *when* particular content and skills are required or expected to be taught. There was a time when the French minister of education could brag that he knew to the minute what was being taught in all of the nation's schools. By that standard, even the Japanese elementary curriculum seems flexible; though its content and the year in which it must be taught is specified, the precise time during the school year is not. But by the Japanese standard, the curriculum specifications set out in the NCTM standards and in most of the California frameworks—which are highly specific by American standards—are quite relaxed, for those documents outline material to be covered *within a three- or four-year* range.

- A third element concerns the depth and breadth of the curriculum. Should equal importance and time be given to every decade of U.S. history since 1607, or should more attention be given to certain eras? Must we cover as much of the content of chemistry, physics, and biology as we possibly can during high school? Or should a student be expected to become especially proficient in a few key areas of each science? These issues are especially important for U.S. schools because many recent observers—including such diverse people as William Bennett, TheodoreSizer, Arthur Powell, and

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AMERICA THE MULTICULTURAL

BY ROBERT J. COTTROL

I GREW UP in the fifties, in an era when public schools, with few exceptions, presented a picture of the world that was relentlessly monocultural and, I might add, monochromatic. World history classes presented us with an impressive array of European heroes and villains, King John I (who I confess made a greater impression on me as the villain of numerous Robin Hood

movies than as the grantor of the Magna Carta), Charlemagne, Columbus, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, and the list goes on. Rarely did the standard world history class examine the lives of the great figures from Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the indigenous populations of the Americas. Likewise, in American history class it was possible to go through the school year learning about Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Wilson and other great men of U.S. history, with only a pause, in February, during what was then called "Negro History Week," to spend a brief moment on George Washington Carver and his experiments on the peanut.

So my views on multicultural education are informed, in part, by childhood memories. But my views also have been informed by my adult experiences. I have spent my adult life studying the role of race in American legal

*Robert J. Cottrol is a specialist in American legal history and an associate professor of law at Rutgers School of Law in Camden, New Jersey. He is the author of *The Afro-Yankees: Providence's Black Community in the Antebellum Era* and many articles about race and law in the United States. This article is drawn from a speech he delivered at the AFT conference, "Building Alliances for Youth at Risk."*



and social history. This study has left me with an appreciation for the diversity of American culture and for America's opportunity to contribute further to global civilization.

LET ME first say what multicultural education is not, or at least should not attempt to be. It should not simply be a program designed for minority students. There is a temptation to believe that multicultural education can somehow provide a quick fix for the ills that plague inner-city education. If only we teach inner-city students about the African Kingdom of Mali in the Middle Ages instead of dwelling on Medieval England, if we present less Abraham Lincoln and more Frederick Douglass, if we offer more of the writings of Malcolm X and less discussion of the Eisenhower administration, then students who previously had been turned off by

school will suddenly become scholars, enthusiastic and interested in their school work. Would that this were so! We then could easily switch to a more Afro-centric or Hispano-centric or Asia-centric curriculum, confident that a change in subject matter would produce diligent, enthusiastic students. The increase in language and analytical skills alone that would result from their new studiousness would more than justify any subject matter deficiencies such a curriculum might produce. These could be corrected later.

Unhappily, multicultural education has only a marginal ability to bring about such a transformation. The students most at risk—those from decaying inner city neighborhoods, those from broken families, those who join gangs in fear of their lives, those who are the heirs of a culture of despair that has developed in all too many of our ghettos in the last generation—will not be inspired



ILLUSTRATED BY BRU ASSOCIATES

nor have their lives radically changed by the addition of a multicultural dimension to their educations, however much we might hope so. The addition of black, or Hispanic, or Asian, or Indian heroes and role models might inspire a few such students, but multicultural education cannot be seen as a remedy for society's neglect of its cities, the poor people that dwell in them, and the urban schools that will shape the next generation of Americans.

Nor should multicultural education be the occasion for building up false ethnic pride or for substituting myths about people of African, Asian, or Latin American descent for myths concerning people of European descent. Multicultural education should not be an excuse for replacing the myth of "America the Perfect" with "America the Reprobate." In an honest, serious multicultural education, one in which students encounter the rich diversity of the American heritage, our students should learn about the greatness of Thomas Jefferson's ideas *and* that, as a slaveholder, he betrayed America's ideals. Our students should learn about the great achievement that was the opening of the American West *and* about the tremendous price America's indigenous populations paid in the process.

The fact is that American history—like any history—offers no simple, pure truths. Our history is neither great nor terrible, but a complicated mix of both, with good growing from evil, and evil growing from good. It is this complexity that makes history interesting and challenging. We shouldn't deny students of any color the richness of this American dilemma.

THE TEACHING of history is probably the most important part of multicultural education because it is the major means by which the culture, values, and legacy of our civilization are passed from one generation to the next. American history, like history generally, tells us the ways in which our civilization is unique, and yet, properly taught, it reminds us of our kinship with others who share the human experience.

Every student who passes through our school system needs to be made aware that the cultures of peoples from every corner of the earth have made significant contributions to the American experience. This means teachers must bring some of the newer historical scholarship into the classroom. At one time those who wrote about and taught history believed their mission was to relate the stories of the great men and public events of each age and to ignore the day-to-day lives of ordinary people. We would learn about George Washington but little about the lives and motivations of the farmers, shopkeepers, and artisans who served with him in the Continental Army. Or we would learn about the Lincoln-Douglas debates but little about the agonies of the slaves who were at the heart of those debates. We learned about the building of the transcontinental railroad but nothing about the day-to-day living conditions of Irish and Chinese laborers who carved that railroad out of the American wilderness.

Much recent scholarship—by focusing more on the lives and contributions of minorities; on the political and social lives of ordinary Americans; and by exploiting such historical sources as census data, court records, and voting statistics—has given us a more complete

At every point in our nation's history, American culture has been transformed, and our democratic ideals tested and strengthened, by America's black, brown, red, and yellow citizens.

picture of the American past. It is important that this new, more historically accurate picture be painted for our students as early in their education as possible. The incorporation of that scholarship will tell us and our students much concerning the civilization that we Americans of all colors have built on the North American continent.

Our civilization began with an English base. We need not deny nor underplay this fact even when we are teaching children of African, Latin American, Asian, American Indian, and I might add, Eastern and Southern European descent. Our notions of law and politics, of constitutionalism in the broadest sense of that term, are English in origin. It was in England that modern concepts of limited, representative government, due process in criminal trials, the rights to organize politically and challenge the government through orderly political processes took their modern form. These ideas have captured the imagination of the world; they have been adopted as ideals and, increasingly, as practices by people of every race. The great Latin American liberator Simon Bolivar took American ideas of constitutionalism and incorporated them into the fundamental charters of a number of South American countries. He went the American Constitution one step better by, in many cases, abolishing slavery immediately upon attainment of independence. And these constitutional ideals have been spread by Americans of every race. Japanese-Americans helped draft Japan's postwar democratic constitution. The great African-American lawyer and jurist Justice Thurgood Marshall helped draft Kenya's first constitution as an independent nation.

The spread of Anglo-American constitutionalism has been a multiracial enterprise as was the creation of English as a universal language. The English language was spread by British colonial administrators and by Americans of every description, by Jewish-American tourists, by Polish-American students studying in foreign universities, by Hispanic Peace Corps volunteers, by the Negro and Nisei GIs who played a large part in liberating Italy and France during World War II.

BUT THE story of America is not just about how Anglo-American ideas were spread by a multicultural citizenry. At every point in our nation's history, American culture has been transformed, and our democratic ideals tested and strengthened, by America's black, brown, red, and yellow citizens. This is a story all students need to know. We should tell students about anthropological historian Peter Wood, whose work on eighteenth-century South Carolina, "*Black Majority*," shows us that much of the American cowboy culture had West African origins. Our students should know that at the time of the Constitution's formation that the issues of slavery and black citizenship were hotly debated, and they should know that black people were not passive bystanders in that debate. The odyssey of early American freedom is not complete unless students learn of Paul Cuffee's successful struggle to attain black suffrage in eighteenth-century Massachusetts or that Richard Allen established an independent black church in eighteenth-century Philadelphia because he and his congregation refused to participate in a segregated church. A student who walks away from an American history

class unaware that the nineteenth-century war between the United States and the Seminole nation of Florida occurred because Seminole chief Osceola regarded the fugitive slaves who lived among the Seminole as an integral part of the Seminole nation and refused to return them to their former masters has missed an important chapter in the history of the struggle for freedom in this country. Nor should we neglect to tell our students that the Texas War for Independence (the war in which the battle of the Alamo was fought) occurred, in part, because Mexico had abolished slavery and refused to allow American settlers in Texas to maintain slaves.

The struggles to end segregation and slavery and to build a more just society in their aftermath, provide the most vivid examples of how a multicultural population changed this country and helped enlarge the definition of freedom here, and indeed around the world. An Afro-American culture was formed in slavery, a culture different from the West African culture from which its people were descended—a fact we should never lose sight of, for if we do, we run the risk of asking black students to substitute an ersatz African culture for the rich African-American culture that is theirs. The Afro-American culture formed in slavery was an American culture and one that influenced not only black Americans but white ones as well. Who can look at American music, storytelling, and cooking without seeing this Afro-American culture? Who can look at southern white Protestantism and its fervent religiosity and deny the Afro-American influence?

But the impact of black people on the story of American freedom is broader and deeper than these examples. No student should leave our schools without having encountered the life of Frederick Douglass, preferably in one of his magnificent autobiographies. Douglass, one of nineteenth-century America's great statesmen and men of letters overcame handicaps even greater than those of his legendary friend Abraham Lincoln. Born a slave, he had a bootlegged education as a child, clandestinely taught to read and write by his master's wife. He escaped and had an incredible career as an abolitionist, journalist, and statesman. His concern for human freedom extended far beyond the precincts of slavery and race. He was an early advocate of women's suffrage and the betterment of working class whites. While still a fugitive, he stayed in England for a time. Notwithstanding his gratitude to his English hosts and his appreciation for their support of the American abolitionist cause, he did not hesitate to criticize England's treatment of Ireland and to befriend the Irish statesman Daniel O'Connell. During the Civil War, Douglass played a courageous role in persuading Lincoln to move beyond simple unionism to embrace the antislavery cause. No American student can truly be said to have had a complete education without studying the life of this remarkable man.

But there are others who must be studied. The slaves and free black men who rallied to the American cause and served with the Union forces during the Civil War helped write a new chapter in American constitutionalism. Students should become familiar with these lives, and I would heartily recommend the movie *Glory*

(Continued on page 38)

CHAOS ON SESAME STREET

*Does This Carnival of Images
Help Students Read?*

BY JANE M. HEALY

WITH A small sigh, four-year-old Nancy, thumb in mouth, settles down next to her grandmother. The television screen assails them with its blasts of music and color, brighter and louder than life. A confusing melee of animation churns forth as characters, seated around a dinner table, leap up and down shouting a harsh and hurried parody of human conversation. What are they yelling about? A winter storm rages violently on the sound track, doors slam, dishes crash; the sound effects drown out the few words that might otherwise be intelligible.

"What is it? What is it?" whines Nancy's two-year-old brother Peter, running to the screen and anxiously pointing at something. But Peter's question remains unanswered. The scene and characters alter, the action races relentlessly along, and Peter retreats to Grandmother's other side.

From across the room, I am stunned by the sensory assault of "Sesame Street." The cacophony of vignettes that change, literally, by the minute is overwhelming.

"Sesame Street" segments last anywhere from thirty- or forty-five seconds to a rare maximum of three minutes each. Muppets, people, objects, cartoons cascade

forth—each scene arrestingly novel and removed both visually and contextually from the one before. Within twenty minutes we are propelled from Spain or Mexico (the pace is so rapid it is hard to tell which) to the streets of New York, to a zoo, behind the set of a television studio, and to a game show. A cartoon history on how peanuts are grown and peanut butter is made is shown in fifty seconds, narrated by a voice mimicking an antebellum Southern accent. "It gr-ao-ws in the gr-ao-und!" we are told. Nancy looks up, puzzled. Grandmother starts to explain, but the children's attention is instantly captured by numerals that leap onto the screen to dance, jump, metamorphose—appear, disappear, grow larger, smaller, in the flick of an eyelash.

"One, two, three," shouts a disembodied voice. *H* floats by, suddenly experiencing an explosion of parts that transforms it to *h*. "*H*," the voice intones, but immediately *h* is gone and we are on a street in London where cartoon characters shout a slapstick routine featuring rhyming sounds, unrelated in any discernible way to the previous "teaching."

A pulsating red numeral 3 appears, capering among a series of boxes. "Three," blasts the sound track amid more sounds of crashing and banging. Now 3 becomes a ball and leaps into the final box, which immediately is transformed (to an adult's eyes) into some sort of grinder; in a second, 3 decomposes and comes pouring out the spout as red powder.

"What happened to it?" asks Grandma.

Jane M. Healy is a reading specialist and an educational psychologist. She is the author of Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1990), from which this article was adapted with permission.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SHERBO



"I don't know," says Nancy, registering surprise. But there is no time to discuss. The show must go on.

THE WORST thing about "Sesame Street" is that people believe it is educationally valuable. It amazes me that so many people seem to have accepted the notion that this peripatetic carnival will somehow teach kids to read—despite the fact that the habits of mind necessary for reading are exactly those that "Sesame Street" does *not* teach: language, active reflection, persistence, and internal control. The truth is that most adults have probably not taken time to sit down and view the program objectively, from the perspective of tender young brains struggling to make the connections that will organize their intellects. They should.

Each week "Sesame Street" is viewed by almost half of all American preschoolers—more than 5.8 million children between ages two and five watch an average of three episodes per week. Where I live, the hour-long program is broadcast three times a day. (In contrast, *Reading Rainbow*, which actually stimulates book circulation in libraries by engaging its audience with good children's books, is aired once a week at a time when children who can read are in school.) The major problem with "Sesame Street," however, does not lie in the proportion of total viewing time it occupies, but in the messages it conveys—or fails to—about learning and about what constitutes constructive children's programming.

