

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
WINTER 1993/1994

# AMERICAN **Educator**

## School Disorder and Violence

The Underlying  
Causes

By **Jackson Toby**

We've Become  
Too Tolerant of  
Destructive Behavior

By **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**







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# LETTERS

## WHENCE UNDERSTANDING?

I read with interest Mr. David Perkins' article "Teaching for Understanding" in the Fall 1993 issue of the *American Educator*. And also with some dismay. As with so much writing about education, Mr. Perkins' revelations sound commonsensical and obvious. No matter how many grants you get funded, and no matter how many studies you cite, you don't sound scholarly or original when you announce that good teachers engage students' interest by relating curricula to their lives, giving them creative tasks to perform and providing useful evaluations of their achievements.

My concern is that, although Mr. Perkins says teaching for understanding is an extension of teaching knowledge and skills, he also hints that it can be a substitute. Can students "understand" ethnic hatred, without knowledge of events like the French Revolution? Can students understand Columbus' first voyage to the New World without knowing the year it occurred? Teachers who impart facts and skills have achieved the key goal of teaching, and needn't feel like they've somehow come up short. Literate and knowledgeable young people will grow into their own personal understanding of the world. Ignorant and illiterate students cannot understand and cannot grow.

Our schools are deficient in teaching knowledge and skills. Let's get good at it, by giving those attainments the status they deserve and by resisting the temptation to devote ourselves to teaching something that cannot be defined, that cannot be measured, and that, in the absence of knowledge and skills, is meaningless.

—MARK WALPOLE  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

## A RUSSIAN TEACHER IN AMERICA

I was most impressed by Andrei Toom's article on the sorry state of higher education (Fall 1993). I want to relieve his despair of bright stu-

dents making complaints. At 43 years of age and newly enrolled in graduate school, I had the misfortune to enter a class where the professor felt the proper method of teaching was to stand at the head of the class and paraphrase a giant soup-to-nuts textbook starting at page one. On leaving the first session, I was amazed to hear my classmates (mostly in their twenties) praise the professor. I protested that I was not paying good money at the graduate level to have a book read to me. This was received with embarrassed silence. Immediately dropping the class, I wrote a strong letter of protest to the administration expressing my desire for an education rather than the collection of credit hours and my outrage that such teaching could be found in a graduate school of education. I don't know how this was received, but I do know that the professor was not teaching the next quarter.

I have seen much of what Mr. Toom has described—students constantly being reassured that nothing will be too difficult and frequent promises of easy grades. In my most recent class, the students answered the professor's request for an end-of-class critique with a plea for more videos and less reading. As the article indicated, if students are to be the designers of their own education then the situation will not improve until those who want a true education, as I do, speak up.

—CLIFTON A. BROWN  
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

The article "A Russian Teacher in America" promised insight. What it delivered to me was surprise that you had offered Mr. Toom's comments as a model, concern that a mathematical journal had similarly published his supercilious and cruel observations and even greater distress to think that he sends students off from interactions with him with "tears in . . . (their) eyes" after being informed by him that they are "illiterate." What else could he say, he wondered, for he couldn't imagine an alternative prop-

er response. Wow! I can think of many. How about a gentle laugh and a suggestion that we sit down together to see how one might approach the problem that was totally undoable for the student. He stated that American students do not discuss their mistakes. Who would discuss mistakes with someone who obviously thinks you are hopelessly stupid? The point of educators is to help students learn, not to inform them that they know nothing.

I have been teaching sociology at the community college level for over twenty years. I share an office with a math professor, and my sister is also a math professor. I feel qualified to state that teaching at this level requires accepting students as they are. Recognizing deficiencies in their preparation and trying to help them remedy them is part of the function of college professors; dismissing the students as illiterate, whether mathematically or otherwise, consigns them to the academic scrapheap. Hardly an intellectually or morally elevating approach. I truly believe that if you do not care about students as human beings, if you don't love them, you should not be teaching.


By the way, the simple Tom, Dick, and Harry problem that stumped the tearful student is not so simple. If taught the methodology, anyone could do it, but this is a complex "work problem" that frustrated me and challenged my husband, who has a graduate degree in regional economics.

—KATHRYN BARCHAS  
SKYLINE COLLEGE  
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# EVERYDAY SCHOOL VIOLENCE: HOW DISORDER FUELS IT

BY JACKSON TOBY

**I**N JANUARY 1989, an alcoholic drifter named Patrick Purdy walked onto the playground of the Cleveland Elementary School in Stockton, California, and, without warning, began spraying bullets from his AK-47 assault rifle. Five children died and 29 persons were wounded, some critically. In January 1992, two students at Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, New York, were fatally shot by an angry 15-year-old classmate. In April 1993, three teenagers armed with a baseball bat, a billy club, and a buck knife invaded an American Government class at Dartmouth High School, in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, a small town six miles southwest of New Bedford. They were looking for a boy they had fought with the previous Sunday. When 16-year-old Jason Robinson stood up and asked why they were looking for his friend, one of the youths fatally stabbed him in the stomach. That same month a 17-year-old Long Island high school student who had been reprimanded by her teacher poured nail polish into the teacher's can of soda. The teacher was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital; the student was arrested for second-degree assault.

The public is outraged when dramatic murders and attempted murders—as well as assaults and rapes—in or around schools are widely reported in the press and on television. Parents fear for the safety of their children and for the integrity of the educational process. People ask, “Why is there so much more school violence now than when I was in school?”

School violence is often blamed on a violence-prone society. Some urban schools are located—as Thomas Jefferson High School is—in slum neighborhoods where drug sellers routinely kill one another, as well as innocent bystanders, on the streets surrounding the school. More than 50 Thomas Jefferson students died in the past five years, most of them in the neighborhood, a few in the school itself. Some violence erupts inside schools like Thomas Jefferson when intruders import neighborhood violence to the schools or when students—themselves products of the neighborhood—carry knives and guns to school in order “to protect themselves.” But the other three violent incidents—in Stockton, California; Dartmouth, Massachusetts; and Deer Park, Long Island—did not occur in particularly violent communities.

The most frightening cases of school violence, those of insanely furious armed intruders such as Patrick Purdy, are, like floods or tornadoes, not easy to predict or to prevent. Although these dramatically violent acts occur at schools, the acts cannot be blamed on anything the schools did or failed to do. Such unusual cases of school violence differ from *everyday* school violence: a group of students beating up a schoolmate, one student forcing another to surrender lunch money or jewelry. Mundane non-lethal, everyday school violence is more common in big-city schools than in suburban and rural ones, but it can be found in these schools as well.

Everyday school violence is more predictable than the sensational incidents that get widespread media attention, because everyday school violence is caused at least in part by educational policies and procedures governing schools and by how those policies are implemented in individual schools. This article addresses the causes of everyday school violence and the educational policies that might be changed to reduce it.

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## STATISTICAL FACTS ABOUT EVERYDAY SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Partly in response to alarming newspaper, magazine, and television reports of violence and vandalism in American public schools—not just occasionally or in the central cities, but chronically and all over the United States—the 93rd Congress decided in 1974 to require the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to conduct a survey to determine the extent and seriousness of school crime.

In January 1978, the National Institute of Education published a 350-page report to Congress, *Violent Schools—Safe Schools*, which detailed the findings of an elaborate study. Principals in 4,014 schools in large cities, smaller cities, suburban areas, and rural areas filled out questionnaires. Then, 31,373 students and 23,895 teachers in 642 junior and senior high schools throughout the country were questioned about their experiences with school crime—in particular whether they themselves had been victimized and, if so, how. From among these 31,373 students who filled out anonymous questionnaires, 6,283 were selected randomly for individual interviews on the same subject. Discrepancies between questionnaire reports of victimization and interview reports of victimization were probed to find out exactly what respondents meant when they answered that they had been attacked, robbed, or had property stolen from their desks or lockers. Finally, intensive field studies were conducted in 10 schools that had experienced especially serious crime problems in the past and had made some progress in overcoming them.

The results of this massive study are still worth paying attention to even though the data are nearly 20 years old. Because the study was conducted in schools, it remains the only large-scale national study of school violence that probed a broad range of questions about the school milieu. The other national surveys of school violence, one (McDermott, 1979) based on data collected at about the same time as the Safe Schools study, the other in 1989 (Bastian and Taylor, 1991), were based on a few questions about school victimizations in the interview schedule of the National Crime Survey—too few to throw light on why some schools seemed unable to control violent students.

The statistical picture of crime and violence in public secondary schools that emerged from these three studies placed the sensational media stories in the broader context of everyday school violence.

The report, *Violent Schools—Safe Schools*, was not mainly concerned with mischief or with foul language—although it mentioned in passing that a majority of American junior high school teachers (and about a third of senior high school teachers) were sworn at by their students or were the target of obscene gestures within the month preceding the survey. The report was concerned mainly with illegal acts and with the fear those acts aroused, not with language or gestures. Both on the questionnaires and in personal interviews, students were asked questions designed to provide an estimate of the amount of theft and violence in public secondary schools:

In [the previous month] did anyone steal things of

yours from your desk, locker, or other place at school?

Did anyone take money or things directly from you by force, weapons, or threats at school in [the previous month]?

At school in [the previous month] did anyone physically attack and hurt you?

Eleven percent of secondary-school students reported in personal interviews having something worth more than a dollar stolen from them in the past month. A fifth of these nonviolent thefts involved property worth \$10 or more. One-half of 1 percent of secondary-school students reported being robbed in a month's time—that is, having property taken from them by force, weapons, or threats. One out of nine of these robberies resulted in physical injuries to the victims. Students also told of being assaulted. One-and-one-third percent of secondary-school students reported being attacked over the course of a month, and two-fifths of these were physically injured. (Only 14 percent of the assaults, however, resulted in injuries serious enough to require medical attention.)

These percentages were based on face-to-face interviews with students. When samples of students were asked the same questions, by means of anonymous questionnaires, the estimates of victimization were about twice as high overall, and in the case of robbery four times as high. Methodological studies conducted by the school-crime researchers convinced them that the interview results were more valid than the questionnaire results for estimating the extent of victimization; some students might have had difficulty reading and understanding the questionnaire.

The report also contained data on the victimization of teachers, which were derived from questionnaires similar to those filled out by students. (There were no teacher interviews, perhaps because teachers were presumed more capable of understanding the questions and replying appropriately.) An appreciable proportion of teachers reported property stolen, but only a tiny proportion of teachers reported robberies and assaults. However, robberies of teachers in inner-city schools were three times as common as in rural schools, and assaults were nine times as common. Even in big-city secondary schools, less than 2 percent of the teachers surveyed cited assaults by students within the past month, but threats were more frequent. Some 36 percent of inner-city junior high school teachers reported that students threatened to hurt them, as did 24 percent of inner-city high school teachers. Understandably, many teachers said they were afraid of their students. Twenty-eight percent of big-city teachers reported hesitating to confront misbehaving students for fear of their own safety, as did 18 percent of smaller-city teachers, 11 percent of suburban teachers, and 7 percent of rural teachers.

Violence against teachers (assaults, rapes, and robberies) is more rare than violence against students. It is an appreciable problem only in a handful of inner-city schools, but, when it occurs, it has enormous symbolic importance. The violent victimization of teachers suggests that they are not in control of the school. In another segment of the Safe Schools study, principals were questioned about a variety of crimes against the school



***What would have been furtive larcenies in a well-ordered school can become robberies when the school authorities do not appear to be in control, just as angry words can turn into blows or stabbings.***

furtive misbehavior— theft of unattended property of other students and teachers, fights between students that stop as soon as teachers loom into view, graffiti scrawled secretly on toilet walls. But schools differ in the mix of nonviolent and violent crime: In some schools, violence was appreciable—and frightening—both to students and to teachers. What apparently happens is that what would have been furtive larcenies in a well-ordered school can become robberies when the school authorities do not appear to be in control, just as angry words can turn into blows or stabbings. Under conditions of weak control, students are tempted to employ force or the threat of force to get property they would like or to hurt someone they dislike. Consequently, student-on-student shakedowns (robberies) and attacks occur, infrequently in most schools, fairly often in some inner-city schools.

Thus, school crime partly reflects weak control and is partly the cause of further disorder, which in turn leads to more crime.

## **HOW DISORDER PROMOTES EVERYDAY SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

Everyday school violence is a visible threat to the educational process, but it's only the tip of the iceberg. Under the surface is what criminologist James Q. Wilson calls "disorder" (Wilson, 1985). Professor Wilson argues (in a more general analysis of the relationship between disorder and criminal violence) that neighborhoods ordinarily become vulnerable to the violent street crime that arouses so much fear among city dwellers only *after* they have first become disorderly. What makes a neighborhood "disorderly"? When panhandlers are able to accost passersby, when garbage is not collected often enough, when alcoholics drink in doorways and urinate in the street, when broken windows are not repaired or graffiti removed, when abandoned cars are allowed to disintegrate on the street—a sense of community is lost, even when the rate of statutory crimes is not particularly high. According to Wilson, "disorderly" means the violation of conventional expectations about proper conduct in "public places as well as allowing property to get run down" or broken. Wilson believes that the informal community controls effective in preventing crime cannot survive in a neighborhood where residents believe nobody cares:

[M]any residents will think that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise, and they will modify their behavior accordingly. They will use the streets less often, and when on the streets will stay apart from their fellows.... For some residents, this growing atomization will matter little, because the neighborhood is not their "home" but "the place where they live." But it will matter greatly to other people, whose lives derive meaning and satisfaction from local attachments rather than from worldly affairs; for them, the neighborhood will cease to exist except for a few reliable friends whom they arrange to meet.