"Sesame Street" is expensive in every respect. Estimates put the cost of producing each viewing hour at anywhere between \$92,000 and \$1 million.¹ No one questions that this monumental effort and expense reflect good and earnest intentions on the part of the program's producers, Children's Television Workshop. Yet when we encourage preschoolers to watch "Sesame Street," we are programming them to enjoy—perhaps even need—overstimulation and to believe that learning is something adults can be expected to make happen as quickly and pleasantly as possible. Thus prepared, the children hardly can be blamed if they fail to discover for themselves the personal joys—time-consuming as they are—of serious learning, mental effort, and mastery.

Despite its obviously large budget, this carefully crafted flagship of television's educational armada has not produced significant research by which its effectiveness can be assessed. Although elaborate "instructional goals" for the program have been promulgated, there is little accountability for meeting them. Almost all of the research done by Children's Television Workshop, in fact, falls in the category of "formative evaluation," i.e., research that mainly tests the program's appeal.² "Summative" research, by which the attainment of those instructional goals might be evaluated, has mainly been left up for grabs—and for all twenty years of the program's life, few researchers have grabbed.

But everything we know about how children should be taught to read suggests that "Sesame Street" is going about it in the wrong way. Here are ten of those ways.

1. It Teaches Letters Too Early

"Sesame Street" has popularized the belief that it is appropriate for most preschoolers to learn to read. In

fact, it is a serious mistake to push reading skills on children before they have completed certain developmental tasks that will enable them to understand what they are reading. To become good readers, children first must install in their brains the cognitive and language furnishings that will allow literacy to take root and blossom. During the early years, this is best done through active, hands-on experiences (e.g., playing, building, exploring, talking), imaginative social play, and listening with enjoyment to good children's literature.

Preschoolers also need to practice the fine motor skills that will eventually enable them to write. New research indicates that the increase in *dysgraphia* (difficulty with handwriting) now plaguing the schools may be related to the fact that children have spent so much more time in front of the TV than in free play and such activities as bead stringing, carpentry, sand and water play, drawing with crayons, cutting out shapes, and other natural and appropriate learning activities.³ "Sesame Street" could—and should—do much more to encourage these activities.

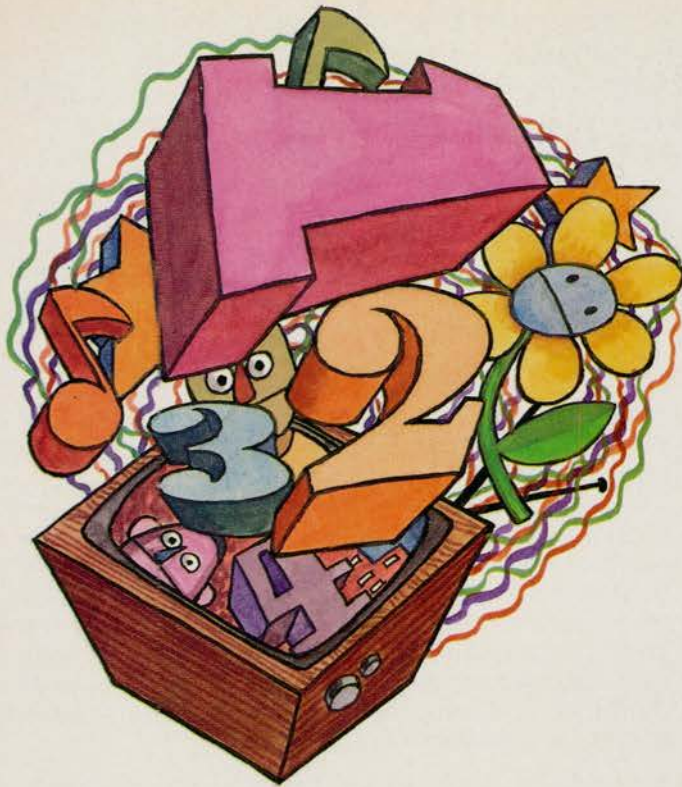
In contrast, learning letter names and "sounding out" words are better saved for later—usually around the age of six. Many, perhaps even most, preschoolers' brains are not prepared to connect written symbols to the sounds they represent. Many experts now believe that early pressure to remember letters and their sounds may cause learning problems, especially for children whose environments have not primed them for literacy. At the very least, youngsters who are mystified by the meaning of the dancing letters on "Sesame Street" are being set up to feel failure. Why can't they understand something that everybody else seems to think is so important? If teaching letter sounds to preschoolers really were important, it might be worth the risk. But it is not.

2. It Emphasizes Letters Over Meaning

"Sesame Street" has overemphasized letters and numerals and underemphasized the language development and thinking skills necessary to make these symbols meaningful. Contrary to what most parents believe, learning the alphabet is only a small part—and the easier part—of learning to read.

Children who believe the program's implicit message that alphabet letters are the major key to reading are headed for trouble. When researchers ask groups of poor readers what reading is all about, they'll often say something like: "sounding out the words." When good readers are asked the same question, they give answers such as, "understanding what the words and the sentences say." Somehow, the poor readers have failed to pick up the idea that reading must take them far beyond the alphabet into an active search for meaning.

Dr. Ingvar Lundberg, from the University of Umea in Sweden, has shown the importance of exposing children to a language-rich environment. His large study of children's reading development reports that even though Scandinavian children do not enter school until age seven, most pick up basic decoding (alphabet and word-reading) skills without difficulty. But he also finds "a reasonably good school environment" alone does not guarantee that children will develop strong comprehension skills. "Home factors play a very considerable role as far as comprehension is concerned."⁴



What these less-advantaged children need is not early phonics but language development. Yet “Sesame Street” offers a poor language environment. Although apologists for the program claim that its sentence length and grammatical complexity are appropriate for young children,⁵ the only study I could locate on this topic failed to take into account the pace, clarity, or volume level of the characters’ speech. Even a casual observer soon becomes aware that most of the characters talk too fast and shift topics too abruptly. Research on the development of auditory abilities shows that children of four, five, and even six years need slow, repetitive talk, with emphasis on word inflections.⁶

“You know,” explains Dr. Janet Jensen, a prominent researcher in this field, “the way kindergarten teachers talk. Everyone makes jokes about it: ‘Now—children—let’s—look—at—the—bunny,’ but they do that because the kids need and respond to it. Many children’s programs, including “Sesame Street,” go much too fast for them.”⁷ (Testimony to the fact that a children’s program can respect these needs and still be enduringly popular comes from Mister Rogers of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” whose slow, repetitive speech appeals instinctively to preschoolers—at least to those whose sensibilities have not been dulled by raucous side-shows.)

“Sesame Street” also subordinates meaningful dialogue to braingrabbing visual events, noises, and slapstick comedy. This emphasis is particularly troubling in view of the fact that disadvantaged children and those with reading disabilities commonly show difficulty in using what are called “verbal strategies” for processing information. The tendency to focus on the nonverbal aspects of a situation and disregard the language sets a child up for difficulty in school.

“Sesame Street” sporadically attempts to teach vocabulary (e.g., names of ten baby animals in ninety

seconds), but its format discourages sustained attention to the meaning of the grammar, sentences, or phrasal inflections that children will find in the books they read. And far too little effort is made to get the child to respond.

The few studies that suggest “Sesame Street” teaches preschoolers to recognize a few more spoken vocabulary words provide very unconvincing evidence of overall language development. Although children who have watched “Sesame Street” get better at pointing to pictures in response to vocabulary words,⁸ this type of recognition-level test cannot be taken to mean that the children can use the words in their own conversation.⁹ In one study it was the children whose parents encouraged them to watch “Sesame Street” who had the lowest overall vocabulary scores!¹⁰

Twenty years of throwing alphabet letters and dancing words at children have produced exactly what we might expect: students, who even after learning to read, lack the foundations for further progress; children who find reading “boring,” who are satisfied with the superficial, who can’t understand why meaning doesn’t appear magically—like a visual effect—and who give up when it doesn’t. The resulting failure and disenchantment are particularly tragic for the very children the program primarily was designed to serve.

3. How Does Print Behave?

The way the program treats letters and other symbols gives children an odd idea of what to expect from the printed page. Words in books do not jump about, transform before one’s eyes, or call attention to themselves. Children, particularly those who have little or no experience with real books during the preschool years, are in for quite a shock when they get to school and discover that print in books stands still. No wonder they turn off when told that they must bend their brains around the words, rather than having a barrage of letters, words, and pictures attacking their brains.

Even on the rare occasions when a real book slides through the cracks between the program’s animation and agitation, usually only the book’s illustrations are shown. (These, incidentally, tend to appear pallid and uninteresting when compared to the program’s vivid coloration.) As a result, children can miss out on an important aspect of reading readiness. Technically termed *metalinguistic awareness*, it comprises knowledge that literate adults take for granted:

- understanding that letters make up words and that written words must be linked together into meaningful sentences;
- knowing what a “word” is (i.e., that funny-looking bunch of squiggles with white space on all sides);
- knowing the conventions of print (i.e., in English we read from left to right, observe punctuation marks, etc.).

Metalinguistic awareness is an important predictor of a child’s success with early reading and is apt to be particularly deficient in the target audience of “Sesame Street.” Youngsters may be totally bewildered in school when the teacher says, “Now, Johnny, try to read this word,” if Johnny has never learned to differentiate among letters, words, and sentences. Many children who haven’t been exposed to books, or who have little

experience drawing and scribbling, can't visually locate word boundaries or consistently follow a line of type from left to right. "Sesame Street" should place more emphasis on promoting this metalinguistic awareness.

4. Bits vs. Big Bites of Meaning

Children who watch "Sesame Street" are exposed to lots of incidental knowledge, but adults who think this kind of information automatically makes kids "smarter" are fooling themselves. If children can't process the knowledge bits or link them to other bits, the knowledge will not be very useful. And, indeed, according to a report from the International Reading Association, "children of all ability levels in grades four to twelve have considerable difficulty in studying and linking together the concepts presented in science and social studies texts."

Children have many little bits of information, but they can't seem to see relationships, make inferences, or draw conclusions, according to teachers ranging from kindergarten to college level.

Watching "Sesame Street" with an adult brain can be very frustrating. The rapid, minute-by-minute alterations in context—from a pirate ship to a city street, from a barnyard to a cartoon of letter symbols—defy sequence or logic and make it impossible to see relationships, determine cause and effect, or sustain a train of thought. Such brain training is directly antagonistic to the active and sustained work on connecting ideas needed to understand written text.

5. Listening vs. Looking

Why doesn't "Sesame Street" make a greater effort to teach listening skills? Many in the growing ranks of poor readers (and spellers) can't listen carefully enough to discriminate individual sounds in words or identify the order in which they come (e.g., "Here is a word: *sun*. Now tell me what sound you hear first in the word *sun*. Which sound do you hear last?").

"Sesame Street" purports to teach children phonics, and its statement of educational goals includes such elements of phonological awareness as rhyming words (which, unfortunately, too often are presented unclearly and far too rapidly). The program's demanding visual format belies the claim, however, since phonics, by definition, is an *ear* skill, not an *eye* skill. Moreover, research shows that if auditory processing skills aren't embedded in the brain during the critical early years, it is much harder, if possible at all, to develop them later.

Research also shows that children process the same information differently, depending on whether they look at it or listen to it. In one study, clear differences were found between children who had seen a folktale on television and those who heard the same dialogue read from a storybook. Children who had watched the story described the visual effects and what the characters did. Those in the read-aloud group described more dialogue and gave significantly more information about the story's content and its characters.¹¹

Children need lots of good, slow, clear exposure to the sounds and words that will become their armamentarium for attacking language meaning. What a shame they are not getting it from this program.

6. Perceptual Organization vs. Perceptual Defense

One of the brain's major early purposes is to organize the confusing array of sensory stimuli that begin to bombard us at birth. In particular, the ability to organize a visual field is the entry point to reading. Children with poor visual organization skills often have difficulty distinguishing word boundaries and keeping their place in the text. Yet, rather than encouraging children to develop *perceptual organization*, programs such as "Sesame Street" may actually foster habits of *perceptual defense* as a matter of simple neural self-protection. When even an adult brain has difficulty organizing confusing action, abrupt changes, and inexplicable visual effects, we should not be surprised when children are overwhelmed by the perceptual chaos.

Though it has been suggested, there is no firm evidence that television causes serious, organic, or perceptual problems. We need studies that will examine the possible subtle effects of noisy, visually demanding programming on a normal child's perceptual (auditory and visual) organization skills. The "tuned-out" viewing behavior that many parents report in their children may simply be the immature nervous system's defense against overstimulation.

7. Active vs. Passive Brains

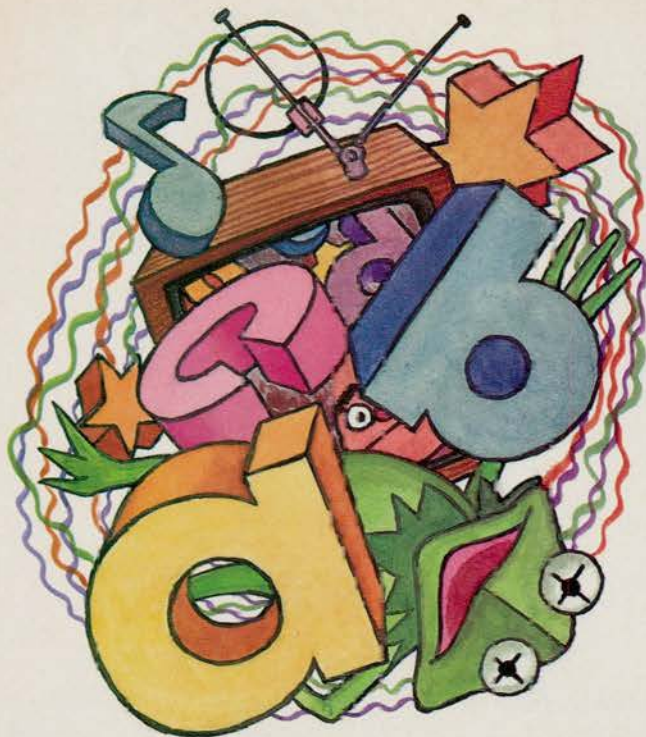
Poor readers—and poor problem solvers in any domain—tend to be passive; they give up if they don't immediately "get it." Such habits of incomprehension may be exacerbated by programs that suggest that understanding something is either unnecessary or impossible. Although research suggests that most children instinctively try to comprehend what they see on TV, they are often prevented from doing so by confusing program formats. When these kinds of programs are watched frequently, children soon learn they are neither required nor expected to understand what they are watching.

Studies are beginning to show that young children can't comprehend much of what they see on "Sesame Street." Dr. Jerome Singer, Yale's noted authority on children and television, cites an example:

One of the programs in the series we studied involved an attempt on the part of the producers of "Sesame Street" to demonstrate the notion of deafness to children. A group of deaf children were introduced and they engaged in a series of activities, including suggesting letters through their body postures. Despite the production effort and undeniable sensitivity of the show (at least from the perspective of an adult), only one of the preschoolers in our sample of sixty who viewed this program grasped that the children on the screen *could not hear*. In effect thousands of dollars went into the production which failed completely to communicate its major message to the preschooler target viewing audience.

8. Good Readers Learn to Remember

If children are to be effective readers, they must understand what they have read and be able to



remember it. Such memory demands mental perseverance and a command of active memory strategies. Passive brains retain sensations, not information.

Children who do not understand what they are seeing do not learn active memory strategies. Curiously, although "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" does not rivet children to the set (research has shown they are much more inclined to walk and look around than during the sensorially demanding format of "Sesame Street"), they actually remember more from "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." In this regard, reports Dr. Singer, *those children who were less intelligent suffered more [i.e., remembered less] from exposure to "Sesame Street," purportedly designed for the educationally disadvantaged [emphasis added].*¹²

9. Good Readers Can Pay Attention

Young children's minds tend to wander when they watch television, unless their attention is continually pulled back. Researchers who cite studies "proving" that children "pay attention" to TV are usually referring to this type of *involuntary attention*, which is quite different from the sort of *voluntary attention* needed to do well in school in general and in reading in particular.

Ideas in a text do not seize the reader's mind the way Ernie and Big Bird can. Reading demands sustained voluntary attention from a mind that can hold a train of thought long enough to reflect on it, not one accustomed to having its attention jerked around every few seconds.

10. Who Makes the Pictures?

One of the most serious charges leveled against television viewing in general is that it robs children of the

ability to make pictures in their own minds. This critical skill is a cornerstone of good reading, not only because it keeps the reader connected to the text, but also because it is a very practical way to keep track of and remember what has been read. When poor readers—and poor verbal problem solvers—hear (or read) words, they have trouble projecting anything on their screens of imagination.

Not long ago, I visited an advanced-placement English class in a fast-track high school. The first act of *Macbeth* had been assigned to students as homework the previous evening; as they arrived in class the teacher asked them to write a description of what they had "seen" as they read. In a classful of good readers, I anticipated some colorful and dramatic accounts, and I was not disappointed. For a handful of students, however, this assignment proved frustrating.

"I read this over and over, but I guess I just don't see anything when I read," lamented one girl.

"That must make it hard to understand what you're reading," I said.

"It sure does," she responded. "Maybe that's why I really hate reading—but don't tell Mrs. _____!"

Later the teacher drew me aside to tell me that the same students who didn't see the pictures were the ones she was most worried about. "I knew they weren't as good readers as the others," she said. "Now I think I know one reason why."

Visual imagery also helps in solving math and science problems. "If Tom has three baskets of apples with twelve apples in each, and he divides each basketful evenly into four small boxes, how many boxes will he have and how many apples will each box contain?" Many people use some sort of visual image to "see" the baskets and boxes and to keep track of each step in the problem. Interestingly, students of the "Sesame Street" generation have particular difficulty with such mathematical story problems. It seems that a combination of poor reading skill, lack of persistence, and inability to visualize contributes to this difficulty. While this skill seems to come more naturally to some brains than to others, it can be developed with practice. In a few studies, after children had been taught to make mental pictures, their reading scores went up.¹³

In teaching visual imagery, "Sesame Street" is constrained by its medium. Nonetheless, it should not be too difficult to come up with some activities that will elicit "mind pictures." The more children become accustomed to this externally demanding visual format, the less likely they probably will be to generate their own scenarios.

Only a few studies have looked at the relationship between television and aspects of the imagination in general. But findings do show that children tend to provide longer and more imaginative endings to audio (radio) than to audiovisual (TV) stories.¹⁴

ISN'T THERE ANYTHING GOOD ABOUT "SESAME STREET"?

During a famine, even a sacred cow may be required to yield some nourishment. During the two years I have watched "Sesame Street" for the purpose of writing this review, I've noticed some encouraging changes. The

(Continued on page 39)

A GLIMPSE AT TEACHING CONDITIONS IN TOP PRIVATE SCHOOLS

BY ARTHUR G. POWELL

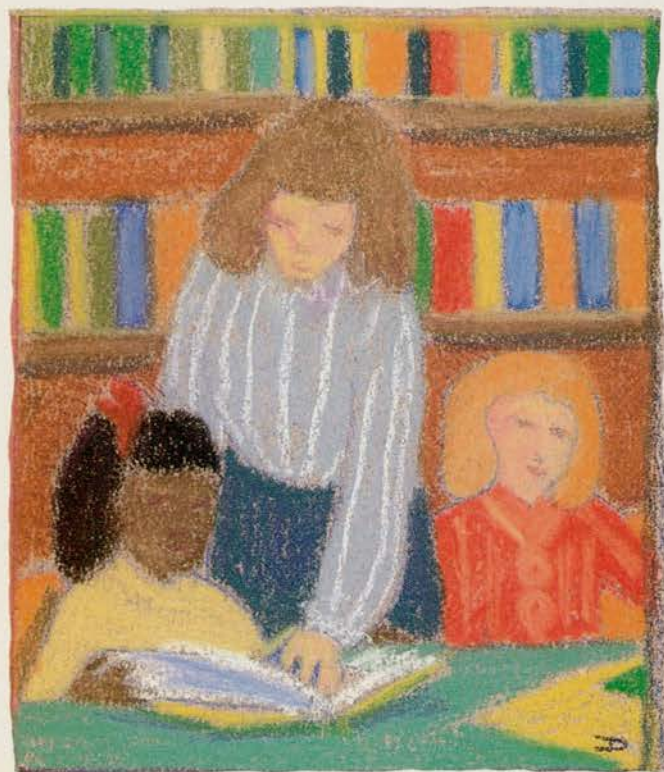
ONE FEATURE of public school reform is the proposed empowerment of adults who work in schools. Reformers have advocated increasing principals' authority at the school site, while simultaneously increasing the authority and autonomy of classroom teachers. Much of what has been called restructuring refers to decentralizing and dispersing educational authority to the building level. Additional policy emphases flow directly or indirectly from these general themes: small and caring school environments (instead of large and impersonal ones); greater parent involvement; character development as an explicit goal; and an unapologetic emphasis on academic learning, including

more homework and higher standards.

It goes without saying that none of these themes is found exclusively in private schools or even in all private schools. And yet these are among the features that many private schools regard as their most distinctive characteristics. In these circumstances it seems useful to explore workplace conditions within private schools as they are experienced by teachers.

We focus here on the type of private schools known as "independent" schools. These schools present two analytic advantages. Relative to most other private schools, they are less suffused with denominational religion and therefore more similar to the legal circumstances of public schools. In addition, independent schools are the most expensive private schools. The median tuition for all American private schools in the 1985-86 school year was \$1,100 (calculated using each school's highest tuition level). Yet, in the same year, the median twelfth-grade tuition of independent private day schools was \$5,338 [National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), 1985]. Although their high cost makes them inaccessible to most Americans, it also permits an examination of institutions that are chosen by families who can afford any type of schooling. In many areas of American consumer life, what the few possess today is what the many will prefer—and receive—in some form tomorrow.

Independent schools are a small minority within the private school universe—perhaps fifteen hundred



Arthur G. Powell is a senior research associate at the National Association of Independent Schools. He is the author (with Eleanor Farrar and David K. Cohen) of The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace. This article is adapted with permission of Teachers' College Press from The Contexts of Teaching in Secondary Schools: Teachers' Realities, edited by Milbrey W. McLaughlin, Joan E. Talbert, and Nina Bascia. ©Teachers College Press, New York, 1990.

schools out of an estimated total of nearly twenty-six thousand private schools. They enroll perhaps 10 percent of the roughly 5.5 million Americans who attend private schools [National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1987; NAIS, 1987]. They are managed by independent boards of trustees; they are nonprofit institutions which hardly ever receive funds from external systems such as religious denominations.

What are the conditions of work in these schools? The territory has not been thoroughly explored; thus the map that can be drawn is preliminary and somewhat speculative. The sketch that follows draws on existing data—case studies of individual schools and surveys and large-scale databases whose material touches on working-condition issues.

Three broad themes stand out as capturing many important aspects of teachers' work in independent schools. These are a workplace context of purposeful educational communities; a workplace emphasis on personalizing education; and a workplace conception of teacher authority that attempts to embrace both the idea of teacher empowerment and the idea of strong management at the school site. I will not deal here with the first of these contexts except to say that a purposeful educational community is more easily — and more commonly — achieved in independent schools than in public schools (largely because these schools can choose their staff and students and vice-versa), and the existence of such a common purpose — also known as a school ethos — both eases and strengthens teaching. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see my chapter on this subject in *The Contexts of Teaching in Secondary Schools*. In this article, I will deal only with the second two themes.

Personalization of Education

The educational strategy most characteristic of independent education is to provide personal attention to each student within a small-scale environment. The *personalization* of education is the heart of indepen-

dent school technology. All schools, of course, profess full allegiance to the ideal of *individualized* education. In many public schools, especially secondary schools, individualization means providing greater curricular variety and removing barriers to student choice about classes and programs. Individualization thus means the freedom to do one's own thing. Very often it is a surprisingly anonymous process, carried on without much knowledge of particular individuals. Anonymous individualization is almost the opposite of personalization (Powell et al., 1985).

School professionals often say that the biggest difference between public and private school practice is



ILLUSTRATED BY SUSAN DAVIS

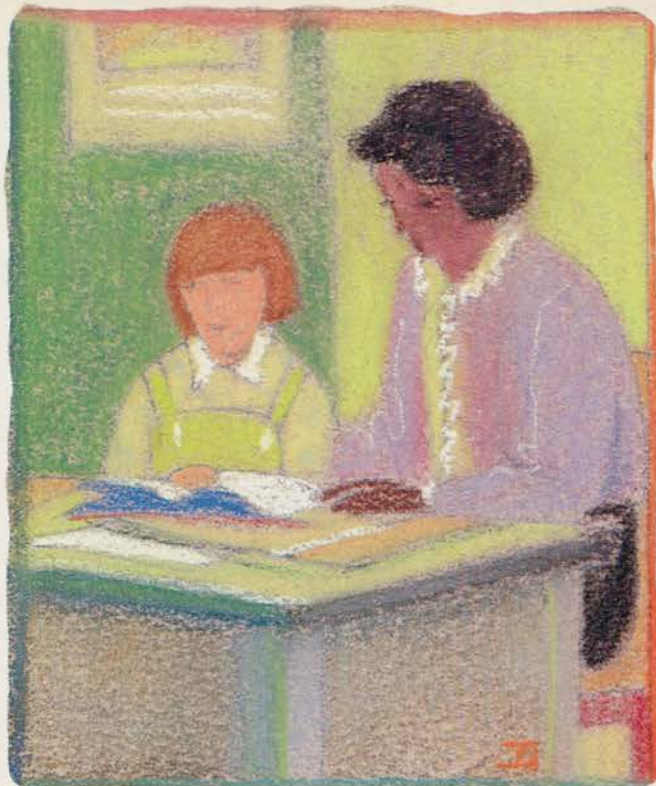
that private school teachers "are being paid to know your kid." Parents and students tend to agree. A recent summary (Roeser, 1987) of the results of market research on parent and student attitudes toward nineteen independent schools found that a "caring and concerned faculty" ranked first among all the attributes they desired, even above the teaching ability of the faculty.

This parental expectation, and the various ways schools attempt to meet it, constitutes a crucial workplace condition for independent school teachers. Much institutional energy is expended to ensure that all students are known, that no one falls through the cracks and gets lost. Students with special abilities or disabilities are always easy to know and often easy to like. They gravitate to teachers, and teachers to them. But many average, normal, regular students are not distinctive in any way. It is easy for them to become neglected, invisible, unspecial—to pass quietly through school without anyone knowing or caring that they are there. Average students form a sizable part of the independent school constituency, and the schools are expected to treat each one as special (Powell et al., 1985).

How do they go about doing this, and how in particular are conditions of teachers' work affected? First, the schools' small size, small scale, and low student attrition help minimize the distance between teachers and students. Second, teachers interact with students in a wide variety of ways. Third, these interactions, along with parental and school expectations, shape a somewhat distinct conception of the role of the teacher and of the desirable qualities possessed by good teachers. The result is that teachers in independent schools have no more chance of being invisible or anonymous than do students. They cannot easily escape students, any more than students can escape them. Let us now discuss each of these three dimensions of personalization.

Independent schools are typically quite small. Students are known and taught by teachers who know and talk with each other. It is very unlikely that a teacher could bring up a student's name in the presence of other teachers without most of them knowing something of the student. Over 80 percent of independent schools enroll fewer than 400 students. The median school size in the 1987-88 school year was 320 and has remained stable through the 1980s (NAIS, 1988a). But school size is only one measure of environmental scale. Many independent schools span elementary and secondary grades but have separate upper, lower, and middle divisions, sometimes in different geographical locations. The actual unit with which students have contact is often smaller than the size of the school would suggest.

The size of grades can therefore offer a better perspective on the scale of independent school communities. Since these schools tend to build up their enrollments over the K-12 progression, the upper grades are usually the largest. The average number of twelfth-graders in independent schools having a twelfth grade was 65 students in 1987-88. The figures for the third-, sixth-, and ninth grades were 33, 34, and 50, respectively (NAIS, 1988a). An examination of data from 656 independent high schools in 1986-87 indicates that only 17 (fewer than 3 percent) had graduating classes of 200 or more. Most of these were relatively



large boarding schools. Eighty-four percent of the senior classes were smaller than 100; 63 percent of all seniors were in graduating classes with fewer than 100 students (Powell, 1988b).