Such an area is vulnerable to criminal invasion. Though it is not inevitable, it is more likely that here, rather than in places where people are confident they can regulate public behavior by informal controls, drugs will change hands, prostitutes will solicit, and cars will be stripped.

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as a community: trespassing, breaking and entering, theft of school property, vandalism, and the like. Based on these reports as well as on data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics in a survey of vandalism, *Violent Schools—Safe Schools* estimated the monetary cost of replacing damaged or stolen property at \$200 million per year. Vandalism, called "malicious mischief" by the legal system, is a nuisance in most schools, not a major threat to the educational process. But vandalism of school property, especially major vandalism and fire-setting, is a precursor of school violence because its existence suggests that school authorities are not in control and "anything goes."

Some of the statistics from the two national studies were reassuring. Both the 1978 Safe Schools study and the 1989 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Survey studies showed that, in the aggregate, school crime consisted mostly of nonviolent larcenies rather than violent attacks or robberies, which were rare. In other words, the bulk of school crime is essentially



Drunks will be robbed by boys who do it as a lark, and the prostitutes' customers will be robbed by men who do it purposefully and perhaps violently. Muggings will occur.

Persuasive as Wilson's thesis is with regard to *neighborhood* crime rates, it seems even more relevant to *school* crime. A school in which students wander the halls during times when they are supposed to be in class, where candy wrappers and empty soft-drink cans have been discarded in the corridors, and where graffiti can be seen on most walls, invites youngsters to test further and further the limits of acceptable behavior. One connection between the inability of school authorities to maintain order and an increasing rate of violence is that—for students who have little faith in the usefulness of the education they are supposed to be getting—challenging rules is part of the fun. When they succeed in littering or in writing on walls, they feel encouraged to challenge other, more sacred, rules like the prohibition against assaulting fellow students. If the process goes far enough, students come to think they can do *anything*. The school has become a jungle.

### The Significance of Disorder

Psychologists and sociologists long have recognized that families vary both in their cohesiveness and in their effectiveness at raising children; experts regard “dysfunctional families” as a factor in juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and the personality pathologies of young people that lead to violence. The concept of “school disorder” suggests that schools, like families, also vary in their cohesiveness and effectiveness. What school disorder means in concrete terms is that one or both of two departures from normality exists: A significant proportion of students do not seem to recognize the legitimacy of the rules governing the school's operation and therefore violate them frequently; and/or a significant proportion of students defy the authority of teachers and other staff members charged with enforcing the rules.

Although disorder is never total, at some point in the deterioration process, students get the impression that the perpetrators of violent behavior will not be detected or, if detected, will not be punished. When that happens, the school is out of control. Even lesser degrees of school disorder demoralize teachers, who make weaker efforts to control student misbehavior, lose enthusiasm for teaching, and take “sick days” when they are not really sick. Some teachers, often the youngest and the most dynamic, consider leaving the profession or transferring to private or suburban schools. A disorderly atmosphere also demoralizes the most academically able students, and they seek escape to academically better, safer schools. For other students, a disorderly atmosphere presents a golden opportunity for class-cutting and absenteeism. The proportions of potentially violent students grow in the disorderly school, and thus the likelihood decreases that violence will meet with an effective response from justifiably fearful teachers.

Disorder leads to violence partly because it prevents meaningful learning from taking place. Thus, an insolent student who responds to his history teacher's classroom question about the Civil War: “I won't tell you, asshole,” merely commits an offense against school order, not a

***Verbal abuse of a teacher, because it prevents a teacher from maintaining classroom authority, or even composure, may interfere with education more than would larceny from a desk or locker.***

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criminal offense in the larger society. Nevertheless, verbal abuse of a teacher, because it prevents a teacher from maintaining classroom authority, or even composure, may interfere with education more than would larceny from a desk or locker. The disrespectful student challenges the norm mandating a cooperative relationship between teachers and students to promote education. Under conditions of disorder, a building may look and smell like a school, but an essential ingredient is missing. Punching a teacher is only a further stage on the same road.

### **SOCIAL TRENDS LEADING TO DISORDERLY SCHOOLS**

Part of the explanation for the greater incidence of disorderly schools in central cities is that there is less consensus in inner cities that education is crucially important. Why? Because big cities tend to be the first stop of immigrants from less developed societies where, frequently, formal secular education is less valued. (Toby, 1957; Hawaii Crime Commission, 1980) Consequently, maintaining order is easier in rural and suburban schools than those in central cities. But the problem of school disorder is not solely a problem of central cities. Social trends in American society have tended greatly to reduce the effectiveness of adult controls over students in all public secondary schools. Some of these developments have simultaneously tempted enrolled students to be unruly. It is to these trends that I now turn.

### **The Separation of School and Community**

Historically, the development of American public education increasingly separated the school from students' families and neighborhoods. Even the one-room schoolhouse of rural America represented separation of the



educational process from the family. But the consolidated school districts in nonmetropolitan areas and the jumbo schools of the inner city carried separation much further. Large schools developed because the bigger the school, the lower the per capita cost of education; the more feasible it was to hire teachers with academic specialties like art, music, drama, or advanced mathematics; and the more likely that teachers and administrators could operate according to professional standards instead of in response to local sensitivities—for example, in teaching biological evolution or in designing a sex-education curriculum. But the unintended consequence of large schools that operated efficiently by bureaucratic and professional standards was to make them relatively autonomous from the local community. While the advantages of autonomy were immediately obvious, the disadvantages took longer to reveal themselves.

The main disadvantage was that students developed distinctive subcultures only tangentially related to education. Thus, in data collected during the 1950s Professor James Coleman found that American high school students seemed more preoccupied with athletics and personal popularity than with intellectual achievement. Students were doing their own thing, and their thing was not what teachers and principals were mainly concerned about. Presumably, if parents had been more closely involved in the educational process, they would have strengthened the academic influence of teachers. Even in the 1950s, student subcultures at school promoted misbehavior; in New York and other large cities, fights between members of street gangs from different neighborhoods sometimes broke out in secondary schools. However, Soviet achievements in space during the 1950s drew more attention to academic performance than to school crime and misbehavior. Insofar as community adults were brought into schools as teacher aides, they were introduced not to help control student misbehavior but to improve academic performance.

Until the 1960s and 1970s, school administrators did not sufficiently appreciate the potential for disorder when many hundreds of young people come together for congregate instruction. Principals did not like to call in police, preferring to organize their own disciplinary procedures. They did not believe in security guards, preferring to use teachers to monitor behavior in the halls and lunchrooms. They did not tell school architects about the need for what has come to be called “defensible space,” and as a result schools were built with too many ways to gain entrance from the outside and too many rooms and corridors where surveillance was difficult. Above all, principals did not consider that they had lost control over potential student misbehavior when parents were kept far away, not knowing how their children were behaving. The focus of PTAs was on the curriculum, and it was the better-educated, middle-class parents who tended to join such groups. In short, the isolation of the school from the local community always meant that, if a large enough proportion of students misbehaved, teachers and principals could not maintain order.

Conceivably, schools can exercise effective control even though parents and neighbors do not reinforce their values through membership in PTAs or through conferences with teachers. But social control is weakened by population mobility, which creates an atmosphere of

anonymity. Consider how much moving around there is in the United States. Only 82 percent of persons were living in the same residential unit in 1990 as they were in 1989. Residential mobility was much greater in the central cities of metropolitan areas. Since cities have long been considered places to which people migrate from rural areas, from other cities, and indeed from foreign countries, it may come as no surprise that during a five-year period, a majority of the residents of American central cities move to a different house. Yet the anonymity generated by this atmosphere of impermanence can plausibly explain why American society is not very successful in imposing order in urban neighborhoods. Anonymity is not confined to central cities. High rates of mobility are typical, creating the anonymity that complicates problems of social control. Schools vary of course in their rates of student turnover. In some big-city schools less than half the students complete an academic year; in some small-town schools, on the other hand, the bulk of students are together for four years of high school.

### **The Relentless Pressure to Keep Children In School Longer**

The most important trend underlying school disorder is the rising proportion of the age cohort attending high school in all modern societies. The reason for raising the age of compulsory school attendance is excellent: Children need all the education they can get in order to work at satisfying jobs in an increasingly complex economy and to be able to vote intelligently. However, higher ages of compulsory school attendance mean that some enrolled youngsters hate school and feel like prisoners. Obviously, such youngsters don't respect the rules or the rule-enforcers as much as students who regard education as an opportunity.

Compulsory education laws vary from state to state. But they share an assumption that the state can compel not only school attendance but school achievement. In reality, compulsory education laws are successful only in keeping children *enrolled*, sometimes longer than the nominal age of compulsory school attendance. Parental consent was often written into the law as necessary for withdrawal from school before reaching 17 or 18 or a specified level of educational achievement. Parents have little incentive to consent, partly because they hold unrealistic educational aspirations even for academically marginal students, partly because they recognize the difficulties faced by adolescents in the labor market and do not want their children loitering on the streets, and partly because benefits are available from programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children for children enrolled in school.

Like their parents, the disengaged students also have incentives to remain enrolled, although not necessarily to attend regularly. In addition to conforming to parental pressure, they are called “students” although they are not necessarily studious, and this status has advantages. The school is more pleasant than the streets in cold or rainy weather—it is an interesting place to be. Friends are visited; enemies attacked; sexual adventures begun; drugs bought and sold; valuables stolen. There are material

*(Continued on page 44)*



# DEFINING DEVIANCY DOWN

## *How We've Become Accustomed to Alarming Levels Of Crime and Destructive Behavior*

BY DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

**I**N ONE of the founding texts of sociology, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), Emile Durkheim set it down that "crime is normal." "It is," he wrote, "completely impossible for any society entirely free of it to exist." By defining what is deviant, we are enabled to know what is not, and hence to live by shared standards. Durkheim does not imply that we ought to approve of crime—"[p]ain has likewise nothing desirable about it"—but we need to understand its function. He saw religion, in the sociologist Randall Collins's terms, as "fundamentally a set of ceremonial actions, assembling the group, heightening its emotions, and focusing its members on symbols of their common belongingness." In this context "a punishment ceremony creates social solidarity."

The matter was pretty much left at that until seventy years later when, in 1965, Kai T. Erikson published *Wayward Puritans*, a study of "crime rates" in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The plan behind the book, as Erikson put it, was "to test [Durkheim's] notion that the number of deviant offenders a community can afford to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." The notion proved out very well indeed. Despite occasional crime waves, as when itinerant Quakers refused to take off their hats in the presence of magistrates, the amount of deviance in this corner of seventeenth-century New England fitted nicely with the supply of stocks and whipping posts. Erikson remarks:

It is one of the arguments of the ... study that the amount of deviation a community encounters is apt to remain fairly constant over time. To start at the beginning, it is a simple logistic fact that the number of deviancies

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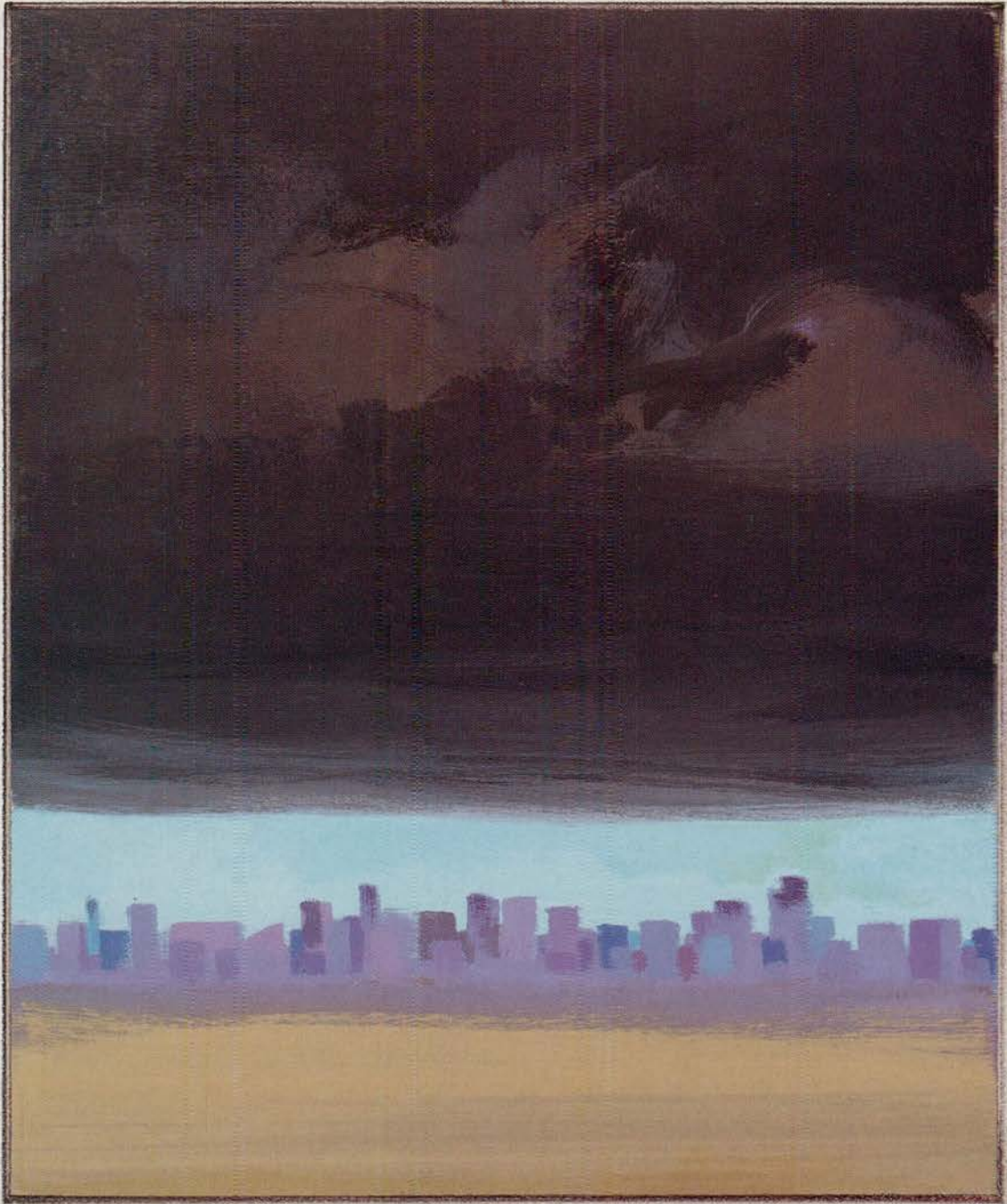
which come to a community's attention are limited by the kinds of equipment it uses to detect and handle them, and to that extent the rate of deviation found in a community is at least in part a function of the size and complexity of its social control apparatus. A community's capacity for handling deviance, let us say, can be roughly estimated by counting its prison cells and hospital beds, its policemen and psychiatrists, its courts and clinics. Most communities, it would seem, operate with the expectation that a relatively constant number of control agents is necessary to cope with a relatively constant number of offenders. The amount of men, money, and material assigned by society to "do something" about deviant behavior does not vary appreciably over time, and the implicit logic which governs the community's efforts to man a police force or maintain suitable facilities for the mentally ill seems to be that there is a fairly stable quota of trouble which should be anticipated.