ANOTHER QUITE different indicator of scale is the number of students a teacher actually instructs. Despite research disagreement over how class size and student learning are related, there is very little disagreement (and none in the minds of parents) that personal attention is directly related to how many students a teacher is responsible for. Available secondary school data suggest that student loads significantly smaller than those carried by public school teachers characterize independent schools. In New Jersey, the average load of independent day teachers was 69, compared with 103 students for public high school teachers (Kane, 1986). Many of the recent national high school studies have reported student loads of 125 or even 150 in urban schools, though truancy may reduce the numbers somewhat. A national survey (Powell, 1986) of all independent secondary schools found that the median student load per teacher was 63. Perhaps more important, 88 percent of schools reported that their student loads per teacher were 80:1 or lower, which is the target student load for Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools.

A small community and a small student load are typical conditions of teachers' work in independent schools. These conditions make it easier for teachers to know students well and in more ways than they might in large schools with large loads. A related circumstance is the relatively low turnover rate of students from year to year, which, according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS, 1989), is about 12 percent. Since independent schools are rarely "neighborhood" schools to begin with, family residential moves from one part of town to another, or from one town to another nearby do not need to result in a school change. The more students change schools, the less well they

will be known by school staff (Grant, 1988).

These conditions are enabling conditions. They permit desired things to happen but do not in themselves guarantee that they will. Do teachers capitalize on these advantages in their actual interactions with students? One tentative answer is that independent school teachers may work longer hours than many other teachers, despite the fact that they have fewer students. They interact with students in more varied ways than many other teachers, and probably know them better. The New Jersey independent teachers who taught one-third fewer students than their public school counterparts nevertheless spent seven hours more on their jobs per week (fifty-five hours vs. forty-eight hours). Thus, the average time spent per teacher per student in the independent schools was forty-eight minutes per week, as compared with twenty-eight minutes per week in the public schools (Kane, 1986).

But the extra hours worked by these independent teachers were not spent on additional classroom instruction. In fact, independent teachers spent slightly less time in classroom teaching (Kane, 1986). The big difference—5.5 hours a week—between the public and private teaching roles was the greater out-of-class time spent by independent school teachers in helping students, in correcting papers, and in preparing for their classes. Indeed, independent school teachers spent slightly more time on these out-of-class instructional duties than they spent on classroom teaching. Such out-of-class instructional duties should not be confused with all the other out-of-class, extracurricular, athletic coaching, advising, and monitoring activities that all teachers undertake in the ordinary course of a day. These latter responsibilities are a separate item and consumed ten hours of the fifty-five-hour workweek of the independent school teachers, compared with nine hours of the forty-eight-hour workweek of the public school teachers—an equivalent percentage of effort (Kane, 1986).

The significant time spent on out-of-class instructional duties in independent schools confirms evidence from other sources that the personal attention supplied by teachers embraces many more types of teacher/student interaction than that of classroom teaching. Classes themselves, of course, are smaller in the independent schools. But what is the most distinct about the independent teaching role is the variety of ways in which teachers interact with students.

Instruction in independent schools seems considerably less specialized in function than in public schools, where there are far more programs funded from different sources, governed by different rules and agencies, and employing different types of personnel. Regular classroom teachers in independent schools are more likely to coach sports, advise clubs, and work on student publications and drama productions. They are far more likely to spend time preparing written summary evaluations of student performance, a tradition that rarely turns up in public schools. They are also more likely to discuss with other teachers the progress of students who are not in dire academic or personal trouble. Such schools often spend entire faculty meetings reviewing the situation of every student. Just as students must participate more in the varied activities of

independent schools simply because there are fewer of them and they are needed, teachers must be generalists, too (Kane, 1986; Powell et al., 1985).

PERHAPS THE best example of the less-specialized nature of the independent school workplace is student advising. In the departmentalized world of high schools, it is very easy for no one to have an across-the-board picture of how a student is progressing. This is understandable in public schools, where responsibility for such in-depth understanding usually rests with specialist guidance counselors, each often burdened with four hundred students. These busy individuals have time to advise only that small minority with distinct problems of one sort or another. For the rest, advising too often consists of signing study cards to ensure that formal requirements have been met.

Independent schools, in contrast, assume that student advising is a proper job for teachers. In New Jersey, nearly half of the independent day teachers had advisees, compared with 14 percent of the public school teachers (Kane, 1986). But the skills of the teacher/advisor are not those of the specialized psychological counselor. Independent schools describe the role as an adult friend who pays particular attention to an individual student, or a ready listener who cares. Advising is one more extension of the task of knowing all students well and taking a genuine interest in their lives.

Over the years the pervasiveness of personalization has helped shape a particular image of the "good" independent school teacher. This emphasizes personal traits and somewhat downplays specialized instructional skills. Kraushaar (1972), who collected some of the first survey data on these teachers for his study of nonpublic schools, concluded that:

the profile of the independent school teacher ... is that of the dedicated amateur—a man or woman broadly educated in the humanistic liberal arts tradition, not highly specialized, and but lightly burdened, if at all, with the pedagogical formalism of professional education [p. 145].

The same image was nicely captured in 1956 by a former headmaster of the then all-male Phillips Academy. Andover's John Kemper wrote:

At the heart of secondary education is the relationship of man and boy. . . . In his every contact with a boy a great teacher communicates what he is and stands for as a person; his love for things of the mind, his integrity, his moral values. From the example and encouragement of such a man, a boy sets his sights high and grows in self-reliance, self-control, and confidence. In the last analysis he will probably not learn in any other way [quoted in Allis, 1979, p. 644].

Such a sentiment validates personal attention on grounds that go beyond "caring and love." If the good teacher teaches by modeling and exemplifying a total personality, then students are best served when teachers' associations with them are increased and distance is minimized.

Yet the day-to-day realities of personalization within independent schools are often more problematic than the discussion so far might suggest. The expectation of close faculty/student relations may exhaust teachers, if family expectations for out-of-class help of all kinds

become excessive. Conversely, some students may rebel from environments where adults know too much about them.

One study (Cookson & Persell, 1985) has pointed to the "structural discrepancy" between the wealth and privilege of independent students and most of their teachers. Teachers can become frustrated if they are perceived as "akin to the family retainer—unobtrusive, hard-working, and ultimately expendable." The frustration is exacerbated when the expected norm is a close and caring relationship. (Also see Coles, 1977.)

Finally, the varied conditions, practices, and beliefs we have called "personalization" appear to affect life outside classrooms far more than classroom instruction itself. Teachers with very small classes are just as likely to lecture to them as teachers with larger classes, and they are just as likely to confuse Socratic method with a question-and-answer format. The enabling conditions of small scale and commitment to personal attention have not made classroom pedagogy different in independent schools (Powell et al., 1985).

Teacher Authority

By definition, independent school authority is concentrated at the school site. Independent school teachers have not worked under a relentless cloud of public, political, and academic criticism about their work or its results. They are much freer from external mandates set by political authority far from the school. They are also freer from bureaucratic rules, regulations, and procedures established by strangers in distant central offices. Their authority is neither eroded nor enhanced by collective negotiations between organized management and organized teachers. Unions are exceedingly rare in independent schools. In all these ways, the issue of teachers' authority in independent schools is distinctly a within-school issue. At the same time, independent schools characteristically give a great deal of authority to very strong school heads.

How then do these two facts affect teachers' working conditions? Are teachers empowered by virtue of their relative freedom from external requirements? Or is powerlessness a condition of their work lives?

Perhaps the best introduction to these questions is to explore the role of the head of an independent school. School heads (in most cases the word *principal* is actively avoided) are expected by most boards of trustees to be powerful figures. They feel comfortable with business-derived descriptions such as "chief executive officer." Although the typical school size is smaller than most public schools, and the student bodies more homogeneous and less resistant to engagement in the schools' academic agendas, heads often compare themselves to superintendents rather than principals, because the scope of their authority is so wide.

That boards expect heads to exercise wide authority is best seen by examining school salary policies. It is well known that independent school teachers' salaries, on average, are substantially lower than public school salaries. Independent school teachers cite remuneration as the least satisfactory condition of their work (Kane, 1986). In the 1987-88 school year, for example, the average teacher salary in independent day schools was \$22,755, compared with an average public school

salary of \$28,085, a national gap of more than 23 percent (NAIS, 1988b).

But the situation is very different when independent school heads' salaries are compared to those of public high school principals. According to NAIS (1988a) figures, the median cash salary of independent school heads in 1987-88 was \$57,000. In addition, nearly 46 percent of these heads had their housing provided fully by their schools, and another 10 percent received partial housing as a benefit. (These statistics include elementary and secondary schools, as well as schools spanning both grade levels.) The mean salary of public school principals for the same year, according to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 1988) was about \$47,000. If only public schools with the highest per-pupil expenditure of \$5,000 or more are included, the median principals' salary was roughly \$53,000 to \$54,000. Few of these individuals received any housing benefits.

The general direction of these differences is striking. The comparative disadvantage of independent school teachers does not exist for heads. On average, heads are compensated at least as well as—and, when housing is included, substantially better than—public school principals. Further, the salary gap between teachers and heads in independent schools is much greater than the salary gap between public school teachers and principals. Independent schools make a very significant and unique investment in their heads. They expect them to be powerful leaders and personify school purposes to an extent that is unusual in most public schools. These large expectations for heads inevitably shape important aspects of teachers' work lives. Heads are expected to build competent faculties. Most are centrally involved in faculty appointments, and even those who choose not to be have veto power. Teacher contracts are usually given on an annual basis, and formal tenure is rare. In general, teachers know that reappointment (plus career references) depend on satisfying the head (Baird, 1977).

YET THE substantial authority of the head is typically not exercised in an authoritarian way. The incentives for heads to succeed and hold their jobs, especially since heads lack tenure as well as teachers, usually encourage other administrative styles. Chubb and Moe (1985) argue that private schools tend to operate on a more democratic than authoritarian organizational model. "Relative to public schools," they conclude "private schools appear to delegate significant discretion to their teachers and to involve them sufficiently in school level policy decisions to make them feel efficacious." They attribute administrative trust in teachers mainly to the heads' power over who gets hired and who gets reappointed. "The leaders are able to staff the school the way that they wish. It is safe, therefore, for them to involve teachers integrally in decision-making processes."

Heads tend to support and trust teachers, rather than supervise and evaluate them, for reasons that go beyond their authority over appointments. Their attitude is partly a function of the scale of the schools. In small institutions that are not part of a larger system, bureaucratic regulation and supervision are less neces-



sary to monitor expectations and keep track of what is going on.

Excessive authoritarianism is also held in check by the sometimes overlooked reality that independent school heads need good and satisfied teachers perhaps more than do many public school principals. The faculty is always perceived as one of the most marketable features of the school. Marketing the school well—getting enough students and the right students to attend—is one of the bottom-line ways by which boards judge heads. Supporting a faculty in every possible way—through expressions of personal appreciation, gentle evaluations, involvement in a variety of school duties, providing attractive physical facilities, and improving compensation—is near the top of heads' priorities.

Professional development programs of various types are an increasingly important method of faculty support. Independent schools have little tradition of in-service education, in part because schools are not components of systems and in part because appointment and advancement have not depended on accumulating credits in professional courses. What has evolved is a quite varied notion of what professional development entails.

Nearly 20 percent of the independent schools, for example, support an internship program to help train beginning teachers (Powell, 1986). About 30 percent of independent secondary schools have sabbatical programs in which schools pay for teachers' travel to other countries, graduate study in their fields or in education, short-term workshops, visits to other schools, and solitary independent study (Powell, 1988a). Characteristically, these programs place the burden for designing an appropriate experience on the individual teacher. Teachers are not told what to do.

THOUGH MOST heads have learned that supportive management is in their own best interests, one cannot underestimate the variety of leadership styles or

different school traditions in which heads' power is exercised. At one extreme, some independent schools remain a last bastion of paternalistic, patronizing one-person rule. (Many such schools were literally created by their heads, sometimes with their own money.) At times, as Lightfoot (1983) observes, the "unquestionable dominance and benign power" of the head only underscore the faculty's "relative powerlessness and reinforce the childlike impulses." In such schools, the teachers could seem the "least powerful, most disenfranchised group," regardless of the plethora of supportive benefits, such as sabbatical opportunities, open to them. (Also see Cookson & Persell, 1985.)

Yet, in other schools, equally powerful heads treat teachers as adult colleagues. The collegial model makes these schools seem more like serious colleges. Teachers are regarded as akin to professors: They are assumed to be learned women and men, "thinkers." Within one such faculty, Lightfoot (1983) writes, "there are striking differences in teacher style, an unusual concern for the philosophical issues that shape educational matters, and an expressed need for intellectual invigoration." Sometimes a school faculty thinks of itself enough like a college faculty to make many important decisions on its own. Each school, Lightfoot concludes, interprets teacher rewards differently, but all "search for a balance between the expression of teacher autonomy, initiative, and adulthood on the one hand, and the requirements of conformity, discipline, and commitments to school life on the other."

Despite these environmental differences, the authority of independent school teachers seems relatively straightforward. Classroom freedom, for example, is not a major problem; it is a well-established condition of teachers' work. In New Jersey, 70 percent of independent school teachers cited "autonomy" as the single factor they liked best about working in their schools, compared with 34 percent of the public school teachers sampled (Kane, 1986). The former cited the "freedom to choose texts," "freedom to construct curriculum," and "freedom to teach the way I want within the structure" as the chief advantages of working in their schools. Moreover, public school teachers pointed to administrative practices, especially to frustration with principals and supervisors, as the factor they liked least about their schools. Twenty-eight percent mentioned this compared with 19 percent of the independent day school teachers and 10 percent of the boarding school teachers. Eighty-eight percent of the public teachers in that state had to turn in lesson plans for approval, compared with 20 percent of the independent teachers. (Also see Baird, 1977; Chubb & Moe, 1985.) Classroom freedom, of course, is not absolute. Some independent secondary teachers complain, for example, about the subtle curricular power of the Advanced Placement (AP) examinations of the College Board.

Beyond the classroom, independent school teachers often have substantial influence over school educational policies. Trustees and heads often delegate considerable authority over these matters to faculty committees and faculties as a whole. Indeed, faculty meetings occur frequently at independent schools. Policies are often debated and voted on, rather than just announced. Most schools have a senior administrative position for an

academic dean, director of studies, or dean of faculty, a position with no ordinary equivalent in most public schools. One important responsibility is to involve teachers in curricular policymaking (Kane, 1986).