In this sense, the agencies of control often seem to define their job as that of keeping deviance within bounds rather than that of obliterating it altogether. Many judges, for example, assume that severe punishments are a greater deterrent to crime than moderate ones, and so it is important to note that many of them are apt to impose harder penalties when crime seems to be on the increase and more lenient ones when it does not, almost as if the power of the bench were being used to keep the crime rate from getting out of hand.

Erikson was taking issue with what he described as "a dominant strain in sociological thinking" that took for granted that a well-structured society "is somehow designed to prevent deviant behavior from occurring." In both authors, Durkheim and Erikson, there is an undertone that suggests that, with deviancy, as with most social goods, there is the continuing problem of demand exceeding supply. Durkheim invites us to

imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman







will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such.

It would not appear that Durkheim anywhere contemplates the possibility of too much crime. Clearly his theory would have required him to deplore such a development, but the possibility seems never to have occurred to him.

Erikson, writing much later in the twentieth century, contemplates both possibilities. "Deviant persons can be said to supply needed services to society." There is no doubt a tendency for the supply of any needed thing to run short. But he is consistent. There can, he believes, be *too much* of a good thing. Hence "the number of deviant offenders a community *can afford* to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." [My emphasis]

Social scientists are said to be on the lookout for poor fellows getting a bum rap. But here is a theory that clearly implies that there are circumstances in which society will choose *not* to notice behavior that would be otherwise controlled, or disapproved, or even punished.

It appears to me that this is in fact what we in the United States have been doing of late. I proffer the thesis that, over the past generation, since the time Erikson wrote, the amount of deviant behavior in American society has increased beyond the levels the community can "afford to recognize" and that, accordingly, we have been redefining deviancy so as to exempt much conduct previously stigmatized, and also quietly raising the "normal" level in categories where behavior is now abnormal by any earlier standard. This redefining has evoked fierce resistance from defenders of "old" standards, and accounts for much of the present "cultural war" such as proclaimed by many at the 1992 Republican National Convention.

Let me, then, offer three categories of redefinition in these regards: the *altruistic*, the *opportunistic*, and the *normalizing*.

The first category, the *altruistic*, may be illustrated by the deinstitutionalization movement within the mental health profession that appeared in the 1950s. The second category, the *opportunistic*, is seen in the interest group rewards derived from the acceptance of "alternative" family structures. The third category, the *normalizing*, is to be observed in the growing acceptance of unprecedented levels of violent crime.

**I**T HAPPENS that I was present at the beginning of the deinstitutionalization movement. Early in 1955 Averell Harriman, then the new governor of New York, met with his new commissioner of mental hygiene, Dr. Paul Hoch, who described the development, at one of the state mental hospitals, of a tranquilizer derived from rauwolfia. The medication had been clinically tested and appeared to be an effective treatment for many severely psychotic patients, thus increasing the percentage of patients discharged. Dr. Hoch recommended that it be used system-wide; Harriman found the money. That same year Congress created a Joint Commission on Mental Health and Illness whose mission was to formulate "comprehensive and realistic recommendations" in this area, which was then a matter of considerable public concern. Year after year, the population of mental institutions

grew. Year after year, new facilities had to be built. Never mind the complexities: population growth and such like matters. There was a general unease. Durkheim's constant continued to be exceeded. (In *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, Rudy Abramson writes: "New York's mental hospitals in 1955 were overflowing warehouses, and new patients were being admitted faster than space could be found for them. When he was inaugurated, 94,000 New Yorkers were confined to state hospitals. Admissions were running at more than 2,500 a year and rising, making the Department of Mental Hygiene the fastest-growing, most-expensive, most-hopeless department of state government.")

The discovery of tranquilizers was adventitious. Physicians were seeking cures for disorders that were just beginning to be understood. Even a limited success made it possible to believe that the incidence of this particular range of disorders, which had seemingly required persons to be confined against their will or even awareness, could be greatly reduced. The congressional commission submitted its report in 1961; it proposed a nationwide program of deinstitutionalization.

Late in 1961, President Kennedy appointed an interagency committee to prepare legislative recommendations based upon the report. I represented Secretary of Labor Arthur J. Goldberg on this committee and drafted its final submission. This included the recommendation of the National Institute of Mental Health that 2,000 community mental health centers (one per 100,000 of population) be built by 1980. A buoyant Presidential Message to Congress followed early in 1963. "If we apply our medical knowledge and social insights fully," President Kennedy pronounced, "all but a small portion of the mentally ill can eventually achieve a wholesome and a constructive social adjustment." A "concerted national attack on mental disorders [was] now possible and practical." The president signed the Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act on October 31, 1963, his last public bill-signing ceremony. He gave me a pen.

The mental hospitals emptied out. At the time Governor Harriman met with Dr. Hoch in 1955, there were 93,314 adult residents of mental institutions maintained by New York State. As of August 1992, there were 11,363. This occurred across the nation. However, the number of community mental health centers never came near the goal of the 2,000 proposed community centers. Only some 482 received federal construction funds between 1963 and 1980. The next year, 1981, the program was folded into the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse block grant and disappeared from view. Even when centers were built, the results were hardly as hoped for. David F. Musto of Yale writes that the planners had bet on improving national mental health "by improving the quality of general community life through expert knowledge, not merely by more effective treatment of the already ill." There was no such knowledge.

However, worse luck, the belief that there *was* such knowledge took hold within sectors of the profession that saw institutionalization as an unacceptable mode of social control. These activists subscribed to a redefining mode of their own. Mental patients were said to have been "labeled," and were not to be drugged. Musto says of the battles that followed that they were "so intense and dramatic precisely because both sides shared the fan-



***At the time Governor Harriman met with Dr. Hoch in 1955, there were 93,314 adult residents of mental institutions maintained by New York State. As of August 1992, there were 11,363.***

tasy of an omnipotent and omniscient mental health technology which could thoroughly reform society; the prize seemed eminently worth fighting for."

But even as the federal government turned to other matters, the mental institutions continued to release inmates. Professor Fred Siegel of Cooper Union observes: "In the great wave of moral deregulation that began in the mid-1960s, the poor and the insane were freed from the fetters of middle-class mores." They might henceforth sleep in doorways as often as they chose. The problem of the homeless appeared, characteristically defined as persons who lacked "affordable housing."

The *altruistic* mode of redefinition is just that. There is no reason to believe that there was any real increase in mental illness at the time deinstitutionalization began.

Yet there was such a perception, and this enabled good people to try to do good, however unavailing in the end.

**O**UR SECOND, or *opportunistic* mode of redefinition, reveals at most a nominal intent to do good. The true object is to do well, a long-established motivation among mortals. In this pattern, a growth in deviancy makes possible a transfer of resources, including prestige, to those who control the deviant population. This control would be jeopardized if any serious effort were made to reduce the deviancy in question. This leads to assorted strategies for redefining the behavior in question as not all that deviant, really.

In the years from 1963 to 1965, the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of Labor picked up the first tremors of what Samuel H. Preston, in the 1984 Presidential Address to the Population Association of America, would call "the earthquake that shuddered through the American family in the past twenty years." The *New York Times* recently provided a succinct accounting of Preston's point:

Thirty years ago, 1 in every 40 white children was born to an unmarried mother; today it is 1 in 5, according to federal data. Among blacks, 2 of 3 children are born to an unmarried mother; 30 years ago the figure was 1 in 5.

In 1991, Paul Offner and I published longitudinal data showing that, of children born in the years 1967-69, some 22.1 percent were dependent on welfare—that is to say, Aid to Families with Dependent Children—before reaching age 18. This broke down as 15.7 percent for white children, 72.3 percent for black children. Projections for children born in 1980 gave rates of 22.2 percent and 82.9 percent respectively. A year later, a *New York Times* series on welfare and poverty called this a "startling finding ... a symptom of vast social calamity."

And yet there is little evidence that these facts are regarded as a calamity in municipal government. To the contrary, there is general acceptance of the situation as normal. Political candidates raise the subject, often to the point of dwelling on it. But while there is a good deal of demand for symbolic change, there is none of the marshaling of resources that is associated with significant social action. Nor is there any lack of evidence that there is a serious social problem here.

Richard T. Gill writes of "an accumulation of data showing that intact biological parent families offer children very large advantages compared to any other family or non-family structure one can imagine." Correspondingly, the disadvantages associated with single-parent families spill over into other areas of social policy that now attract great public concern. Leroy L. Schwartz, M.D., and Mark W. Stanton argue that the real quest regarding a government-run health system such as that of Canada or Germany is whether it would work "in a country that has social problems that countries like Canada and Germany don't share to the same extent." Health problems reflect ways of living. The way of life associated with "such social pathologies as the breakdown of the family structure" lead to medical pathologies. Schwartz and Stanton conclude: "The United States is paying dearly for its social and behavioral problems," for they have now become medical problems as well.

To cite another example, there is at present no more



vexing problem of social policy in the United States than that posed by education. A generation of ever-more ambitious statutes and reforms have produced weak responses at best and a fair amount of what could more simply be called dishonesty. ("Everyone knows that Head Start works." By the year 2000, American students will "be first in the world in science and mathematics.") None of this should surprise us. The 1966 report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* by James S. Coleman and his associates established that the family background of students played a much stronger role in student achievement relative to variations in the ten (and still standard) measures of school quality.

In a 1992 study entitled *America's Smallest School: The Family*, Paul Barton came up with the elegant and persuasive concept of the parent-pupil ratio as a measure of school quality. Barton, who was on the policy planning staff in the Department of Labor in 1965, noted the great increase in the proportion of children living in single-parent families since then. He further noted that the proportion "varies widely among the states" and is related to "variation in achievement" among them. The correlation between the percentage of eighth graders living in two-parent families and average mathematics proficiency is a solid .74. North Dakota, highest on the math test, is second highest on the family compositions scale—that is, it is second in the percentage of kids coming from two-parent homes. The District of Columbia, lowest on the family scale, is second lowest in the test score.

A few months before Barton's study appeared, I published an article showing that the correlation between eighth-grade math scores and distance of state capitals from the Canadian border was .522, a respectable showing. By contrast, the correlation with per pupil expenditure was a derisory .203. I offered the policy proposal that states wishing to improve their schools should move closer to Canada. This would be difficult, of course, but so would it be to change the parent-pupil ratio. Indeed, the 1990 Census found that for the District of Columbia, apart from Ward 3 west of Rock Creek Park, the percentage of children living in single-parent families in the seven remaining wards ranged from a low of 63.6 percent to a high of 75.7. This being a one-time measurement, over time the proportions become asymptotic. And this in the nation's capital. No demand for change comes from that community—or as near to no demand as makes no matter. *For there is good money to be made out of bad schools.* This is a statement that will no doubt please many a hard heart, and displease many genuinely concerned to bring about change. To the latter, a group in which I would like to include myself, I would only say that we are obliged to ask why things do not change.

For a period there was some speculation that, if family structure got bad enough, this mode of deviancy would have less punishing effects on children. In 1991 Deborah A. Dawson, of the National Institutes of Health, examined the thesis that "the psychological effects of divorce and single parenthood on children were strongly influenced by a sense of shame in being 'different' from the norm." If this were so, the effect should have fallen off in the 1980s, when being from a single-parent home became much more common. It did not. "The problems associated with task overload among single parents are

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***"The relationship is so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. This conclusion shows up time and time again in the literature; poverty is far from the sole determinant of crime."***

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more constant in nature," Dawson wrote, adding that since the adverse effects had not diminished, they were "not based on stigmatization but rather on inherent problems in alternative family structures"—*alternative* here meaning other than two-parent families. We should take note of such candor. Writing in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* in 1989, Sara McLanahan and Karen Booth noted: "Whereas a decade ago the prevailing view was that single motherhood had no harmful effects on children, recent research is less optimistic."