These procedures attempt to establish within the faculty a sense of shared authority and responsibility for the school as a community, as distinct from simply a sense of individual authority over each teacher's own classroom. Freedom within the classroom, in these schools, tends to be less a goal to be worked toward than a reality that is somewhat problematic. It is easier for teachers to agree to let each other alone in the classroom than to strive for more cooperative approaches to instruction itself, such as cooperative teaching, team teaching, and joint planning. Although cooperative approaches to schoolwide policy making are common, collaboration in teaching itself is less frequent.

* * *

THIS TENTATIVE mapping of the territory concerning workplace conditions in one type of school may illuminate two policy questions faced by all schools. First, how can teachers' work become more dignified and appealing so that teaching attracts and retains its fair share of able young Americans? Second, what conditions of teachers' work seem most closely associated with the fundamental goal of improving student learning and development? These are classic questions with no ready answers.

Our discussion suggests that working conditions at independent schools have many ingredients that reinforce the notion that teaching is attractive and dignified work. In a market-driven "industry" in which most schools must constantly sell themselves to potential clients, teachers are a major marketing tool. In many ways, including participation in educational policymaking, they are constantly reminded by their schools how important they are and how good they are. In a society where criticism of teachers is often the norm, such positive market visibility is refreshing. The impact of being advertised as important at the local level should not be underestimated as one source of vocational self-esteem.

Another source of dignity is that the conditions of work in these schools tend to put teaching and learning near the center of institutional concern, rather than on the periphery. One problem with the teaching career in general is not that teaching itself is unappealing or undignified to many young adults, but that teaching is hard to do in many schools. Too many other things, for one reason or another, get in the way. The personalization of education and the increase in school-site and teacher authority give support to the teaching role; they do not detract from it. They are enabling conditions that make it easier to teach, rather than harder. This, of course, is not the same thing as saying that good or imaginative teaching will in fact occur. But if it does not, many traditional culprits cannot be blamed.

A third source of dignity is that affluent and educated independent school families tend to demand conditions of work for their children that spill over into teacher workplace conditions. The schools do not look like or feel like large processing plants. If they did, students would not come. Facilities in general are by no means lavish, but they are maintained and rarely appear shabby

and neglected. Bathrooms are usable and generally free from graffiti. Student behavior is relatively civil. Visitors often find such schools inviting rather than impersonal. Such features are not merely the inevitable (and therefore dismissable) results of money and social class. They express a commitment to create a decent living environment for all. They express respect for the students, and for the teachers. To stay afloat these schools must convey such signs of respect.

On some other dimensions, however, independent teachers' workplace conditions do not promote the idea of teaching as dignified and appealing work. In the New Jersey study, for example, a higher fraction of independent day teachers believed teaching to lack prestige as a career than did public school teachers (Kane, 1986). Part of this problem may arise from how prestige is viewed by different populations. Many independent school teachers attended independent schools themselves and attended selective colleges. It is perhaps harder to make a commitment to schoolteaching when one's peers routinely enter such occupations as medicine, law, business administration, and Ph.D. programs in academic disciplines. A more prosaic but still powerful explanation may be teacher compensation policies. Low pay is what independent school teachers like least about their work, and in America low pay is closely associated with low prestige.

How do these conditions of teachers' work affect students? Is there sufficient payoff for *all* schools to emphasize policies that would emphasize more purposeful communities, more personalization, and more teacher authority?

Public schools have tended to respond to the realities of student diversity and the commitment to include and retain all students in school, by offering more educational opportunities (courses, programs, etc.). More recently, proponents of equity have come to realize that providing opportunities is useful but insufficient. The conditions of work we have discussed bear directly on the issue of access. The independent schools have not chosen to expand curricular and other choices from which students may or may not choose; rather, their goal has been to push, press, and otherwise engage students in whatever learning opportunities are available. The central educational strategy is seen as engagement, not the expansion of curricular opportunity.

Purposeful communities, for example, establish deeply imbedded expectations for participation in learning. Engagement at some level becomes a school norm. Personalization undercuts student anonymity and the preferences of many to remain unengaged, to pass quietly through, accumulating credits and not much more. It is harder to negotiate high school this way if one is known.

So these conditions seem to have important benefits for students as well as for teachers. Yet they also contain certain educational limitations. A central one is that they support cautious and traditional conceptions of educational engagement just as much as they do more fundamental "restructuring" of the educational objectives and pedagogies of schools. They are not neutral about the importance of engagement in school, but they are solidly neutral about the forms engagement can

(Continued on page 39)

And then They Asked for Hamlet

The American Educator solicits for this section readers' specific accounts of the lessons or units they have successfully used to present challenging, "high-track" education to students supposedly "unable to handle it." Essays should be 750 to 2,000 words and should be sent to "And Then They Asked for Hamlet," American Educator, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001. We will pay \$150 for essays that we publish.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BARKIN

Turned on by Tutoring

BY CAROL PINO

IN 1988, our administration implemented an overnight schedule change that suddenly left me responsible for teaching reading improvement, in a three-hour block, to ninth-grade students ranging in age from fourteen to seventeen. The schedule change turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

I knew I had to pique the interest of these reluctant learners with a unique, creative approach to learning. I had always had a secret desire to help these students improve their self-concepts by having them work with younger students to develop those very skills which the older students themselves found so difficult. Could I successfully implement this idea during the six weeks in which these students would be in my care? (After six weeks, these students, who were part of what we call our transitional program, would move to another teacher, and I would receive a new class of transitional students.)

Because planning time was short, I got in touch with the principal of the nearby elementary school right away to volunteer my students to serve as tutors. My offer was enthusiastically received. The principal told me she would have no problem finding teachers who could use tutors. I asked her what kind of tutoring my students would be expected to do. Whatever the teachers need was the reply—practice in listening, reading, or questioning, drilling on vocabulary, assisting with writing and art projects. My students and I would be “on” for three days a week for the next five weeks. Now, I had to tell my students about our new role.

We would do this together, I promised. I was confident, I assured them, that they were capable of accomplishing any task that would be required of them. On their own, the students soon decided that if they helped the younger pupils, these younger ones “might not end

up like us.” There was some reluctance to take on this assignment, of course, but the students realized their good fortune: They would be the only students in our transitional unit who were going to be able to do anything exciting (including leaving the campus).

In class, we discussed what we thought the elementary teachers’ and students’ expectations of us would be, as well as our own expectations. We reviewed what we already knew about elementary students and discussed how we would engage them in learning. We also set some ground rules for our own behavior. We were to be role models, after all.

And then we discussed grading. “Do we get a grade for this?” they asked. “Of course,” I replied, “a participation grade.” The students were relieved to know that I did not expect them to be perfect “teachers.” Together, we decided what the participation grade would reflect—attendance, and no tardies; appropriate dress and language; positive attitude and polite behavior; accomplishment of the tasks requested; sharing experiences, in both oral and written form; and representing our school and ourselves with pride. The final grade would be based on my observations and a self-evaluation conference with all students at the end of their teaching experiences. With nervous excitement we were ready for Day One.

ON DAY ONE, and the days thereafter, I began to see my students in a new light; they too discovered a lot about themselves and their relationships with others, including teachers. After my students received their tutoring assignments and I had introduced them to their cooperating teachers, I gave them time to acclimate. I then began circulating among the classrooms, observing, taking notes, and marvelling at their experiences.

I observed one student, a chronic truant with low self-esteem, blossom into the most self-assured, natural, caring, loving teacher one could imagine. I was struck by

Carol Pino teaches language arts to ninth-graders at San Marcos High School in San Marcos, Texas.

his ability to give higher-level synonym clues for vocabulary words. His expertise in getting students to pronounce difficult words equalled that of a master teacher. And to think that here was a child who had been absent most of his school life. As we trudged back to the high school one day, he said he was going to make sure that any kids *he* had would learn how to read and would go to school every day.

Another student, a quiet one whose oral language skills were underdeveloped, became a smiling, vocal, warm mentor to the fledgling kindergarten class he taught. He was reluctant to read aloud a particular book because he said he couldn't pronounce some of the words. I told him to skip those words or to substitute others for them. With knots in my stomach, I listened as he masterfully read to the circle of admirers. I knew where he had to fake it, but no one else did. A smile from me at the end let him know that he successfully had performed his assignment. What he enjoyed most was playing word games with the little ones. As his confidence grew, he became very skilled at eliciting responses from the young students.

Another boy, who had never been particularly interested in reading, listened enthusiastically to faltering, struggling, reluctant younger readers. With self-assurance, he asked comprehension questions ranging from literal to judgmental and guided members of his group toward a logical answer through questioning techniques I had used in our classroom. He told me that his students often could "say" the words, but didn't know what they meant. Little did he know how many sleepless nights I had spent lamenting this same problem as it applied to him and his classmates.

Still another young man, who wasn't my most ambitious student by a long shot, was assigned to a cooperating teacher whose children were elsewhere when my students arrived. So he, like some others, had to assist in setting up the room each morning. He was impressed by the amount of work teachers do just to get ready to teach. He was adamant that, even after our five weeks had passed, his cooperating teacher *needed* him and he would have to remain somehow in my class so he could continue to help her. He begged to be failed. Fail he did not, but he did arrange an occasional visit to his teacher before school and during the morning break. He was particularly adept at helping the younger students print and draw their responses to books and stories which they were reading.

In the end, it seemed that all of my students had stories to tell about their experiences. When we returned to our own classroom, we shared our feelings in classroom discussions and in our journals. Some students, particularly the girls, wanted to do extra projects, such as creating flash cards to share with the younger students. A few talked about experiences they remembered from their own early elementary school days. Others told about the pleasure they derived from helping a little one to paint, to choose colors for an art project, to line up numbers for a math problem, to shake up a jar of butter, or make sand castings from shells. Most of their experiences revolved around language arts skills. I wondered if I had accomplished my goals. Had I enabled my students to enhance their self-concepts? Had their own reading skills improved through having

to teach these skills to others?

WITHOUT A doubt, they did feel good about themselves as teachers. Their comments on the formal open-ended evaluation confirmed this. Reactions ranged from "I felt important," "I felt good," "I felt okay," to "I felt like it was probably the first time in my life I'd done anything worthwhile." Some students said they would consider teaching, or being a teacher's aide, as a career. Many speculated on how one day they would encourage their own children to do well in school.

The younger students idolized my students, and the older ones knew it after the first few sessions. Who wouldn't feel good when little ones choose to drill their vocabulary words, or read to you, instead of going to recess? Or write touching farewell letters referring to you as their best friend? All of my students (with one exception) came to school, on time, every day we were scheduled to teach. Apparently these students told others in our transitional unit about their experiences, because as each six-week period began, the first question always was, "Do we get to teach, too?"

Unfortunately, their enhanced self-concepts did not easily transfer into the regular classroom setting. Their old habits and attitudes were deeply ingrained. Their enthusiasm for tutoring did not directly translate into enthusiasm for my lessons.

I think, however, that if I had been able to extend each groups' "teaching" experience beyond a five- to six-week period, greater carryover might have occurred. I think a program of this sort needs at least a semester to succeed. Then I could incorporate a series of mini-lessons on pronunciation, synonyms, reading comprehension techniques, etc., which my students could use in their own teaching and that would help them in the work we are doing in our own classroom. I also would arrange for my students to plan, implement, and evaluate language arts activities that coordinated with the elementary classroom teacher's plans.

In particular, I would offer a unit on children's literature. I think this could be an enjoyable and effective way of introducing my students to literary analysis. My reluctant learners get frustrated by their inability to identify literary elements as they occur in complex writing. But they will be able to identify—and therefore understand and appreciate—these same elements when they appear in simpler children's literature.

I might, for example, use Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*, which contains all the literary elements of figurative language. Another good selection would be Graeme Base's *Animalia*, which offers a fine study in alliteration. And *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!*, by A. Wolf, as told to Jon Scieszka, is a unique introduction to point of view.

The younger children will love to hear these stories. The older students, as they explain plot, alliteration, and so forth in simple terms, will come to a better understanding of these ideas, and I believe will be more willing to attempt to analyze adult literature.

Often we educators see great value in having advanced students tutor others. We need to consider having underachievers tutor as well, and for most of the same reasons. This might be one way to curb the rising tide of at-risk students. □

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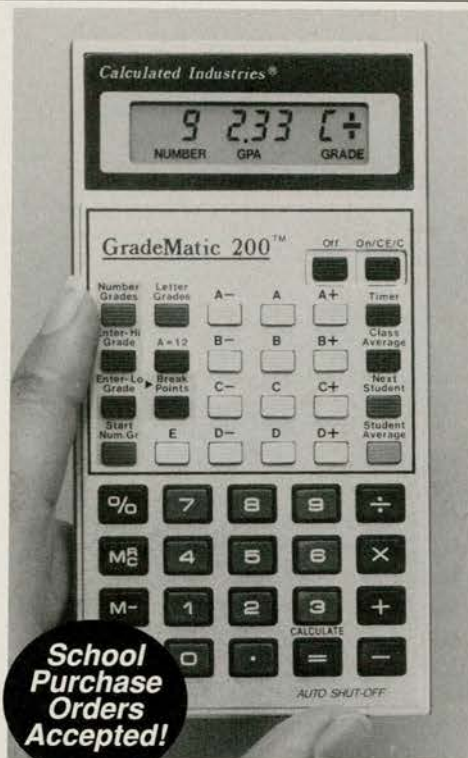
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AMERICA THE MULTICULTURAL

(Continued from page 21)

as one way to discover that chapter in American history. We need to teach our students about former slaves who in the aftermath of Appomattox worked to unite and rebuild the many families that had been separated during slavery. We must tell our students about how much freed men valued education. Whole families would till the soil for twelve or fourteen hours a day and then go to school because they believed that education would bring about a better life for their children. We also need to tell our students that the dashing of those hopes led to the frustration that is at the root of many of today's urban problems. Our students also need to be taught that one of the most important cases establishing the principle of equal treatment under law came when a Chinese immigrant named Yick Wo insisted on an equal right to run his small business—a laundry.

Students studying twentieth-century America need to learn of A. Philip Randolph's struggle to bring dignity and economic justice to black workers. We must tell them about Walter White's attempts to stop lynchings, of Judge William Hastie's efforts to bring a measure of justice to the Jim Crow army of World War II, and of the incredible heroism of the Japanese-Americans of the 442nd regiment in that war and how they and black troops, two groups singled out for second-class military and civilian citizenship, helped to liberate Dachau. Students' knowledge of America will be enriched immeasurably by studying the lives of Americans of all races who were active in the civil rights movement. Children cannot appreciate the richness and poverty of the twentieth-century American experience without examining the world through the eyes of labor leader Cesar Chavez, or walking down the mean streets of East Harlem with Piri Thomas.

These too are part of the American story. They are the legacy of all Americans as much as are our more familiar memories of Washington and Lincoln. These stories should not be put to one side, reserved for students of some races but not others or marginalized as sidebars to American history. This *is* American history.

WE ARE coming to the end of a remarkable, and in many ways terrible, century. In this period, we have seen extraordinary technological progress, moving testimony to the human capacity for the acquisition and application of knowledge. But we have also seen another, darker side of human character. We have seen the rise of totalitarian forces made more potent and more terrible by that same technological progress. I do not know how the history of the world in the twentieth-century will be written in the future. I suspect that future historians will note that the United States played an admirable, indeed leading, role in vanquishing those totalitarian forces—Imperial Germany in the first World War, Nazism, Fascism, and Japanese militarism in the Second, and more recently Communism, in what was once termed by John Kennedy the long twilight struggle of the Cold War. Our record in this regard has by no means been perfect. There were compromises between our ideals and our policies. We have, for example, been slow to anger over the tyrannies that rule in China, and South Africa, in Uganda and Iraq. But still the American

people—through great expenditure of resources, including our most valuable resource, the lives of the nation's sons and daughters—have not only done much to vanquish tyranny but much to advance the cause of freedom as well. Ours is a remarkable record for a nation that was not counted among the great powers at the beginning of this century.

But there is another great contribution we can make to the world. At the beginning of this century, W. E. B. Du Bois said that the problem of the twentieth-century would be the color line. How prophetic he was. With slight modification, we can see that the problem for the next century remains the same. The problems of ethnic strife and multiculturalism plague nations around the globe. We need not look beyond our northern neighbor, Canada, to see language and ethnicity dividing a peaceful and prosperous country. Our former adversary, the Soviet Union, now faces ethnic conflict that may engulf the country in a civil war that could threaten the entire world. Eastern Europe's difficult road to democracy is made more so by the release of long pent-up ethnic hatreds. Western Europeans who once looked with amazement and scorn at American racial problems have suddenly become very quiet on the subject in the face of large-scale immigration from Asia and Africa. The nations of Africa are divided by tribalism. The problem of South African racism and tribalism still mocks universally held values. Japan has scarcely begun to address the question of justice for Koreans and other ethnic minorities. Irish Protestants and Catholics still quarrel over issues that had their origins during the reigns of Tudor and Stuart monarchs.

For all its faults and for all the faults that a multicultural education will uncover and report, the United States remains the most successful multi-ethnic and multiracial society of our time, perhaps of all time. This too is the American story. And so we return to the real teaching challenge: telling the very complicated story of American history to students—complicated because it includes so much that is terrible and so much that is remarkable. It is a history of contradiction and dilemmas. Ultimately, we should judge the quality and success of our multicultural education programs not strictly according to how many individuals of color are noted—such an approach could easily lead just to more sidebars, which is not the point. In judging a particular multicultural education effort, we should ask whether it tells the story of how American culture was shaped and transformed by a multicultural population. And we should ask whether it helps our students come to grips with the contradictions at the core of our history.

Moreover, multicultural education should include, as part of its fundamental *corpus*, the teaching of the democratic ideas—tolerance, justice, rule by law, individual rights, majority rule, and more—that have made possible our incredibly diverse, prosperous and—relatively speaking—amicable society.

Perhaps our most important contribution to the twenty-first century will be to demonstrate that people from different races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds can live side by side; retain their uniqueness; and, yet, over time form a new common culture. That has been the American story. It is a history that has much to tell the world. It must be told by American educators. □

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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take. There is nothing about these conditions, for example, that calls into question engagement defined as memorizing facts in order to do well on tests. There is nothing about them that weighs the practice of lecturing to small groups of students, or that challenges students to think things through more on their own. Consequently, these conditions of work do not exert much specific impact on how teachers teach in classrooms, or on how they work together, or on what conceptions of learning their students take away. Thoughts about restructuring education in these fundamental ways are usually far from the minds of independent school clients. □

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CHAOS ON SESAME STREET

(Continued from page 27)

pace is slowing just a bit, although not nearly enough. The program has made a serious effort to give positive messages about cultural diversity, handicaps, and major emotional issues such as those surrounding death—although, as discussed earlier most of the message is missed by its young audience.

If "Sesame Street" did not purport to be seriously educational, it might pass as clever and colorful light entertainment. But as our major media effort to educate children, I believe it has failed. Worse, it misleads us at a time when we desperately need better models for educational television.

Children's Television Workshop has not met its responsibility to provide sufficient summative research on the program's effects—positive and negative—on learning. It easily can be argued that the program's producer has led an overly trusting public astray. The public, in turn, has been only too willing to cede responsibility. And thus we reap the consequences.

One perceptive first-grader sums up the situation quite neatly:

"It doesn't teach me much. It makes me laugh." As a reading teacher, however, I'm not laughing. □

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NATIONAL CURRICULUM

(Continued from page 17)

John Goodlad† have argued that the schools sacrifice depth of understanding to gain wide and superficial coverage of content. They say such broad, shallow coverage leads to an uninspiring curriculum, a lack of attention to problem solving, and pedantic, top-down pedagogy. It is far easier, however, to call for more focus and depth than it is to work it out in practice. We might all agree that high school history would be better if students focused heavily on the Civil War. But a huge, practical instructional problem comes into play here, for it is necessary to understand what happened during the decades leading up to the 1860s in order to understand the Civil War. As a consequence, an emphasis on depth might require more active coordination among teachers than is now required. (In our view, this would be a major, positive development.) Thus, a sixth-grade science course that fits within a framework emphasizing depth might be designed by teachers to build on broad coverage provided in earlier grades. Such a strategy of balancing depth with breadth would give teachers more freedom to explore topics in which they have a strong interest as well as an opportunity to emphasize the complexity and richness of content. Finally, delving deeply into a topic should give students a chance to explore these issues on their own.

● The final component concerns the degree of flexibility allowed to districts, schools, and teachers. At the most general level, this might include the proportion of the overall curriculum that is determined nationally. We can imagine, for example, a core curriculum around four subject-matter areas that would be determined at the national level, while the remainder of the curriculum would be determined by state and local education authorities. Or we can imagine a core of topics within a subject area being specified for national coverage, while others are left open; the fraction of the curriculum that forms the core could range from the very modest to practically everything.

Other forms of flexibility are also possible. For example, localities or states could be offered choices within national curriculum frameworks; a national framework explicitly might direct districts, schools, or teachers to choose among key issues or topics in biology or among alternative genres of literature for study during the middle-school years. Or there might be alternative emphases within frameworks. For example, a science framework might allow teachers to choose among an emphasis on environmental issues, interdisciplinary connections, or science and technology. Each of the alternative emphases would be designed to retain the same core of knowledge and skills, but the motivation and context for learning would vary dramatically. (The California science framework offers this kind of flexibility.)

A final and more troublesome approach to flexibility would be to allow local schools to adopt different frameworks for students in different curriculum tracks.

†Theodore Sizer is the author of *Horace's Compromise* 1984; A. G. Powell a co-author of *The Shopping Mall High School*, 1985; John Goodlad the author of *A Place Called School*, 1985.

In this country, a national curriculum would have to balance national direction with local discretion.

We emphatically reject such a design, though it is common in other nations: At the beginning of ninth grade, students there routinely are streamed, on the basis of examination scores, into two or more very different curricula, with one path leading to college and the others to a vocation. Of course, curricular tracking also occurs in U.S. high schools. But there are occasionally auxiliary avenues among the tracks that give students second and third opportunities. It would be tragic if, in the development of a national curriculum system, we closed off even these second and third chances.

WHERE ALONG these continuums should a U.S. national curriculum lie? Certainly, at a time when so many observers believe improved education requires increased respect and authority for teachers as professionals, the national curriculum should not preclude (whether through excessive specification of content or sequence) teachers from presenting a body of content in the way most appropriate for his or her class. In this country, a national curriculum would have to balance national direction with local discretion. If the choices along each continuum are toward giving states, districts, and schools greater options, the curriculum might be perceived as more democratic and more able to respond to the variety of needs that exists in this very diverse nation. With too much variety, though, the curriculum will remain incoherent and fragmented; and the opportunity for constructively aligning the content of a challenging school curriculum, instructional materials, teacher education, and the national assessment instruments will be greatly undermined. Finally, if the alternative options are not comparable, we quickly might find ourselves offering needier students a less desirable curriculum, as we do now.

Curriculum Materials

The unflattering critiques of standard American instructional materials—particularly textbooks—are legion. Because textbook publishers try to have their materials adopted by as many states and districts (all with different frameworks!) as possible, the texts tend to be bland so as not to alienate buyers. And they are

superficial—in order to meet all the demands made by the many states and localities they must cater to.

A well-conceived national curriculum should trigger development of high-quality instructional materials based on the curricular frameworks. But does this also mean that the variety of acceptable materials would be limited? Does it mean the federal government will write curriculum materials and tell local districts and teachers to use them? A range of possibilities exists.

In some countries, the education ministry has virtually total control over the development and selection of materials. In Japan, for example, the ministry itself publishes textbooks. In other countries, national ministries establish curriculum standards and commission private firms to develop materials that meet those standards. These commissioned materials—of which there may be many or few—may be the only ones permitted in the schools, or they may be provided to schools on a preferential basis, perhaps at a discounted rate, for example. In some cases, ministries rely on the profit motive of private curriculum developers to produce high-quality, appropriate materials. In this kind of system, national curriculum specifications would be promulgated, and because schools—the primary purchasers of instructional materials—would be expected to follow the national curriculum, private publishers would have a clear incentive to design high-quality materials (textbooks, filmstrips, software, etc.) that followed the national curriculum guidelines.

In some nations, private publishers' products are subjected to review by a quasi-governmental body, whose job is to set standards for material selection as well as to make the final selection. (This is the system used in the Netherlands and Australia.) Such an agency sounds a bit like the textbook selection commissions that function in several U.S. states, though these often have not exercised very high standards, perhaps due to their direct governmental sponsorship. We can much more easily imagine intelligent selections being made by a quasi-governmental group; or by a professional group such as the NAS, the NCTM, or the AAAS.

Perhaps in a U.S. system, which we assume would try to maximize selection freedom, a national review board of this latter type could offer advisory opinions on materials (and thus stimulate private developers to compete for the board's seal of approval) but allow the state, district, or teacher to make the final selection. In any system that we can imagine, teachers would exercise considerable quality control. And in a mature system of national curriculum guidance, teachers should be much more knowledgeable about the material they were judging than they now are—their pre-service and in-service education (and the materials themselves) having been based on the same core of knowledge. Hence, teachers would be better situated to judge the quality of curriculum materials and other resources. We would expect quality control to increase over time.

The Student Examinations

Should examinations be used to reward or penalize students for learning, or failing to learn, the material set forth in the national frameworks? Should the exams be used to motivate schools and teachers to teach the curriculum? Should they be used to recognize and chan-

nel help to those who need it? Can a national exam focus curriculum in a healthy way?

Student accountability. For many Americans, the notion of a national examination system conjures up images of rigidly tracked secondary schools, the result, for example, of the "eleven-plus" exams formerly used in Great Britain; of months of grueling study, as for the *Baccalaureate* taken upon graduation from the French lycée; or worse yet, of the "examination hell" experienced by many Japanese middle and high school students and popularized in both the Japanese and the American press. Certainly the most common use of national examinations is for student accountability and placement. And in cases where the stakes run high for students—determining, for example, entrance to college, to academic high schools, or to desired occupations—and where second chances are few or nonexistent, anxiety levels run high. Many American observers would prefer to minimize such repercussions in any national testing system developed here.

There are, however, also positive lessons to be gleaned from the national school examinations of other industrially developed nations. The first and central lesson is this: If exams are used to motivate students to be more serious about their studies, then the examinations' content must be very closely tied to the curriculum frameworks that are used to teach students.

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The strong links between the content of the examinations and the content of coursework, combined with the educational and occupational consequences the examinations have, create an important, and we believe desirable, effect on behavior in school: Students are motivated to prepare for the exams by studying the material in their syllabi; "studying for the exams" takes years and is generally indistinguishable from regular schoolwork. In this regard, the national exams of other countries are similar to the Advanced Placement (AP) exams in the U.S., or the Regents examinations given in New York State, though in many countries the national examinations are more important in students' lives than either the AP or Regents. In contrast, the high stakes of the SAT tests in this country have little effect on performance in school or on student learning in general, because the SAT tests are designed to be largely independent of school curricula and outside preparation.

A second lesson is that exams may be designed to reflect whatever flexibility exists within the national curriculum. In Germany, for example, the content of the

Abitur (which is taken only by the nation's top students and which must be passed in order to enter university) is adjusted to focus on the particular area of studies chosen early in the student's career at the *Gymnasium* (e.g., classical languages, modern languages, mathematics, and science). In England, a system for equating examination questions has been developed to allow for regional differences in the makeup of the examination, with national standards still retained.

System accountability. To date, Americans have typically used examinations as yardsticks of the quality—and equality—of the education provided to students by their schools and teachers.†† In fact, institutional and teacher accountability based on student test scores has become almost a passion in this country and is certainly integral to the current interest in a national student test.⁶

There are a lot of unanswered questions about how to tie the examinations into an accountability system. Certainly, a national student exam could provide a means for evaluating the effectiveness of particular schools and for levying appropriate rewards or sanctions on them, thereby motivating teachers and school administrators to find the best ways to teach the national curriculum. But three conditions would have to exist for this exam to have much effect on the quality of schooling. First, the tests would have to reflect the content of the national curriculum. Otherwise they would have no legitimacy. After all, how can we hold teachers and schools responsible for students' learning if the material tested in the exams is divorced from that which teachers are expected to teach? Second, teachers would have to be given ample opportunity to learn and develop expertise in the content of the courses they are expected to teach. Otherwise, we couldn't rationally expect them to teach it. Third, the tests must be linked to incentives for teachers and schools—that is, the tests must carry institutional and professional consequences. Otherwise, the accountability system will have no teeth, and the test's effects on school practice will be greatly diluted.