The year 1990 saw more of this lesson. In a paper prepared for the Progressive Policy Institute, Elaine Ciulla Kamarck and William A. Galston wrote that "if the economic effects of family breakdown are clear, the psy-



chological effects are just now coming into focus." They cite Karl Zinsmeister:

There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate children often end up with intellectual, physical, and emotional scars that persist for life.... We talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, and the problems of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.

As for juvenile crime, they cite Douglas Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura: "Neighborhoods with larger percentages of youth (those aged 12 to 20) and areas with higher percentages of single-parent households also have higher rates of violent crime." They add: "The relationship is so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. This conclusion shows up time and time again in the literature; poverty is far from the sole determinant of crime." But the large point is avoided. In a 1992 essay "The Expert's Story of Marriage," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead examined "the story of marriage as it is conveyed in today's high school and college textbooks." Nothing amiss in this tale.

It goes like this:

The life course is full of exciting options. The lifestyle options available to individuals seeking a fulfilling personal relationship include living a heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual single lifestyle; living in a commune; having a group marriage; being a single parent; or living together. Marriage is yet another lifestyle choice. However, before choosing marriage, individuals should weigh its costs and benefits against other lifestyle options and should consider what they want to get out of their intimate relationships. Even within marriage, different people want different things. For example, some people marry for companionship, some marry in order to have children, some marry for emotional and financial security. Though marriage can offer a rewarding path to personal growth, it is important to remember that it cannot provide a secure or permanent status. Many people will make the decision between marriage and singlehood many times throughout their life.

Divorce represents part of the normal family life cycle. It should not be viewed as either deviant or tragic, as it has been in the past. Rather, it establishes a process for "uncoupling" and thereby serves as the foundation for individual renewal and "new beginnings."

History commences to be rewritten. In 1992, the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families of the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing on "Investing in Families: A Historical Perspective." A fact sheet prepared by committee staff began:

"INVESTING IN FAMILIES: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE"

#### FACT SHEET

##### *HISTORICAL SHIFTS IN FAMILY COMPOSITION CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM*

While in modern times the percentage of children living with one parent has increased, more children lived with just one parent in Colonial America.

The fact sheet proceeded to list program on program for which federal funds were allegedly reduced in the 1980s. We then come to a summary.

Between 1970 and 1991, the value of AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] benefits decreased by 41 percent. In spite of proven success of Head Start, only 28 percent of eligible children are being served. As of 1990, more than \$18 billion in child support went uncollected. At the same time, the poverty rate among single-parent families with children under 18 was 44 percent. Between 1980 and 1990, the rate of growth in the total federal budget was four times greater than the rate of growth in children's programs.

In other words, benefits paid to mothers and children have gone down steadily, as indeed they have done. But no proposal is made to restore benefits to an earlier level, or even to maintain their value, as is the case with other "indexed" Social Security programs. Instead we go directly to the subject of education spending.

Nothing new. In 1969, President Nixon proposed a guaranteed income, the Family Assistance Plan. This was described as an "income strategy" as against a "service strategy." It may or may not have been a good idea, but it was a clear one, and the resistance of service providers to it was equally clear. In the end it was defeated, to the huzzahs of the advocates of "welfare rights." What is going on here is simply that a large increase in what once was seen as deviancy has provided opportunity to a wide spectrum of interest groups that benefit from redefining the problem as essentially normal and doing little to reduce it.

**O**UR *NORMALIZING* category most directly corresponds to Erikson's proposition that "the number of deviant offenders a community can afford to recognize is likely to remain stable over time." Here we are dealing with the popular psychological notion of "denial." In 1965, having reached the conclusion that there would be a dramatic increase in single-parent families, I reached the further conclusion that this would in turn lead to a dramatic increase in crime. In an article in *America*, I wrote:

From the wild Irish slums of the nineteenth-century Eastern seaboard to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history: a community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future—that community asks for and gets chaos. Crime, violence, unrest, unrestrained lashing out at the whole social structure—that is not only to be expected; it is very near to inevitable.

The inevitable, as we now know, has come to pass, but here again our response is curiously passive. Crime is a more or less continuous subject of political pronouncement, and from time to time it will be at or near the top of opinion polls as a matter of public concern. But it never gets much further than that. In the words spoken from the bench, Judge Edwin Torres of the New York State Supreme Court, Twelfth Judicial District, described how "the slaughter of the innocent marches unabated: subway riders, bodega owners, cab drivers, babies; in



laundromats, at cash machines, on elevators, in hallways." In personal communication, he writes: "This numbness, this near narcoleptic state can diminish the human condition to the level of combat infantrymen, who, in protracted campaigns, can eat their battlefield rations seated on the bodies of the fallen, friend and foe alike. A society that loses its sense of outrage is doomed to extinction." There is no expectation that this will change, nor any efficacious public insistence that it do so. The crime level has been *normalized*.

Consider the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. In 1929 in Chicago during Prohibition, four gangsters killed seven gangsters on February 14. The nation was shocked. The event became legend. It merits not one but two entries in the *World Book Encyclopedia*. I leave it to others to judge, but it would appear that the society in the 1920s was simply not willing to put up with this degree of deviancy. In the end, the Constitution was amended, and Prohibition, which lay behind so much gangster violence, ended.

In recent years, again in the context of illegal traffic in controlled substances, this form of murder has returned. But it has done so at a level that induces denial. James Q. Wilson comments that Los Angeles has the equivalent of a St. Valentine's Day Massacre every weekend. Even the most ghastly re-enactments of such human slaughter produce only moderate responses. On the morning after the close of the Democratic National Convention in New

York City in July, there was such an account in the second section of the *New York Times*. It was not a big story; bottom of the page, but with a headline that got your attention. "3 Slain in Bronx Apartment, but a Baby is Saved." A subhead continued: "A mother's last act was to hide her little girl under the bed." The article described a drug execution; the now-routine blindfolds made from duct tape; a man and a woman and teenager involved. "Each had been shot once in the head." The police had found them a day later. They also found, under a bed, a three-month-old baby, dehydrated but alive. A lieutenant remarked of the mother, "In her last dying act she protected her baby. She probably knew she was going to die, so she stuffed the baby where she knew it would be safe." But the matter was left there. The police would do their best. But the event passed quickly; forgotten by the next day, it will never make the *World Book*.

Nor is it likely that any great heed will be paid to an uncanny re-enactment of the Prohibition drama a few months later, also in the Bronx. The *Times* story, page B3, reported:

### 9 MEN POSING AS POLICE ARE INDICTED IN 3 MURDERS

DRUG DEALERS WERE KIDNAPPED FOR RANSOM

The *Daily News* story, same day, page 17, made it *four* murders, adding nice details about torture techniques.

## MOYNIHAN IS RIGHT: WE MUST DRAW THE LINE

BY JOHN COLE

AS AMERICANS, we take pride in being a tolerant society. We are tolerant when it comes to expressions of opinion about religion and lifestyle, for example. There is one area, though, in which we should have zero tolerance. We should have no tolerance for violence or abusive behavior.

Unfortunately, during the past 30 years or so, we have increased our tolerance of disruptive behavior. Senator Moynihan has ably outlined the consequences for society at large of an increasingly high level of tolerance for violence. Nowhere are the catastrophic consequences more evident than in our public schools.

In the past 30 years, schools have adopted a very relaxed attitude toward students who disrupt our campuses. This did not come about by accident; it was part of a general philosophy preached in reaction to the stern school settings that domi-

nated the school scene during the first part of this century. Teachers were told to be less judgmental and more tolerant of students. We were told we should consider the problems faced by students, and make allowances for the aberrant behavior of students who came to school with societal problems. We now are reaping the bitter fruits of that philosophy.

Many of us can remember the days when the most serious behavior problems consisted of running in the halls or cutting in line in the cafeteria. There was the occasional physical fight among students, but it was rare and it was dealt with swiftly. A recent survey of teachers from across the state of Texas, conducted by the Texas Federation of Teachers, shows how high the threshold for what we have come to tolerate has risen. The teachers who responded to the survey reported levels of disrespect, abusive behavior, and violence that were unthinkable a generation ago.

They also reported a failure of administrative support for teachers who try to enforce discipline, as well as inadequate alternative placements for dangerous students.

Thirty-six percent of the teachers said they had been the target of profane or abusive language; sixty-three percent said "threats of physical violence to students" were a "significant problem" at their school, and almost one in five (17 percent) said they personally had been threatened.

THE NATURAL tendency of children is to test the limits of authority. Once it is established that it is no big deal to curse at a fellow student, why not resort to violence and see what happens? If it is no big deal to hit a fellow student, how about cursing out a teacher? If you can get away with swearing at the teacher, what about slugging her? The experiments will continue, until the limit is reached.

We cannot let a few children—



The gang members posed as federal Drug Enforcement Administration agents, real badges and all. The victims were drug dealers, whose families were uneasy about calling the police. Ransom seems generally to have been set in the \$650,000 range. Some paid. Some got it in the back of the head. So it goes.

Yet, violent killings, often random, go on unabated. Peaks continue to attract some notice. But these are peaks above "average" levels that thirty years ago would have been thought epidemic.

LOS ANGELES, AUG. 24 (Reuters) Twenty-two people were killed in Los Angeles over the weekend, the worst period of violence in the city since it was ravaged by riots earlier this year, the police said today.

Twenty-four others were wounded by gunfire or stabings, including a 19-year old woman in a wheelchair who was shot in the back when she failed to respond to a motorist who asked for directions in south Los Angeles.

["The guy stuck a gun out of the window and just fired at her," said a police spokesman, Lieut. David Rock. The woman was later described as being in stable condition.

Among those who died was an off-duty officer, shot while investigating reports of a prowler in a neighbor's yard, and a Little League baseball coach who had argued with the father of a boy he was coaching.]

The police said at least nine of the deaths were gang-related, including that of a 14-year old girl killed in a fight

between rival gangs.

Fifty-one people were killed in three days of rioting that started April 29 after the acquittal of four police officers in the beating of Rodney G. King.

Los Angeles usually has above-average violence during August, but the police were at a loss to explain the sudden rise. On an average weekend in August, 14 fatalities occur.

Not to be outdone, two days later the poor Bronx came up with a near record, as reported in *New York Newsday*:

Armed with 9-mm. pistols, shotguns and M-16 rifles, a group of masked men and women poured out of two vehicles in the South Bronx early yesterday and sprayed a stretch of Longwood Avenue with a fusillade of bullets, injuring 12 people.

A Kai Erikson of the future will surely need to know that the Department of Justice in 1990 found that Americans reported only about 38 percent of all crimes and 48 percent of violent crimes. This, too, can be seen as a means of *normalizing* crime. In much the same way, the vocabulary of crime reporting can be seen to move toward the normal-seeming. A teacher is shot on her way to class. The *Times* subhead reads: "Struck in the Shoulder in the Year's First Shooting Inside a School." First of the season.

It is too early, however, to know how to regard the arrival of the doctors on the scene declaring crime a "public health emergency." The June 10, 1992, issue of

and frequently it is just a few children—terrorize their teachers and other students. The key here is to draw the line on student behavior early and to set very firm limits on what schools will tolerate. Here in Texas, we've started a statewide campaign for "Zero Tolerance of Violence." At the very least, we should establish that schools are "violence-free zones" and have zero tolerance for any violent behavior. In some schools, student fighting in the hallway or in the classroom is punished by a three-day suspension. In other schools, the punishment is even less. We should clearly establish that it is absolutely intolerable to have students settling their differences through violent means on school grounds. Students who resort to violence inside the school building should be removed from that school setting and placed in some other setting, where they will not constitute a threat to the other members of school society. This would send a clear message not only to the offenders but to other students that violence is not an acceptable means of settling dis-

putes in a civilized society.

If we do not have zero tolerance for violence, how much tolerance should we have? How many people is a student allowed to assault? One? Two?

We all know from hard experience that, left unchecked, violence tends to increase in magnitude. It is easy to understand why this is so. If you tell me my dispute with another person will be settled by physical combat, I will seek to win that combat. If my opponent seems to be physically stronger, I will arm myself. If my opponent has armed himself, I may seek better weaponry, or I may try to find allies to assist me in my cause.

Once we allow for the possibility of violence at schools, we start in motion a natural sequence of events that leads to schools in which violence and abusive behavior are common, and where student gangs are active.

Schools certainly do not deserve the blame for the horrible problems we now face from violence in America. However, schools do deserve part of the blame. The

absence of meaningful punishment for those who commit violent acts reinforces the belief that violence is an appropriate way for one member of society to settle disputes with another member.

If it is appropriate to curse out or even assault a teacher, why treat an employer any differently? Indeed, if a teacher is fair game for such verbal and physical assault, why should a police officer be immune? Logically one authority figure should be treated as another. When schools treat violent behavior lightly, we inadvertently teach students the wrong lesson. Should we be surprised when they apply that lesson outside of school?

The correct lesson to teach is that society *will not tolerate* any form of violence or abusive behavior. If we do not draw the line at zero tolerance, where do we draw it?

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the *Journal of the American Medical Association* was devoted entirely to papers on the subject of violence, principally violence associated with firearms. An editorial in the issue signed by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and Dr. George D. Lundberg is entitled: "Violence in America: A Public Health Emergency." Their proposition is admirably succinct.

Regarding violence in our society as purely a sociological matter, or one of law enforcement, has led to unmitigated failure. It is time to test further whether violence can be amenable to medical/public health interventions.

We believe violence in America to be a public health emergency, largely unresponsive to methods thus far used in its control. The solutions are very complex, but possible.

The authors cited the relative success of epidemiologists in gaining some jurisdiction in the area of motor vehicle casualties by redefining what had been seen as a law enforcement issue into a public health issue. Again, this process began during the Harriman administration in New York in the 1950s. In the 1960s the morbidity and mortality associated with automobile crashes was, it could be argued, a major public health problem; the public health strategy, it could also be argued, brought the problem under a measure of control. Not in "the 1970s and 1980s," as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* would have us think: The federal legislation

## NO SURRENDER

I WAS hugely encouraged by an address which [New York City] Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly gave to the FBI's Second Symposium on Addressing Violent Crime Through Community Involvement. His address was entitled "Toward a New Intolerance." In it, he called for an intolerance of violence, an end to what Judge Edwin Torres describes as our "narcoleptic state" of acceptance.

There is an expectation of crime in our lives. We are in danger of becoming captive to that expectation, and to the new tolerance of criminal behavior, not only in regard to violent crime. A number of years ago there began to appear in the windows of automobiles parked on the streets of American cities signs which read: "No radio." Rather than express outrage or even annoyance at the possibility of a car break-in, people tried to communicate with a potential thief in conciliatory terms. The translation of "No radio" is: "Please break into someone else's car, there's nothing in mine." These "No radio" signs are flags of urban surrender. They are handwritten capitulations. Instead of "No radio," we need new signs that say "No surrender."

*Excerpted with permission from "No Surrender" by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, which appeared in the Summer 1993 issue of City Journal, published by the Manhattan Institute.*

involved was signed in 1965. Such a strategy would surely produce insights into the control of violence that elude law enforcement professionals, but whether it would change anything is another question.

For some years now I have had legislation in the Senate that would prohibit the manufacture of .25 and .32 caliber bullets. These are the two calibers most typically used with the guns known as Saturday Night Specials. "Guns don't kill people," I argue, "bullets do."

Moreover, we have a two-century supply of handguns but only a four-year supply of ammunition. A public health official would immediately see the logic of trying to control the supply of bullets rather than of guns.

Even so, now that the doctor has come, it is important that criminal violence not be defined down by epidemiologists. Doctors Koop and Lundberg note that in 1990 in the state of Texas "deaths from firearms, for the first time in many decades, surpassed deaths from motor vehicles, by 3,443 to 3,309." A good comparison, and yet keep in mind that the number of motor vehicle deaths, having leveled off since the 1960s, is now pretty well accepted as normal at somewhat less than 50,000 a year, which is somewhat less than the level of the 1960s—the "carnage," as it once was thought to be, is now accepted as normal. This is the price we pay for high-speed transportation: There is a benefit associated with it. But there is no benefit associated with homicide, and no good in getting used to it. Epidemiologists have powerful insights that can contribute to lessening the medical trauma, but they must be wary of normalizing the social pathology that leads to such trauma.

THE HOPE—if there be such—of this essay has been twofold. It is, first, to suggest that the Durkheim constant, as I put it, is maintained by a dynamic process which adjusts upwards and *downwards*. Liberals have traditionally been alert for upward redefining that does injustice to individuals. Conservatives have been correspondingly sensitive to downward redefining that weakens societal standards. Might it not help if we could all agree that there is a dynamic at work here? It is not revealed truth, nor yet a scientifically derived formula. It is simply a pattern we observe in ourselves. Nor is it rigid. There may once have been an unchanging supply of jail cells which more or less determined the number of prisoners. No longer. We are building new prisons at a prodigious rate. Similarly, the executioner is back. There is something of a competition in Congress to think up new offenses for which the death penalty is seemed the only available deterrent. Possibly also modes of execution, as in "fry the kingpins." Even so, we are getting used to a lot of behavior that is not good for us.

As noted earlier, Durkheim states that there is "nothing desirable" about pain. Surely what he meant was that there is nothing pleasurable. Pain, even so, is an indispensable warning signal. But societies under stress, much like individuals, will turn to pain killers of various kinds that end up concealing real damage. There is surely nothing desirable about *this*. If our analysis wins general acceptance, if, for example, more of us came to share Judge Torres's genuine alarm at "the trivialization of the lunatic crime rate" in his city (and mine), we might surprise ourselves how well we respond to the manifest decline of the American civic order. Might. □



# GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH HISTORY



BY MARCIA REECER

**“W**ANTED: ESSAYS for a history quarterly devoted to the work of students.” Will Fitzhugh, the editor of *The Concord Review*, has been putting out calls like this since 1987 when he embarked on the first issue. One of the few magazines that prints only the work of students—and the only one that specializes in scholarly articles—the *Review* has published essays from as far away as Tasmania and Singapore, but most come from American high school students.

You might not know this if you picked up the magazine—or read it. It is all type, including the cover, and has

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the old-fashioned (some might say stuffy) look of a scholarly journal. But there is nothing stuffy about the articles. They are lively, straightforward explorations of ideas and events that obviously fascinated the writers. One of Will Fitzhugh’s favorite stories is about the officer of a foundation who, having turned down the *Review*’s application for financial support, glanced at one of the essays. Before he knew it, he had read the whole 150-page issue.

Fitzhugh got the idea for *The Concord Review* when he was teaching history at Concord High School in Concord, Massachusetts. Every year there were a couple of students who really got into the long essays

ILLUSTRATED BY SUSAN DAVIS



he assigned them. They caught fire, and, for these kids, it was no longer a question of how many pages they were supposed to produce or the number of books required for their reference list. The subject took over, and the students were hungry to find out all they could.

But when the essays came in, Will Fitzhugh was struck by how little he could do to recognize their excellence. Of course, he could give the writers A's, and that was important, but it didn't seem commensurate with what they had accomplished. There must be some other and better way to recognize this kind of achievement. Also, he reflected that if his students wrote essays like this, there must be lots of kids all over the country doing similar things. And so *The Concord Review* was on its way. The idea was neat and obvious—the way a lot of the best ideas are: Give high school students a vehicle for pub-

lishing their excellent history essays and an audience of their peers.

What kinds of articles appear in *The Concord Review*, and who writes them? Fitzhugh asks for 4,000-word essays, but he has accepted ones that are shorter. (For example, the articles by Britta Waller and Jerome Reiter, excerpted below, both ran about 2,500 words.) Essays are sent in by students from private and public schools (about fifty-fifty), and American history is the most popular subject. Some writers try to answer difficult questions about recent history. For example: Was the United States soft in its treatment of Nazis after World War II? What were the origins of U.S. involvement in Vietnam? Is U.S. immigration policy traditionally racist? Others go for constitutional issues or topics in social history, or the implications of historical movements or events. The

## Alexander Hamilton: The Duel with Aaron Burr

BY JEROME REITER

*[Jerome Reiter wrote this essay for an AP history class when he was a student at Mountain Lakes High School in Powerville, New Jersey. His essay traces and analyzes the growth of the animosity between Hamilton and Burr, which climaxed in their duel. The passage is taken from the beginning of Reiter's essay and follows a long quotation describing Hamilton's death.]*

THUS, AS witnessed by Aaron Burr's close friend, Matthew L. Davis, ended the life of one of America's greatest statesmen. Davis's account, though precise and informative, did not tell the entire story; in fact, he omitted one important detail of the plot. Why did Hamilton and Burr fatally meet at Weckawken on July 11, 1804 in the first place? Was it solely the political aftermath of the 1804 New York gubernatorial race, or were other factors involved? Indeed, Hamilton himself wrote, "I am conscious of no ill will to Col. Burr, distinct from political opposition, which, as I trust has proceeded from pure and upright motives." Yet evidence seems to indicate that the 1804 strife was only a climax, and that their antipathy had originated over twenty-five years earlier.

When their family backgrounds, personal occupations, and national ambitions are taken into account, it becomes clear that Hamilton and Burr were on a collision course well before 1804.

Upon cursory examination of these two men, it seems unlikely that they would become rivals. There were probably no two men in the colonies who resembled each other so much. Physically, both were small, compact men of military carriage with penetrating eyes and persuasive voices. Their dress was highly fashionable and dapper, as was the company they kept. Both were adept speakers, particularly when paying compliments to the ladies. Hamilton and Burr were equally driven by a fervent desire to lead American troops in victories.... Yet these same likenesses contributed greatly to the antagonism between them. They were too much alike in temperament and ambition; their hopes clashed. As the old saying goes, opposites tend to attract one another, but likes repel.

## The Split in the 19th Century Woman Suffrage Movement

BY RACHEL DAVIDSON

*[Davidson's essay, written when she was a junior at Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts, discusses how the issue*

*of which would come first—suffrage for women or suffrage for African-American men—led to a tragic division in the woman suffrage movement. This passage describes the 1867 Kansas campaign where two referendums had been put on the ballot, one favoring woman suffrage and the other suffrage for black males. "Anthony," "Stanton," and "Stone" refer to Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone, all of whom campaigned for woman suffrage.]*

WELL INTO the Kansas campaign, an openly racist Democrat, George Francis Train, offered to speak for woman suffrage. After deliberating several weeks, Anthony accepted his offer. Her willingness to associate the AERA [American Equal Rights Association] with a man who slandered freedmen and used women's rights as a weapon against black enfranchisement, was shocking to her former allies. Still she and Stanton defended him, saying "... you do not shut out all in favor of woman suffrage, why should we not accept all in favor of woman suffrage to our platform and association, even though they be rabid pro-slavery Democrats?" Stanton and Anthony went further, not only associating with racists, but, by the end, they began preaching black inferiority themselves....

From the beginning of the Kansas campaign, where they strongly advocated universal suffrage, to the end, when, motivated



essays vary in quality—the way they do in any magazine—but the general level is extraordinarily high.

It is no surprise that *The Concord Review* has gotten a lot of praise. Al Shanker devoted two of his “Where We Stand” columns to it, and Will Fitzhugh has gotten warm letters from famous names in education like TheodoreSizer and Diane Ravitch as well as from teachers and students from all over the world. The *Review* has been called a hopeful sign—in the midst of much gloom—of what our kids can accomplish. And many people have noted its relevance to proposed education reforms. It is right in line with the idea of performance-based assessments. And, at a time when there is talk about setting standards for excellence by locking some people in a room and asking them to define excellence, *The Concord Review* demonstrates what high standards are in the

most concrete possible way: It shows the kind of work pre-college students can do—and are doing.

Perhaps most important is the assumption it makes about writing. Writing is, or is supposed to be, a way of telling an audience something you want them to know. But it's all too easy for students to think of writing as an assignment, a sort of trick they perform for the teacher. In fact, the way writing often is taught encourages this attitude, and as John Bruer points out in *Schools for Thought*, his book on cognitive psychology and learning, even the best students often suffer from it. In making the assumption that students can produce serious and excellent pieces of writing based on intellectual work they have done, the *Review* demonstrates a simple and elegant way to get around the destructive practice of treating student writing like exercises.

by anger, desperation, and resentment, Stanton and Anthony encouraged Train's racism, a tremendous change had taken place in their attitudes. The other obvious consequence of the Kansas campaign was the split it created in the leadership of the woman suffrage movement. In the end, neither referendum succeeded. As Stanton remarked, “I believe both propositions would have carried but with a narrow policy of playing one against the other both were defeated.” While Stone's followers blamed the Kansas loss and split in the movement on Stanton's and Anthony's racism, her opponents claimed they were caused by “...the solid incapacity of all men to understand that woman feels the invidious distinction of sex exactly as the black man does that of color.”....

The breach in the woman suffrage movement expanded beyond repair during the debate over the 15th amendment, the Republican's last Reconstruction program. The amendment was ultimately passed in 1868 with a proclamation that:

The rights of citizens of the United States shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

The absence of the word “sex,” however, created a fierce argument against the amendment in the year before its passage. The debate was a continuation of the fight over the Kansas campaign, except that in this instance, the prize was much more valuable and the contest more intense.

## George W.G. Ferris: The Man Who Reinvented the Wheel

BY BRITTA WALLER

*[In her essay about the Ferris Wheel—America's answer to the Eiffel Tower—Waller shows how Mr. Ferris's “industrial monument,” which was designed and constructed for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, epitomized American optimism and ingenuity in the late 19th century. She wrote the essay for an AP history class when she was a junior at Theodore Roosevelt High School in Kent, Ohio.]*

Burnham [Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, one of the directors of the exposition] told those assembled at the planning session: “Mere bigness is not what is wanted...something novel, original, daring and unique if American engineers are to retain their prestige and standing.” An evening soon after, Ferris sketched the design for his famous amusement ride on a scrap of paper at a Chicago restaurant. He determined all aspects of the wheel—size, number of passengers, price of admission—in his original sketch. He had “re-invented the wheel...big.”

Ferris's wheel was 264-foot high and supported by two 140-foot pyramid-shaped steel towers. The wheel was 26 stories high, taller than any building on the grounds. It weighed, fully loaded, approximate-

ly 1,200 tons, or as much as three Boeing 747s. Thirty-six passenger cars were suspended between two steel rims. Made of wood and iron, paneled with plate glass windows and furnished with swivel chairs, the cars were approximately the size of train passenger cars. The wheel had a total capacity of 2,160 people....

The thousands of parts needed for the steam powered wheel were built by five different steel companies. In late March of 1893, five trains, each thirty cars long, brought all these parts to Chicago. The most crucial was the huge axle—45 1/2 feet long, 33 inches in diameter, weighing 46 1/2 tons. Made by Bethlehem Iron Works of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the axle was the largest single piece of steel ever forged in the United States.