Curricular reinforcement. A third purpose of national exams, integrally tied to the first two, is to drive or at least reinforce the content and goals of the national curriculum. In this regard, it is important to realize that if there is a national "high stakes" exam, that exam *will* likely affect the curriculum—*whether or not this is what was intended and whether or not the content of the test is the same as that of the curriculum frameworks*. Thus, in England, where over the years much

††In other countries, we suspect that informal but powerful judgments of schools and teachers also occur, based on the success of their students on the national examinations. To our knowledge, however, the national exams are generally not part of formal system accountability structures—that is, student performance on the exams does not carry direct, formal consequences for teachers and schools. Instead, the quality of schools and programs typically is monitored by a system of inspectorates—professional educators employed by the central ministry who visit local schools, monitor the quality of their programs, and provide technical assistance where needed.

We also don't want national exams that will lock teachers into a prescribed formula for "successful" teaching.

attention has been given to the development of national examinations, some observers have criticized the practice of "using an examination as a curriculum rather than as a means of evaluating a curriculum."⁷ In the U.S., this might signal the need for caution in developing a national test before the desired curricular content of our schools is discussed adequately.

Implications. First and foremost, we argue that national examinations used for either student or system accountability will only be legitimate and useful if they are based on the national curriculum frameworks. To motivate students, the exams should provide incentives to excel, both by offering challenging content that requires effort and attention from students at all ability levels and through real-life rewards for good performance. For college-bound students, these rewards might be related to university admission; for work-bound students, good exam scores might mean better job prospects. For younger students, rewards might be more symbolic than material or educational. We would want the exams to be tied to legitimate and effective incentives for teacher, school, and system improvement.

What we don't want is equally clear. We don't want to establish a system of punitive accountability based on student performance on a single test instrument—no matter how well constructed that instrument might be; we don't want to rule out second chances. Thus, if a student does not perform up to standard on the exam, he or she should be allowed to retake the test, perhaps after a required waiting period. Or, the student might be offered an alternative means of acquiring the exam's credential. For example, upon doing poorly on the national exam, a student who wanted to go to college might be encouraged to attend a junior college in order to improve his skills and to demonstrate effort and better performance. He could thus enter through a different gate those avenues initially open only to students with higher examination results. If national exam results reflected poorly on a particular school, the remedies ought to be technical assistance and opportunities for improvement.

We also don't want national exams that will lock teachers into a prescribed formula for "successful" teaching or into such narrowly defined content that their professional expertise and intellectual enthusiasm are undermined. We don't want examinations that reinforce rote algorithmic learning.⁸ And we don't want a system that is so overwhelmed with tests or other bureaucratic controls that there is insufficient time or energy for the day-to-day instruction that lies at the very heart of school learning.

Finally, the examinations must incorporate national direction with local and individual flexibility. Such flexibility may involve choice of exam questions or even the form of response. For example, in a future when performance testing is better developed than it is now, students might be able to choose between writing an essay on Shakespeare or working with fellow students to act out one of his plays.

Teacher Professional Development. Curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, and tests alone will not greatly improve American education unless teachers know and can teach the curriculum. Teachers are always the fulcrum upon which educational success turns. Thus, the greatest benefits of a national curriculum would appear over time and would depend on an enormous investment in professional development. To bring pre-service education in line with the curriculum, for instance, would require a substantial change in the curricula of teacher training institutions and licensing requirements. As formidable as the task of changing institutions of higher education appears to be, it may be less massive than creating an effective system of in-service development that could help prepare our more than two million practicing teachers to teach the new curricula and meet the new standards.

In one sense, this task seems daunting. Yet the introduction of a national curriculum might be the very stimulus needed to bring about major improvements in today's inadequate system of teacher professional development. The structure provided by new curriculum frameworks for students would help to organize a common knowledge base for teachers. With these frameworks in hand, institutions that educate prospective teachers could be better positioned to ensure that new teachers have the knowledge and capacity to effectively teach the content and skills required by the districts in which they will teach. Licensing examinations might also be based on these teacher curriculum frameworks. In-service programs (which now tend to be laughingly irrelevant or boring) could be based on improving teachers' understanding of and ability to teach the content of the national curriculum. A critical side benefit would flow from this newly coherent system of teacher preparation: Teachers everywhere would come to share a common base of knowledge, a common professional culture—a development that would bring teaching one step closer to the status of an authentic profession. At a more practical level, this common language of teaching would make possible more frequent, interesting, and

At a more practical level, this common language of teaching would make possible more frequent, interesting, and productive discussions among teachers about teaching.

productive discussion among teachers about teaching.

In the same way that curriculum materials would be judged by a quasi-governmental or professional commission, so could ongoing professional development programs. In this way, teachers' professional development could be closely aligned with the schools' national curriculum and examinations. This would bring the U.S. system much more in line with the approach in other nations, most of which have national curricula.

IN PUTTING forward these issues and examples, we have tried to suggest that a move towards a national curriculum could benefit education by enabling us to align curriculum, assessment and accountability, and the professional development of teachers. Moreover, by creating a national market for quality materials and tests, by focusing the nation's best minds on developing excellent frameworks and exams; and by enlisting the most knowledgeable people to aid in quality control—a national curriculum could stimulate an enormous increase in the quality of materials available to teachers, education policymakers, and administrators. By consciously moving towards a national curriculum, we can replace what has become a de facto national curriculum of basic skills with a richer, more challenging curriculum—and increase the likelihood that this curriculum will be accessible to all children, not just those lucky enough to attend the nation's best schools. Finally, a national exam could add needed incentives for everyone in the education world, especially students; and the results of the exam would provide all of us with important information necessary to improve continually the education we provide.

* * *

In April 1982, Samuel H. Beer delivered a lecture entitled "The National Idea in American Politics." Beer saw the "national idea" as "... a theory of purpose, a perspective on public policy, a guide to the ends for which power should be used. It invites us to ask ourselves what sort of a people we are and whether we are a people and what we wish to make of ourselves as a people."

Is a national curriculum becoming part of America's "National Idea"? Perhaps so. Certainly powerful nationalizing currents are in the air; and while these pressures surely will fluctuate, we see no reason to think they will disappear. But such tendencies don't add up to a curriculum, or even a plan for a curriculum. Additionally, many of the current "nationalizing" ideas would work rather differently. Some promise major change from present practices, while others promise little. Some versions could greatly improve education, while others would have little effect, or even do harm.

Our discussion has left open several key issues. One is how America might govern a national curriculum, when school governance until now has been largely a state and local matter. Another issue is how America might convert to a coherent curriculum when our current system of education is so incoherent and fragmented.

We have no five-point plan for attacking these issues—nor could anyone. Americans are in the early stages of considering them. But there are better and worse ways of thinking about the issues.

GOVERNANCE

Let's begin with governance: Would a national curriculum require a national school system?

The idea seems implausible. State and local school systems are the political foundation of American public education. They are also a key feature of democratic government. If by magic a national curriculum were created tomorrow, it could work only if decisions to adopt it were made by state and local education agencies. States and localities still hold most authority in public education. The creation of any national curriculum would require their active participation and assent.

Inevitably, these agencies would assent and participate by degree. If a national curriculum were created, some states and localities would move ahead, while others would hold back. Still others would find ways to test the water. However elegant the curriculum, it would not be adopted all at once, everywhere. But even if some sort of national curriculum were adopted by a minority of states and localities, would that not change how American public education is governed? Would a national curriculum not supplant the authority that states and localities now exercise?

It might. But it might not.

First, we said before that any curriculum should include ample room for local variations on national themes. Education is not robotics. Individual teachers—or school faculties, or entire districts—should have the intellectual autonomy to frame their own approaches to the material, and to take students' needs and interests into account as well. Thus local school districts would certainly retain this degree of autonomy; and it would be exercised through local school governance.

If by magic a national curriculum were created tomorrow, it could work only if decisions to adopt it were made by state and local education agencies.

Second, much authority in education is now delegated away by state and local school systems. Most substantive decisions about textbooks, for instance, are made by private publishers. With few exceptions, states and localities decide only which of the published versions they will adopt. That is a rather small decision, compared with some others—such as whether reading texts should include little or no literature, or whether arithmetic texts should focus almost exclusively on computation. Similarly, most of the basic substantive decisions about assessment in the United States are made by private testing and publishing agencies. Local districts and states decide which tests to use. But they rarely decide about whether arithmetic tests will assess

computational skills as opposed to, say, knowledge of mathematical ideas. Fundamental decisions about how to define and assess students' knowledge largely are made by private agencies. A few states, such as California, are trying to change these patterns, but most are not.

Finally, almost all of the decisions about the content, quality, and standards of the pre-service training of teachers are entirely out of the hands of K-12 education. Relatively autonomous state and private systems of higher education maintain almost complete control over the curriculum and licensing requirements for newly trained teachers.

It could be different. Suppose the key decisions about tests and texts were made by an agency or set of agencies interested in education, not profits. Such an agency could:

- Devise frameworks and set standards of quality and content for texts and other curriculum materials, for student assessment, and for teacher education;
- Coordinate these standards, so that quality and key content of the schools' curriculum, of student assessment, and teacher education were consistent;
- Do the research and development required to produce models of the sorts of examinations, texts, and curricula (for both K-12 and teacher education) that would meet the standards. (NSF did something like this work for textbooks in the 1950s);
- Monitor and report on the quality of commercial or other efforts to use these models to produce curricula, exams, and texts to these standards;
- Organize ongoing consultation to monitor and revise standards of quality and content.

Such an agency or group of agencies would operate in a domain that in principle belongs to the states. But in fact that domain is now chiefly inhabited by private firms. The new agency would set standards for the products produced by private firms. It would do the necessary research, and develop the models, to make sure that the firms could meet the standards. And the agency would monitor performance and report its findings to the public.

The agency or set of agencies that we envision thus would not be a primary producer of materials. Rather it would define the public interest in such materials. It would support the original development of materials, exams, and the like. And it would defend the public interest in the content and quality of curriculum, exams, and so forth. The agency need not usurp any authority that states or localities now exercise. It need only reoccupy some of the territory now delegated to private firms. If things worked well, the result would be a much better array of materials, exams, etc. And that would give states and localities better choices than they have now.

So, we imagine a scheme in which states and/or localities would choose to embrace a curriculum that would greatly improve the quality of education. It is an appealing prospect, for it suggests that there may be ways to gain greater coherence and intelligence in curriculum while maintaining democratic control.

BUT THIS returns us to the question of governance: To whom would our agency be accountable?

Many imagine that a national curriculum agency

Perhaps some such reduction in bureaucracy should be made a condition of adoption.

would be a creature of the federal government. After all, the government has a commanding political position. But we think this would be unsatisfactory for several reasons. First, education politics in the U.S. are fickle. The issues and the players change with dismaying rapidity. The ensuing instability would make it extremely difficult to manage effectively the work sketched above. Second, Americans seem unlikely to assign the responsibility for local curriculum to a federal bureaucracy, and we think they would be right. Federal agencies probably could not maintain the inventiveness and flexibility the work would require. Third, the federal government has a record of generally weak support for educational research and development, and often it is ineffective in managing the little R&D it does undertake. Given this record, it seems foolish to entrust it with a much larger assignment.

A consortium of state governments initially seems to have much appeal as a governing agent, for the states hold most authority in education, and they are seen as a leading agent of democratic control. But state education politics are no less fickle than national education politics. And though a few states recently have developed some R&D capacity, most have little.

Organized education professionals are a third alternative. They would bring considerable knowledge and skill to the governance of a national curriculum. Professional groups like NCTM, the National Research Council (of the National Academy of Sciences), and others have been active in recent efforts to develop new national standards for instruction and new curricula. No national curriculum could be effectively devised if professional educators were not deeply involved. But professional organizations alone are an unsatisfactory choice. One reason is that the key working professionals—teachers and administrators—are, almost by definition, rooted in current practice. Relying on them alone would be a conservative approach. Additionally, for all their importance, professionals are not the only important players in education: Business, community leaders, and parents are also key and should be involved in governance as well. Finally, few professional organizations in education have had much experience conceiving or managing large-scale R&D.

There are other candidates, but our position probably is already plain. Mixed control would be the best way to govern a national curriculum. This would require the invention of an institution or set of institutions that

would lie on the boundaries among government, the professions, and private institutions. There are several examples of such agencies in post-World War II American politics: Comsat, the National Academy of Sciences, and the early sponsorship of NAEP are three that come to mind. More recently, in education there is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The NBPTS is a private, not-for-profit corporation. But, as noted earlier, it is governed by a broadly representative board.

One strength of such agencies is that they can remain somewhat insulated from the daily shifts in political winds, while still representing many of the groups. The National Board includes members from business, teaching, teacher education, and government. Another strength is that unlike government agencies, the board can receive funding support from a variety of private and public sources—and they have much greater flexibility in using those funds than most public bodies. As a result, they can mobilize resources from many quarters, something that would be difficult for more conventional agencies, but which is essential for this project: Education professionals have much of the technical and educational expertise, but government and business have much of the money. Some business people have managerial know-how that is rare among educators. Mixed governance could help to mobilize broad participation of public and private sponsors.

WITH THIS sketch, we have tried to open the discussion of governance. It is entirely possible that there are better schemes than the one just proposed. And there certainly are problems and issues that we have not discussed. One such problem concerns the distressing overgrowth of governance and administration that currently pervades our education structures. As new national arrangements for curriculum and testing development and for teacher preparation were phased in, these bureaucracies could be streamlined and reduced (which would save money and provide relief to those who find themselves continually stymied and harassed by them). Indeed, if they were not dramatically reduced, the proposals we have been discussing would increase problems in education—by adding layers of agencies to the many that already exist. Perhaps some such reduction in bureaucracy should be made a condition of adoption. Another issue that should not be ignored is the extent to which the larger society attaches importance to the new curriculum. If, for example, student exam results are ignored by college admissions officers and employers, students' motivation to work hard in school will not increase simply because a new exam exists. (For a fuller discussion of the interplay between society's expectations and students' school performance, see "What If Good Jobs Depended on Good Grades?" *American Educator*, Winter 1989.)