Ferris built his ride based on the principle of the bicycle wheel. Heavy steel rods acted as the spokes and pulled toward the axle to keep the wheel's shape. By using tension, he was able to build a lighter, stronger and vastly larger structure than was ever before possible.

A twenty-minute ride, or two revolutions with six stops each time around, cost 50 cents. The wheel ran from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. At night the wheel was lit by 3,000 electric light bulbs powered by a generator in the boiler house of the wheel. One-and-one-half-million people had ridden on the wheel by the fair's end....One North Dakota farmboy wrote in a letter home: “Do whatever you have to do—even sell the kitchen stove—come to Chicago and ride the Ferris wheel!”



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Date of Birth

Name of School

School Address

School Phone

Name of History Teacher for whom essay was written

Title of Course (if any) for which essay was written

Name of School Principal

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But how relevant is all this to the real world of what goes on in most classrooms? How many American students write long essays? And if they did, how many teachers in this country would have time to grade the essays, much less supervise kids as they did the research and the writing? Unfortunately, there is a lot of substance to these questions.

The simplest response is that the thousands of students who take AP history every year are working to a standard comparable to the one represented by the *Review*, and every AP history class must produce essays as good as the ones Will Fitzhugh got from his students in Concord High School. Giving these kids a chance to read *The Concord Review* would show them what students their own age can do and give them a standard and a reward to aim for.

To respond on a more fundamental level, *The Concord Review* may seem to have little relevance for the many students in our high schools who can't even produce a good paragraph. But if we believe in high standards for all our students—not just the ones who are currently doing excellent work—the standard the *Review* sets has a great deal of long-term relevance.

In a speech to the Urban League, its president, John Jacob, said that instead of lowering our ideas of what students can do, we must raise them and demand high academic performance of every student. Among the specific standards Jacob mentioned is that every African-American student, and in fact every student, be required to write a 25-page paper in order to graduate from high school. And Al Shanker sees *The Concord Review* as a possible catalyst in this effort. Why not, he says, organize large school districts to work toward producing special issues of the

*Review*. This would take a number of years, but it would focus resources and attention where they're really needed—toward getting students to work and think and write.

In the meantime (and to come back to planet Earth), *The Concord Review* is in financial trouble, despite its soundness and promise. Will Fitzhugh has never had the money to promote it properly. As a result, his subscription list is too small to support the magazine. And, though the number of teachers who know about the *Review* and use it as a teaching tool and submit their excellent student essays grows year by year, it is smaller than it should be. Will the magazine fold after this year? So far, Will Fitzhugh has found a way to scrape together the money for each issue, but each issue could be the last.

Fitzhugh remarks that we have many ways of rewarding and encouraging excellence in non-academic areas like sports but few in academic areas, and he likes to compare the idea behind *The Concord Review* to the Westinghouse science competition. Perhaps his magazine for kids who love history—and love to write it—will find a well-heeled corporation to offer it long-term support. Fitzhugh hasn't given up hope, but a financial angel, however important, wouldn't take the place of what he's really after—a bunch of faithful subscribers and a flood of papers by kids who can hardly wait to tell other kids what they've discovered about Oliver Cromwell or the Harlem Renaissance or the sinking of the Titanic or glasnost or.... □

*A year's subscription to The Concord Review (four issues per year), costs \$35. To subscribe, send a check to The Concord Review Subscriptions, P.O. Box 476, Canton, Mass. 02021. If your school history department has no discretionary funds available, see if the school library will subscribe. To request a complimentary copy of The Concord Review, write to Marcia Reecer, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. To submit a student essay to the Review, fill out the form on page 22 and mail it to the editorial office of The Concord Review.*





# GIVING THEIR BEST

## *Grading and Recognition Practices That Motivate Students To Work Hard*

BY DOUGLAS J. MAC IVER AND DAVID A. REUMAN

WE LAMENT the lack of material resources—desks, textbooks, computers, laboratory equipment—in our underfunded inner-city and rural schools. However, the resource in shortest supply not only in these schools, but in virtually every American school, is not material in nature—it is concentrated, persistent student effort.

American middle and high school students readily admit they are not putting forth 100 percent effort to learn the subject matter in the courses they take and, as a result, are only working to a fraction of their potential. When asked “How much effort do you usually put forth in this [biology or social science] class?” the average high school student in one recent survey reported expending less than 70 percent effort on a scale ranging from 0 percent (I am not trying at all) to 100 percent (I am working to my highest potential).<sup>1</sup>

Not only do most students decline to do their very best, they also decline to support the effort and achievement of their peers. “Across the socioeconomic spectrum and among all racial and ethnic groups, the informal norms that develop among students are *not* norms that extol achievement, but are norms that scorn effort, and reward scholastic achievement only when it appears to be done

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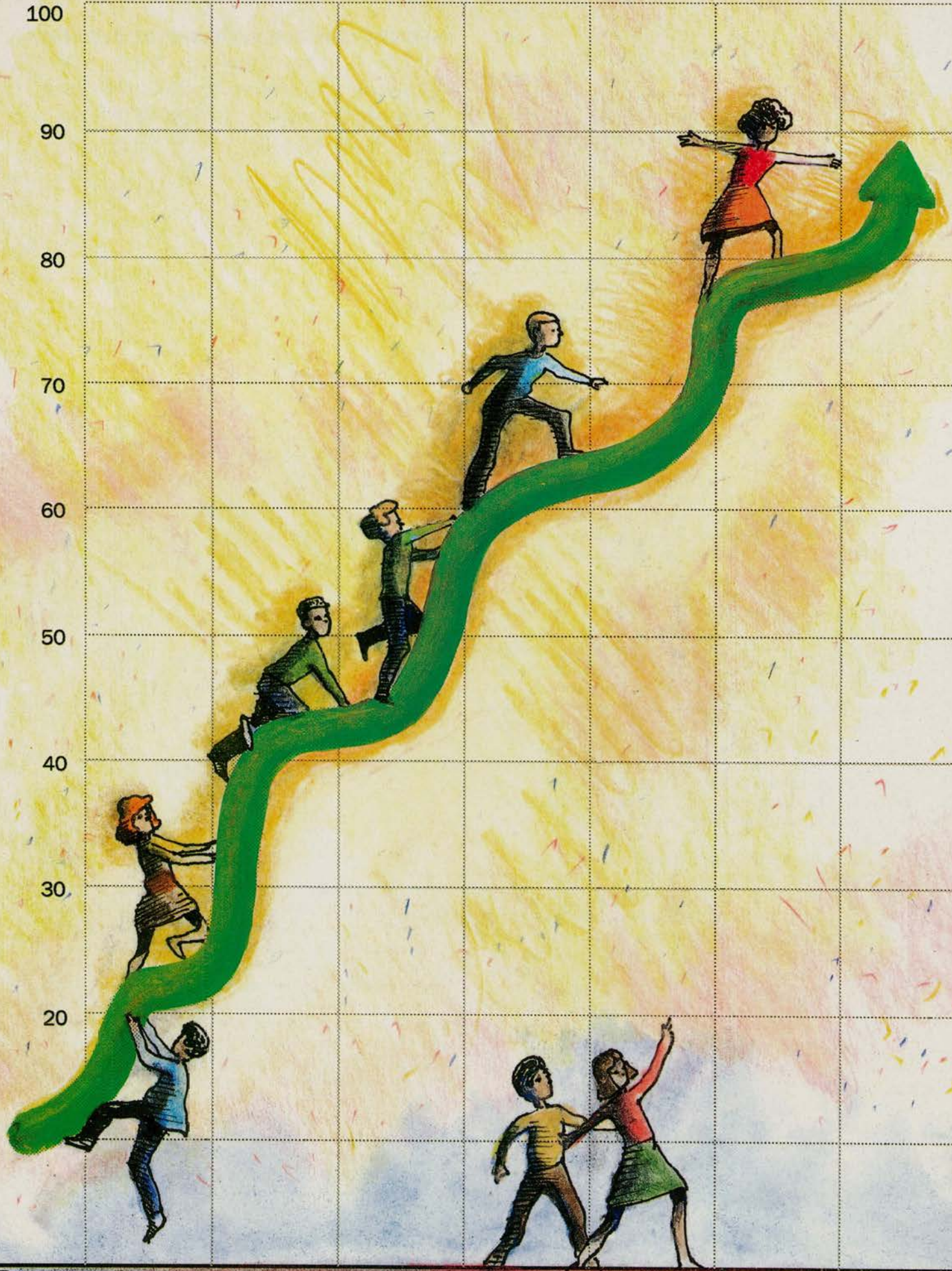
*Douglas J. Mac Iver is a research scientist and associate director at the Johns Hopkins University Center for the Social Organization of Schools. David A. Reuman is associate professor of psychology at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. Both are former members of the AFT.*

without effort,” observes James Coleman, a renowned sociologist at the University of Chicago. Students who violate these norms face “the kiss of death”—being labeled by their peers as a “nerd”—the worst fate imaginable to many a young adolescent.

Traditional assessment, grading, and student recognition practices are partly responsible for the anti-academic norms and low levels of student effort that pervade American schools. These practices fail to apply what psychologists and sociologists have learned about the enormous combined power of *specific assigned goals* that are challenging but reachable, individual *performance summaries* that clearly indicate whether or not a given goal was attained, and a system of *recognition* and commendation that is tied to goal attainment.<sup>2</sup>

In traditional grading and feedback practices, individual students are not assigned specific quantitative goals. As a result students often choose a goal that is unchallenging (to pass the course), or vague (“to do my best”). Extensive research involving more than 100 studies in work settings in business and industry has established that goals that are perceived to be challenging but reachable lead to better performance than easy goals, and that specific quantitative goals “consistently lead to better performance than the goal of ‘doing one’s best.’ This is because, paradoxically, people do not do their best when they are trying to do their best! ‘Doing your best’ is a vague goal because the meaning of ‘best’ is not specified. The way to get individuals to truly do their best is to set a challenging, quantifiable goal that demands the maximum use of their skills and abilities.”<sup>3</sup>







***The two most commonly used grading practices do not take into account students' starting points.***

Although many teachers and parents explicitly encourage students to strive for "a good grade," this generic assigned goal is not very effective in motivating high effort and performance, because the two most commonly used grading practices do not take into account students' starting points. In most middle and secondary school classrooms, teachers award desirable grades and positive recognition to those students who have the highest ranking performance regardless of students' starting levels of skill and understanding. The other common approach is to set "percent-correct" standards of mastery (e.g., to award A's to all those with an average at or above 90 percent, B's to all those with an average between 80 percent and 89 percent, and so on).

These traditional approaches usually are ineffective in motivating students because the approaches do little to ensure that each and every student faces a goal that is reachable yet challenging. For example, if grades and recognitions are based on the rank-in-classroom of one's performances, then students whose starting points are considerably above the classroom average find that even modest effort typically is sufficient to ensure them of scores near the top of the class in comparative terms. Furthermore, these top students receive little peer support for their achievement efforts, because their peers are afraid that the top students will "blow the curve" and make it harder for others to get a desirable grade. Thus, top students have little incentive or support for giving it their all.

Rank-in-classroom also gives little incentive to students whose starting point is considerably below the classroom average. These students quickly become frustrated in a class using rank-in-classroom grading because even substantial progress on their part still leaves them near the bottom of the class in comparative terms. As soon as these below-average students realize that their best efforts will not improve their grades, they become alienated and disengaged.

Unfortunately, "percent-correct" standards work as poorly as "rank-in-classroom" standards, because no matter where the standard is set, it will be overchallenging or underchallenging for some students and, thus, an ineffective goal.

These problems with traditional grading practices are most severe in classrooms having students of widely different abilities. Yet, schools increasingly are moving toward heterogeneous classrooms because of a growing recognition that: (1) tracking results in the unequal distribution of favorable learning conditions so that students in the lower tracks do not receive the learning opportunities, instructional resources, motivational settings, and academic climates they need in order to develop their talent, and (2) "we need to develop the talent of *all* our people if this nation is to be economically competitive and socially cohesive in the different world of the next century."<sup>4</sup>

The compelling body of evidence that the systematic use of assigned goals, feedback, and recognition results in higher effort and performance in the workplace has led some teachers in Maryland and Connecticut to seek a practical way to modify traditional grading practices so that each student in a heterogeneous class is assigned specific goals that are challenging but reasonable (neither too hard nor too easy). These teachers also have

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sought an affordable and manageable way to modify traditional feedback and recognition practices so that students will always receive recognition for meeting these assigned goals. We will describe here two improvement-focused systems for student accountability and recognition that we have developed in collaboration with these teachers, and which the teachers have field-tested and refined. We also will show how these systems affect student norms, attitudes, effort, and performance.

A practical way to set goals—used extensively in the business world—is to use *previous performance* as the standard to beat.<sup>5</sup> Most people consider surpassing their average previous performance to be a fair and reasonable goal. The Incentives for Improvement Program (field-tested in several Baltimore middle schools) and the Challenge Program (field-tested in a Connecticut high school) both use students' average previous recent performance as the standard to beat; distribute feedback charts to students that show their attainment or nonattainment of var-



ious types of improvement goals; and provide official recognition and awards to all students who raise their performance levels across time. The two programs differ in many respects, however. For example, students in the Incentives for Improvement Program are assigned individual goals only; those in the Challenge Program are assigned both group and individual goals. These differences will be evident in the program descriptions that follow.

## THE INCENTIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Incentives for Improvement Program<sup>6</sup> has three major components: *base scores*, *improvement points*, and *awards*.

**Base Scores.** Each week, students are given a specific goal—to beat their current “base score” on the week’s most important quiz, test, project, assignment, or performance task. This base score represents a student’s average performance level in the class on recent assessments. As students improve, their individualized base scores also go up.

There are two ways to determine students’ initial base scores: (1) assign initial base scores that are about five points lower than a student’s grade in the same subject last year. For example, a student who got a final grade of 70 percent on his report card last year in math would be assigned an initial base score of 65 percent in math; or (2) give students a couple of *challenging* quizzes or tests before introducing the program, and then use each student’s average score on these as his or her initial base score.

**Improvement Points.** The program features a modified version of an improvement-oriented scoring system that was first developed for use with cooperative learning techniques.<sup>7</sup> Students earn improvement points by beating their base scores, that is, by raising their performance levels. Students who already have reached a high level of performance also are awarded improvement points for maintaining that level.

Improvement points are earned in *rounds*. A round

Figure 1

SUBJECT		U.S. History							
CLASS		703							
TIME		9:10-9:55							
NAME		BASE SCORE NO.	GRADE	IMPROVEMENT POINTS	GRADE	IMPROVEMENT POINTS	GRADE	IMPROVEMENT POINTS	BASE SCORE NO.
1. Gay Abravanel		74	50	0					
2. Avi Achenbach		78	80	10					
3. Terry Aebi		95	100	30					
4. Akhtar Ahmed		70	80	30					
5. Diane Bradford		65	70	20					

lasts about three weeks, during which students are given three opportunities to beat their current base score (to get—on an important performance assessment—a “percent-correct” score that is higher than their base score). After each assessment, the student’s score is compared with his or her base score and 0, 10, 20, or 30 improvement points are awarded as shown in Table 1.

Thus, improvement points are given in relationship to past performance. A student whose current base score is a 65 percent and who gets a 70 percent on an assessment earns the same number of improvement points (20) as a student whose base score is a 75 percent and gets an 80 percent. Note that there is no danger of students “topping out” with too high a base score; students who have a base score above 90 percent receive 20 improvement points when they score 95 percent to 99 percent, and receive the maximum possible number of improvement points (30) if they get a perfect paper.

Figure 1 shows an enlarged portion of a page from a seventh-grade history teacher’s gradebook, which lists initial base scores, first quiz scores, and improvement points earned on the first quiz for five students in a U.S. History class. The teacher is using the loose-leaf *Incentives for Improvement Program Gradebook* from the *Incentives for Improvement Resource Catalog* (see box

Table 1

## HOW TO EARN IMPROVEMENT POINTS

If You . . .

You Earn

Beat your base score by more than 9 points

30 Improvement Points

Beat your base score by 5 to 9 points

20 Improvement Points

Score within 4 points of your base score

10 Improvement Points

Get a perfect paper

30 Improvement Points

Score within 5 points of a perfect paper

20 Improvement Points



on page 30). At the beginning of the year, the teacher assigned each student a base score five points lower than his or her final grade in sixth-grade social studies the previous year (see first column of Figure 1, "Base Score No. 1"). At the end of the first unit, students took a quiz. Students' grades on this quiz are recorded in the second column. The next column shows the number of improvement points earned.

Looking at the first four students we see that Gay Abra-  
vanel got only 50 percent of the items correct on the first  
quiz. Because she scored 24 percentage points below her  
base, she didn't win any improvement points. On the  
other hand, Avi Achenbach beat his base score by two  
percentage points, thus earning 10 improvement points.  
Terry Aebi and Akhtar Ahmed each won 30 improvement  
points on the first quiz. Terry won his improvement  
points by getting a perfect paper, while Akhtar earned  
his by beating his base score by more than nine points.<sup>8</sup>

**End-of-Round Computations and Awards.** At the  
end of each round, students are assigned an updated base  
score (the last three performances are averaged with the  
current base score). When a student's updated base  
score is higher than his or her previously highest base  
score, the student is awarded a Personal Best Base Score  
Award. And, every student who averages at least 20  
improvement points on the three performances in a  
round receives a Rising Star Award. Thus, at the end of  
every round, students have two chances to obtain an  
award. Although the *Incentives for Improvement  
Resource Catalog* includes certificates and other types  
of small awards (a neon eraser for Personal Best Award  
winners with an "I erased my old record!" imprint; or a  
"Rising Star" pin), some teachers may prefer to use cer-  
tificates they or their students create or other rewards  
that are already available at their school.

The *Incentives for Improvement Program Grade-  
book* provides designated columns for recording  
improvement points, base scores, and awards won, but  
any gradebook can be used with the program. For teach-  
ers having access to a computer and to a spreadsheet or  
database program, "electronic gradebook" shareware  
also is available.<sup>9</sup> To use the electronic gradebook, the  
teacher must first type in students' names and their ini-  
tial base scores. Then, after every 'performance' (quiz,  
test, or major assignment), all the teacher has to do is  
type in students' scores—the computer automatically  
calculates improvement points. At the end of a round,  
the computer also automatically figures each student's  
improvement point average, new base score, and award  
eligibility. Although administering the Incentives for  
Improvement Program is not difficult or time-consuming,  
the electronic gradebook makes it easy even for  
teachers with a heavy student load.

### Effects on Student Effort and Performance

The Incentives for Improvement Program had a mod-  
est, but statistically significant, impact on students'  
assessment of their own efforts; students in the Incen-  
tives for Improvement Program reported working hard-  
er to master course content, studying harder for quizzes  
and tests, and working closer to their potential than did  
students in control classes. This moderate increase in stu-  
dent effort translated into a substantial increase in stu-

dent performance; students in the Incentives for  
Improvement Program classes performed almost two-  
thirds of a standard deviation higher on fourth-quarter  
assessments than did students in the control classes.<sup>10</sup>

The program produced marginally significant increas-  
es in students' valuing of the subject matter (their inter-  
est and enthusiasm for what they were studying) and self-  
concept of ability. Because of its positive impact on stu-  
dent effort and performance, the Incentives for Improve-  
ment Program significantly increased the probability that  
at-risk students (those with very low preintervention  
performance levels) would pass the course (83 percent  
of the at-risk students passed the course in Incentives for  
Improvement Program classes compared with 71 per-  
cent of at-risk students in control classes).

Our evaluation confirmed that student effort and per-  
formance can be increased by a student accountability  
program that gives students specific improvement goals  
and provides them with recognition whenever they  
reach these goals. Next, we wanted to see whether a  
modified version of such a program might help a high  
school to successfully offer challenging, high-level  
coursework to a greater proportion of its students than  
it had been able to do in the past.

## THE WINDHAM CHALLENGE PROGRAM

Students entering Windham High School in Williman-  
tic, Connecticut, are quite diverse in their skills and abil-  
ities. This is due in large part to differences in students'  
learning opportunities and attainments in the elemen-  
tary and middle grades. As do most high schools, Wind-  
ham High responds to this diversity by "tracking" stu-  
dents. For example, English 10 is offered at five levels of  
instruction: basic, standard, advanced, honors, and high  
honors.

In theory, tracking accommodates instruction to stu-  
dents' needs, interests, and the various career and edu-  
cational choices they eventually will face, while ensur-  
ing that students face attainable requirements and  
receive lessons that are neither too difficult nor too easy.  
Because tracking assigns students in the "basic" and  
"standard" tracks to a dumbed-down curriculum, track-  
ing is, in practice, partly responsible for the dismally low  
proficiency levels attained by these students. Students  
cannot learn content to which they are not exposed.  
Those in the lower tracks fall further and further behind  
their more advantaged peers partly because they are  
given fewer opportunities to learn advanced topics and  
develop higher-level thinking skills, and in part because  
they experience a slower instructional pace and fewer  
positive peer models.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1991-92 school year, the second author was  
invited to Windham High School to present a yearlong  
workshop series on "Practical Alternatives to Tracking."  
At one of those sessions, the first author made a presen-  
tation on assessment and evaluation practices designed  
for heterogeneous classrooms. Later that year, some of  
the teachers in the science and social science depart-  
ments at Windham decided that *all* students needed and  
deserved a high-level understanding of the natural and  
social sciences. As they considered how to help all stu-  
dents become literate in these disciplines, they began



***External standard-setting and performance assessment allow each teacher to function more like a coach.***

questioning their school's tracking practices. The teachers requested our assistance in designing an alternative program in which all students would receive a high-level curriculum, students who had low initial levels of achievement would not become disheartened, and students who had high initial levels would not have their progress impeded. The teachers also asked for our help in combating anti-academic peer norms that might undermine even the best efforts to raise standards.

With these teachers, we developed a theory-based, multiple component "best-practice" program that eliminates low-track science and social science courses and replaces them with heterogeneous advanced-level classrooms. To make these heterogeneous classrooms work well, we instituted a departmental team approach to set standards and assess performance, a student-team learn-

ing approach to provide students with extra help and to combat anti-academic peer norms, and an improvement-focused system that would hold individual students as well as student teams accountable. This alternative program is being evaluated rigorously in a series of controlled field experiments with random assignment of students to either the traditional or alternative programs. The alternative program is being introduced into the high school gradually (only two or three courses per year are being de-tracked).

To illustrate what the Challenge Program and the research design look like in actual practice, we will describe how the program was implemented in Biology I in the 1992-93 school year (the first yearlong course that was de-tracked). In spring 1992, 119 students pre-registered for Biology I (about 30 percent of these students preregistered for the "basic-level" course, and 70 percent for the "advanced-level" course). We randomly selected 44 of the preregistrants to serve as a control group: These 44 students would receive just what they had signed up for—the traditional Biology I course at the level they had chosen. The remaining 75 students were assigned to heterogeneous Challenge Biology I classes taught at the advanced level but using innovative approaches to standard-setting, performance assessment, and student and group accountability.

### **External Standards Change the Student-Teacher Relationship**

Individual teachers traditionally are given lots of flexibility in setting the academic requirements in their classrooms. Because teachers can raise or lower requirements at their discretion, students—especially those who feel overchallenged—expend great effort trying to "wear the teacher down" and negotiate a lessening of demands. Often these efforts at negotiation are successful and lead to subtle treaties or explicit classroom bargains between students and teachers that lower standards but keep the peace.<sup>12</sup>

Although this "battle of requirements"<sup>13</sup> occurs in virtually all secondary school classrooms, it becomes especially severe when departments decide—as the science and social science departments at Windham did—to offer a high-level curriculum to all students in heterogeneous classrooms. Even if improvement-focused grading and recognition are used, each heterogeneous class will have many students who feel overchallenged by the advanced topics and difficult assignments. This is especially true in the early years of a de-tracking plan, because many former low-track students will have had many years to become accustomed to the dumbed-down curriculum, texts, and standards of the lower track.

We—teachers and researchers—decided we could defuse this battle of requirements by applying external standard-setting and performance assessment, which would allow each teacher to function more like a coach. One advantage a coach has over the typical classroom teacher is that the coach seldom has to fight the battle of requirements with his or her players. The reason is simple: The coach's players face frequent external "tests." When athletes are faced with a challenging game or match in the near future, they realize it would be counterproductive to pressure the coach to lower standards



and lessen demands during training and practice sessions. The athletes might grumble to themselves about how hard they have to work, but they still cooperate with the coach's agenda (if it is clearly designed to help them do well) and encourage their teammates to do likewise.

Similarly, one reason that advanced students work more and complain less in AP classes than in some of their other demanding courses is because the students know that the AP test is coming. They realize it's counterproductive to complain about being asked to master particularly difficult content, if that content is going to figure prominently on the test. In fact, the teacher is doing the students a favor by pushing them, and the students realize this.

Not only is it beneficial to have frequent external assessments (as long as they assess what is essential and important), it is also beneficial to have external graders because of the taboo against brownnosers. In most classrooms, when a student attempts to establish a close personal relationship with the teacher, the student's peers view this behavior with suspicion. Even such seemingly innocent actions as demonstrating alertness or responsiveness in class often are interpreted by other students as strategic behavior designed to bias the instructor's grading. As a result, student norms develop, tacitly stating that it's "cool" to appear bored in class and to exhibit only grudging cooperation with the teacher's agenda. One way to weaken this taboo against brownnosers and the anti-academic norms that accompany it is to redistribute grading responsibilities so that most of a student's grade is derived from evaluations made by external parties (e.g., other teachers who teach different sections of the same course) rather than by his or her own teacher.

The Challenge Program features standards, tests, and graders that are external to the classroom. Teams of teachers who have different sections of the same course serve as that course's standard-setters, exam-developers, and graders. The standards the team of teachers set are then embodied in performance exams, also written by the team. To write these exams, the teachers must reach consensus on the most important learning objectives for units the exam will cover. These exams are given three times a quarter with every section taking the same exam about the same day. The exams feature performance tasks (authentic assessment) that are "essential, integra-

tive, rich, engaging, active, and feasible."<sup>14</sup> Because teachers take turns grading the performance exams, a substantial portion of a student's grade is derived from evaluations made by teachers other than the student's own. For example, with three Challenge Biology teachers and three exams per quarter, each teacher grades only one exam per quarter.

It's not only the students who find the presence of external exams and external graders motivating, so do their teachers. They want to give students in their sections the very best possible opportunities to learn the skills and understandings that are going to be tested. They want the external grader (one of their colleagues) to be impressed by how much their students have mastered. They don't want their students to hit a section of the test that contains material to which they were never exposed. All this motivates teachers to be sure to cover all the important content and keep their sections going at a challenging pace.