These matters aside, working through the governance issue has provisionally satisfied us on several points. A national curriculum agency or set of agencies could improve on our present arrangements, in which states delegate enormous authority to private firms. Such an agency also could be governed in a way that suited its mission while still preserving broad representation, local autonomy, and state authority in public education.

GETTING THERE FROM HERE

Conversion presents an equally large problem. How could America move to a more coherent curriculum, when arrangements are now so fragmented? How might we get there from here?

Any sensible answer depends on how one envisions the nature of the journey. Our earlier discussion suggests that the distance to travel would be considerable, and that the terrain would not be easy. Consider a few of the tasks. To create a national curriculum that is worth having would require the invention of new curriculum frameworks; the production of new and more thoughtful books and materials; the creation of a new assessment system (organized around examinations rather than standardized tests); and new approaches to both teacher education and teacher assessment—all linked together and based on the same frameworks.

None of these things are utterly new. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has important work on teacher assessment already under way, and the curriculum framework initiatives from California and elsewhere are a major step toward more thoughtful and coherent instructional guidance. But teacher assessment is only a part of education, and California is not the nation. More important, there has been no coordination of these efforts. Any one of the development tasks just mentioned would require a major effort; but coordinating all of them would be an enormous undertaking, doubtless the largest R&D project ever in education. And there is an additional complication: Any national curriculum would have to be developed in ways that would balance nationwide standards and content with local needs and initiative. We are convinced that this is possible. But it also would be very complex, intellectually and politically.

Nor would the work of conversion be chiefly a technical endeavor. The invention of new examinations and curriculum not only would pose daunting technical problems, but also would raise difficult issues in epistemology, the philosophy of the disciplines, and politics. Additionally, the development work would be largely a matter of building social and intellectual capacities—and would thus entail a major educational effort. For any national curriculum worth having would require the teaching of more rigorous content. It therefore would involve teachers and students in much more demanding and exciting work. But in order to carry this off, most teachers and administrators would have to deepen their knowledge of academic subjects and change their conceptions of knowledge itself. They also would have to see learning as a more active and inventive process, and teaching as a more thoughtful and indirect process. More important, many educators would need to learn to do things quite differently in schools and classrooms. For example, any curriculum worth having would require administrative and teaching practice to become more thoughtful, collaborative, and participatory.

Though many educators and parents would welcome such changes, many more would find them puzzling, difficult, and disturbing. Conversion to a national curriculum could only succeed if the work of conversion were conceived and undertaken as a grand, cooperative learning venture. Such an enterprise would fail miserably

We think there is an American way [to make these changes] that will preserve variety and initiative for teachers as well as democratic control of education.

bly if it were conceived and organized chiefly as a technical process of developing new exams and materials and then “disseminating” or “implementing” them.

A worthwhile, effective national curriculum would also require the creation of much new social and intellectual connective tissue. For instance, the content and pedagogy of teacher education would have to be closely related to the content and pedagogy of the schools' curriculum. The content and pedagogy of examinations would have to be tied to those of the curriculum and teacher education. Such connections do not now exist. The lack of coordination among the current “nationalizing ideas” signals that the work of creating such links would begin nearly from square one.

* * *

Conversion to a national curriculum would require major change in many of the education system's key social and intellectual structures. It also would entail extensive professional and public education. Moreover, Americans would have to build elements of a new education system, while the established (and very fragmented) system was still operating. But such a change would produce many benefits, if done well. We think these changes can be made. Furthermore, we think there is an American way to make them—a way that will preserve variety and initiative for teachers as well as democratic control of education. We also know that it will not be easy, quick, or cheap. If Americans continue to want educational reform on the cheap, a national curriculum would be a mistake. □

ENDNOTES

¹Joseph A. Califano, Jr., *Governing America: An Insider's Report from the White House and the Cabinet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981). Speech to College Board, p. 297; note from Carter, pp. 297-98; 1978 citation, p. 299.

²Stanley M. Elam and Alec M. Gallup, “The 21st Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 71, No. 1, September 1989, pages 41-56.

³In a related effort, the Educational Testing Service is carrying out a thorough revision of the National Teachers' Examination (NTE), a test widely used by states for purposes of initial licensure of teachers. Because the test has been so widely used, it has been designed to be very general in its assessment of subject matter, pedagogical, and professional knowledge. Moreover, the frameworks that guide the specifications of test items seem to have been designed to reflect the current condition of teaching and professional practice in the nation's schools rather than a conception of preferred practice. The

net effect of a very general test based primarily on current practice may well be to stifle curricular and teacher reforms. On the other hand, if the new NTE section on mathematics reflects the NCTM standards and the professional standards section reflects the restructuring visions about the roles and responsibilities of teachers, then the examination will be a progressive force for reform. Either way, it will have an important national effect.

⁴A notable exception is the attempt at coordination between NAEP and the NCTM in the development of the NAEP mathematics framework.

⁵These two examples are instructive for another reason. The science framework contains a substantial emphasis on hands-on experimentation in science, while the history/social science framework emphasizes a historical rather than a social studies perspective. The point is simply that the frameworks are vehicles for prescribing pedagogy and values as well as facts and skills. We suspect, but do not know, that there will be more adherence to the specifications of facts and skills than there will be adherence to the specified values and pedagogical strategies for loosely prescribed frameworks.

⁶Despite the passion evident in much of this accountability movement, we see little evidence as yet of test results carrying real consequences or rewards for teachers or schools. For the most part, as in the case of NAEP or the California Assessment Program (CAP), average test scores seem to be used mainly for purposes of public reporting—perhaps in hopes that pressure from the American people for higher scores will result in tangible school improvement.

⁷Denis Lawton, *Education, Culture and the National Curriculum* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), p. 74.

⁸There is an important relationship between the character of the examinations and the curriculum itself. A common argument, with some supporting data, holds that the multiple-choice tests that dominate U.S. classrooms lead to an emphasis on facts, algorithmic skills, and readily solved problems. This argument does not depend on whether the content of the test accurately tracks the curriculum. It could also hold with a curriculum-based multiple-choice examination.

There are alternatives to multiple-choice examinations. The current proposed modifications to the SATs—to include a small percentage of open-ended mathematics problems and an optional essay in the verbal section—are a modest beginning. Beyond that are more “authentic” exam formats that involve such tasks as open-ended problem solving, data analysis, analytic and creative writing, and experimentation. The British and Dutch have made considerable strides in these areas as have a few states, most notably Connecticut. The hope in these “authentic” exams is that the format and type of problems on the examinations will influence the character of the curriculum and instruction, which in turn will influence the mixture of items on the examination.

The ideas driving these reforms are powerful and important. They could have a great, positive impact on education. In the context of a national curriculum, they could be especially potent. We are reasonably confident that if such examinations were available now and reflected a national curriculum, they would increase both students’ and teachers’ interest and motivation to tackle the kinds of complex and challenging tasks that were on the examination. This would be a major step.

But we need to be aware of several problems. The first is our lack of experience in developing, administering, and reporting results from assessments of this type. A second problem is our relative lack of understanding of how to use these new forms of assessment to rank students, teachers, and institutions. This is especially true in a nation as diverse as ours. For years we have struggled with the often legitimate claims of bias in testing; these problems will not disappear if we abandon multiple-choice tests. Indeed, they may be exacerbated.

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LETTERS

(Continued from page 8)

where "...winners and losers have always agreed to work together..." Are we talking the America of Lincoln, Fort Sumter and the Civil War?

(2.) Madison was not concerned with dictatorships, but rather with absolute monarchism or despotism. There are differences, and not just hair-splitting ones, between these political phenomena. Students would have little difficulty in understanding them...

(3.) Hakim says, "Jefferson and Hamilton were both good men..." and that we "...need Hamiltons [and] Jeffersons..." Who's we? And what makes them both good? Good for whom?... I happen to think Hamilton a bright, competent scoundrel... who, among other things, deliberately shaped the early fiscal policies of the nation to favor corrupt private speculators in government-guaranteed securities, government-improved lands, and government-protected industries at the expense of the veteran foot-soldiers of the war. Good? Not by my reckoning. What is Hakim's moral or political frame of reference?...

I have noticed in the current controversies over the teaching of history attempts by each side to proclaim its objectivity and to impute to the other side an "agenda" or ideological slant. All to the good. I only hope that *all the sides* will continue to be heard and printed in *American Educator* so that ... teachers of history may themselves arrive at a more honest, comprehensive and interesting way of teaching it without having one side's version come down to them as fiat...

—ALBERT F. BAUER
NEW YORK, NY

Joy Hakim replies:

It is always helpful to receive comments about a work-in-progress, and I thank both writers for their kind words and criticisms. As for Mr. Stone's concern: In other chapters, I deal extensively with slavery and with the paradox of men, like Jefferson, who believed in liberty but owned slaves. It can't be addressed in every chapter.

Mr. Bauer is right about Matt Lyon. It happens that I tell Lyon's story in a chapter on the Alien and Sedition Acts. Because the American

Educator article included Lyon's picture I should have added a note with that picture. When I say that in America "winners and losers have always agreed to work together," I am talking about a political system that has worked remarkably for two hundred years. We have elections and get on with the business of government. We don't have revolutions after every election. (I am, however, going to footnote that awful exception in 1860.)

But Mr. Bauer doesn't seem to have noticed that I am writing for elementary school children. It is a very different book from one I would write for high school students. There may be distinctions between dictators, absolute monarchs and despots—but I believe those differences are hairsplitting for ten-year-olds.

When it comes to Hamilton, Mr. Bauer's opinion and mine differ. Hamilton was anything but a scoundrel. Even Jefferson had respect for his integrity. Did he do right to pay off the nation's debts when he knew the creditors were mostly private speculators? I'll let him answer that: "States, like individuals, who observe their engagements, are respected and trusted, while the reverse is the fate of those who pursue an opposite conduct."

When Hamilton became secretary of the treasury, our foreign and domestic debt (in proportion to government revenues) was four times what it is today. The new nation was awash in worthless currency. When he left office the nation's bonds were selling well above par. But, as I make clear in my book, the Jefferson-Hamilton argument has been going on for two hundred years.

I happen to be writing a U.S. history that is grounded in respect and admiration for our system. Not everyone will agree with that point of view, but authors do have prerogatives. I have opinions and I state them. I tell my young readers that others may have different opinions. I want to provoke argument. I want children to start defining beliefs of their own.

What I am trying to do is write intellectual history for children. As far as I know, that hasn't been done before. Most of all, I hope my books will stimulate discussion.

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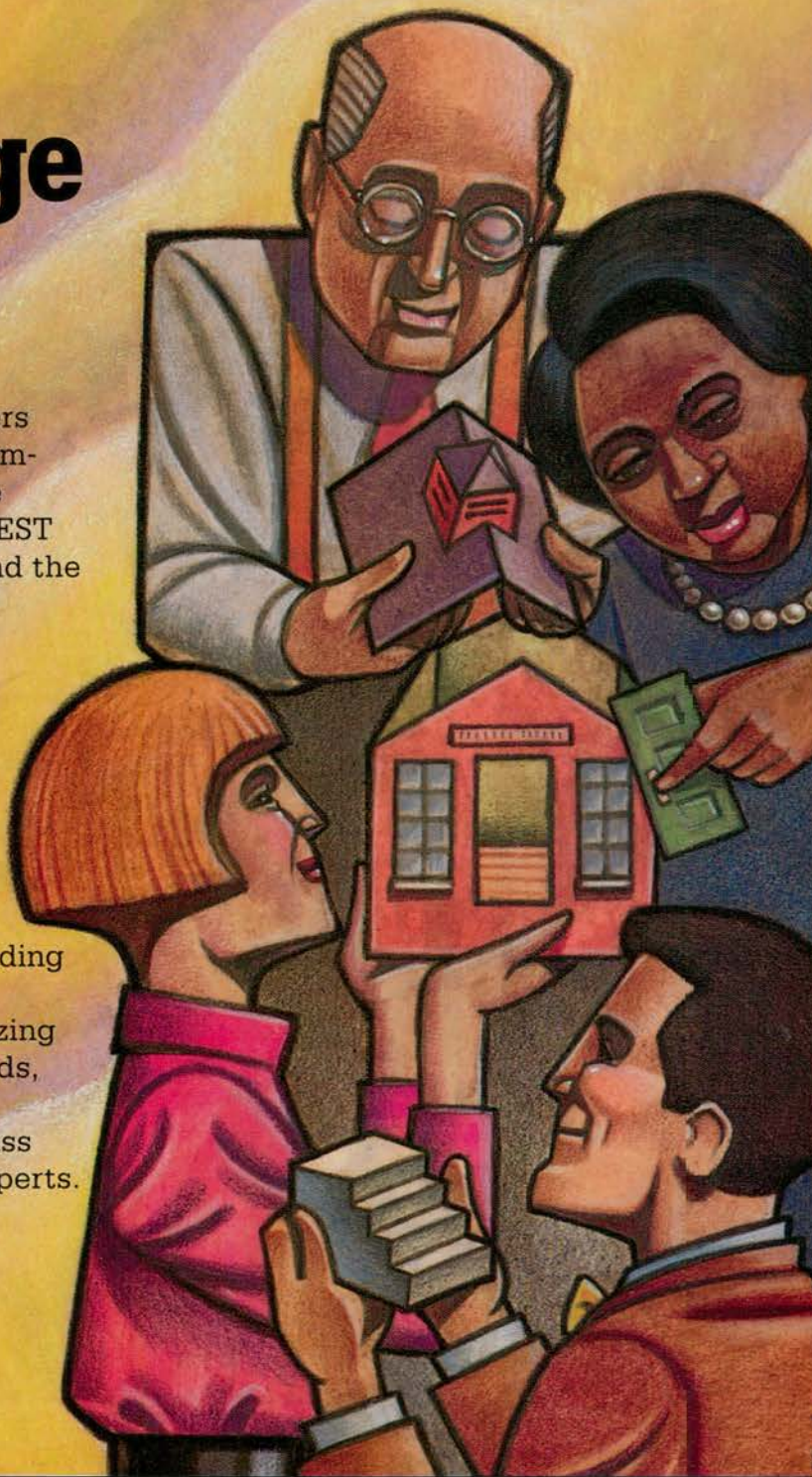
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