### Student Team Learning

Teachers in the Challenge Program receive extensive training in the use of Student Team Learning (see Reference 7) instructional methods, and teams of teachers develop lesson plans that use these methods to accommodate student diversity and to make classroom activities more meaningful and rewarding. The peer interactions in student team learning sessions can motivate students to work harder and help them process information more thoroughly, thereby improving their understanding of complex tasks.<sup>15</sup>

### Student and Group Accountability

Challenge classes use a modified version of the Incentives for Improvement System to ensure that all students are challenged and have an equal opportunity for success—if they work hard—regardless of their individual starting points. In Biology, students' initial base scores are determined by their performance on a science literacy pretest. (We double-check the accuracy of these initial base scores by comparing them with students' past grades in science.) Students earn improvement points for beating their base scores on the demanding and authentic external exams. In the Challenge Program, students' base scores are recomputed after every external exam (about once every two-and-a-half weeks). Thirty percent of a student's semester grade in Biology is determined by his or her improvement point average on the six external exams for the semester.

After each external exam, students can earn two types of awards for individual improvement: Personal Best Base Score Awards (for setting personal base score records) and Personal High Exam Awards (for setting personal records on the external exams). And, each student's cooperative learning team can earn awards based on the average improvement points earned by team members. The team awards give students a reason to help one another, and the individual accountability ensures that each member of the team learns. Under these conditions, students interact to instruct one another rather than simply to provide answers to questions,<sup>16</sup> and the teacher can work more effectively to coach indi-

### *YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH*

The Incentives for Improvement Resource Catalog is available from the dissemination office at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools. The dissemination office is a not-for-profit venture designed to encourage implementation of effective practices by offering affordable training and inexpensive materials (at cost plus shipping and handling charges). Write to: Dissemination Office, The Incentives for Improvement Program, Center for the Social Organization of Schools, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Maryland 21218. Or call Barbara Colton at (410) 516-0370.



vidual students and small groups of students to meet their specific needs.

## Preliminary Findings

We recently completed preliminary analyses of end-of-year survey and test data collected in Biology I classes during the first year of the Challenge Program. The Challenge Program was highly successful in combating anti-academic norms. That is, students in the Challenge Program were significantly less likely than control students to endorse the following statements: "Sometimes I don't do as well in this class as I could so that I will fit in better with my friends," "My classmates don't think it is important to pay attention to the teacher in this class," "My friends would make fun of me if I did too well in this class," and "My classmates make fun of students who ask questions in this class." The size of the reduction in anti-academic norms in Challenge classes was quite large: almost one-half of a standard deviation.

Similarly, the Challenge Program had a positive effect on peer support for achievement; the Challenge students were more likely than control students to endorse statements like the following: "My classmates want me to be a good student," "My classmates want to help me to do my best work," "My classmates believe it is important to come to school every day," and even "If I don't do my best in this class, my classmates will be mad at me." Again the size of the program's effect on peer support for achievement was nearly one-half of a standard deviation.

The Challenge Program had no effect on students' overall performance on our most important measure of achievement in Biology: The National Association of Biology Teachers/National Science Teachers Association High School Biology Test. On the whole, Challenge students performed no better (and no worse) than control students on this test. This can be viewed as very positive: Our heterogeneously grouped Challenge students of all achievement levels are achieving as well academically as tracked control students and suffering none of tracking's stigmatizing social effects. And there are indications that strong implementation of the program may affect achievement—the Challenge section with the highest measured implementation of program components was significantly higher than the control group on the Genetics and Ecology subscales of the test.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, students in the Challenge Program were *not* more likely than control students to report test anxiety or the feeling of being overchallenged. Overall, the early evidence suggests that the Challenge Program is helping Windham High School successfully untrack its course offerings in Biology. The findings further confirm the positive benefits of improvement-focused student accountability systems. It appears that such systems are effective in encouraging students to hold up their end of the bargain in the classroom. □

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> See Douglas J. Mac Iver and David A. Reuman, *Peace with Honor(s): Winning the "Battle of Requirements" through Externally-Established Standards and Value-Added Accountability*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged

Students, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> See Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, *Goal Setting: A Motivational Technique that Works!* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Locke and Latham, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. New York: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development of the Carnegie Corporation, 1989., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Locke and Latham, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> This program description summarizes the current version of the program, which incorporates revisions suggested by teachers during field-testing.

<sup>7</sup> See R.E. Slavin, *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Variations in task difficulty within a course can make it unusually easy or hard for students to earn improvement points on certain tasks. The improvement points system does not adjust for variations in task difficulty because such adjustments would make the system more difficult to implement and more difficult for students and parents to understand. According to the teachers who field-tested the program, students were able to cope with task difficulty variations in a productive manner (e.g., by increasing their effort when faced with unusually difficult tasks and by partially discounting improvement points earned on unusually easy tasks).

<sup>9</sup> If you would like a copy of the electronic gradebook, contact Barbara Colton in the Center for the Social Organization of Schools dissemination office at the address and phone number listed in the box on page 30.

<sup>10</sup> For a full report of the evaluation study, see Douglas Mac Iver, "Effects of Improvement-Focused Student Recognition on Young Adolescents' Performance and Motivation in the Classroom," in Martin Maehr and Paul Pintrich, *Advances in Motivation and Achievement: Volume 8, Motivation and Adolescent Development*. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1993 (pp. 193-218).

<sup>11</sup> Jomills Braddock, "Tracking the Middle Grades: National Patterns of Grouping for Instruction," *PPhi Delta Kappan*, vol. 71, 1990, pp. 450-57; Joyce Epstein and Douglas Mac Iver, *Opportunities to Learn: Effects on Eighth Graders of Curriculum Offerings and Instructional Approaches*, (Baltimore, Md.: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, 1992); Jeanie Oakes, *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Michael W. Sedlak, Christopher W. Wheeler, Diana C. Pullin, and Phillip A. Cusick. *Selling Students Short: Classroom Bargains and Academic Reform in American High Schools*, (N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 1986). Powell, A.G., Farrar, E., and Cohen, D.K. *The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Willard Waller, *Sociology of Teaching*, New York: Wiley, 1932.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Forgione, *Accountability and Assessment: The Connecticut Approach*. Paper presented at the Public Education Forum, Baltimore, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Nel Noddings and others, *What do individuals gain in small group problem solving?* Paper presented at annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, Montreal, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Noreen Webb, "Student Interaction and Learning in Small Groups," In Robert Slavin and others (eds.) *Learning to Cooperate, Cooperating to Learn*, pp. 147-172. New York: Plenum, 1985.

<sup>17</sup> See Mac Iver and Reuman, op. cit for a full technical report of the controlled field experiment in Biology.



# MAKE READING A FAMILY AFFAIR

*Help Parents Help Their Children  
Become Lifelong Readers*

**W**HEN TEACHERS make wish lists for their students, high on the list is a home environment where parents encourage reading and a love of books. Teachers know that a child who sits on a parent's warm lap to listen to a bedtime story is a child who is most likely to grow up hooked on books. And teachers also know that most parents quit reading to their children too soon: Only one in three parents shares in reading activities with their children after age 9, and very few reflect upon the long-term role they might play in their teens' reading lives.

Described on these two pages are two initiatives co-sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers that could really help parents make a difference. The great majority of parents want to do whatever they can to assist their children. Parents need encouragement, and they need ideas. Now, more than ever, we can help.

## **AFT/Chrysler Learning Connection Reading Grants**

**F**OR THE second year in a row, the Chrysler Learning Connection education program is awarding \$1,000 Family Reading Grants to schools. This year, 100 grants will be given to schools around the country for reading programs designed to involve families in the process of learning and loving to read, as well as to award schools that have implemented innovative programs that connect families, teachers, and students through reading.

The Family Reading Grants are an outgrowth of the coalition formed by Chrysler, the AFT, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Any AFT member can get an application for a grant by writing: AFT/Chrysler Learning Connection, School Grants, P.O. Box 11172, Chicago, Ill. 60611. Completed applications must be post-marked by April 15, 1994. Grant recipients will be announced and notified in July.



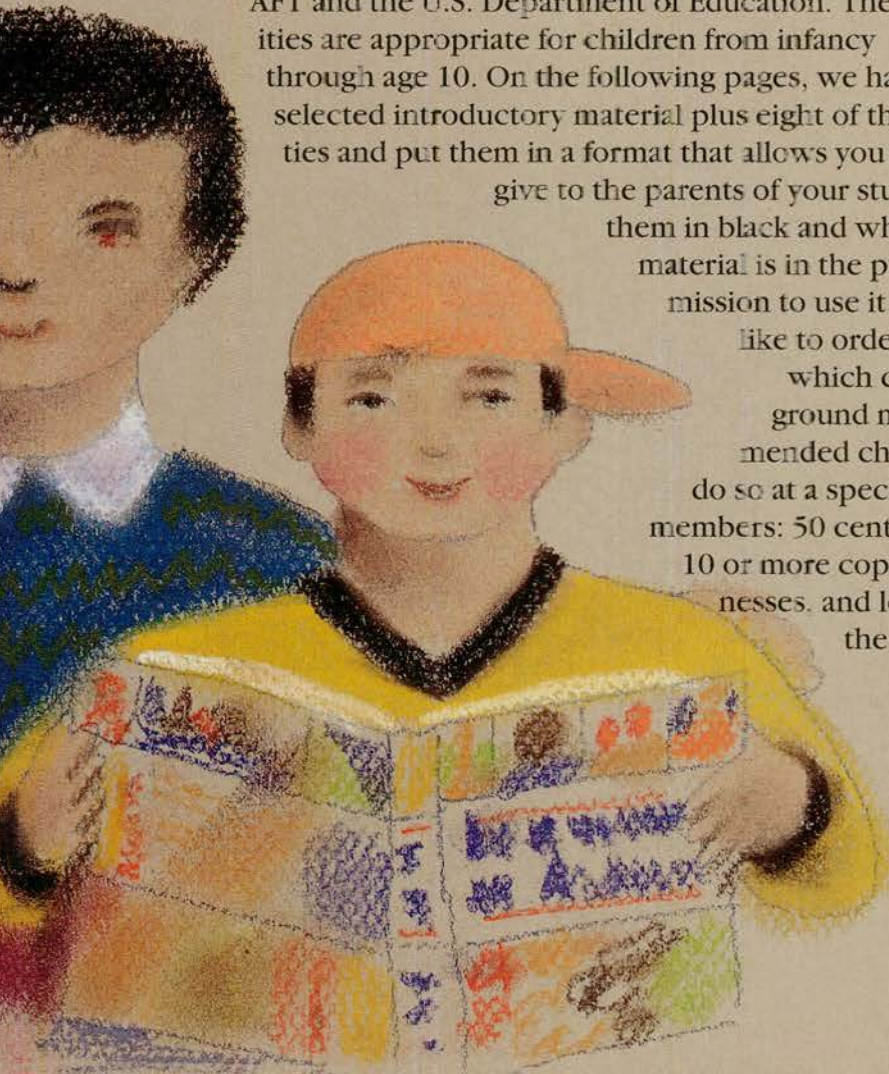
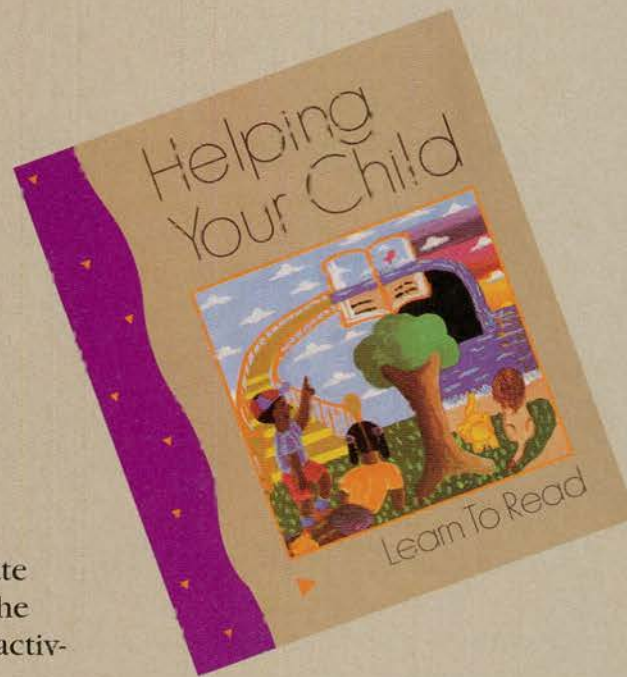
ILLUSTRATED BY SUSAN DAVIS



### Fun and Simple Activities

**T**HIS BOOKLET, "Helping Your Child Learn to Read," contains simple, effective activities parents can use to stimulate children's interest in reading. It is co-published by the AFT and the U.S. Department of Education. The activities are appropriate for children from infancy through age 10. On the following pages, we have selected introductory material plus eight of the activities and put them in a format that allows you to reproduce some or all of them to

give to the parents of your students. We have deliberately printed them in black and white so they will reproduce well. The material is in the public domain, so you do not need permission to use it for educational purposes. If you would like to order the full, 58-page color booklet—which contains 19 activities as well as background material for parents and lists of recommended children's books and magazines—you can do so at a special subsidized price available to AFT members: 50 cents for one copy, and 40 cents each for 10 or more copies. Schools, civic groups, local businesses, and local unions might want to underwrite the cost of distribution to parents in your community. To order, send payment to AFT Order Department, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. No purchase orders accepted. Ask for Item 350. For more information, call 1 (800) 238-1133.





# The Basics

**There is no more important activity for preparing your child to succeed as a reader than reading aloud together.**

Fill your story times with a variety of books. Be consistent, be patient, and watch the magic work.



## Start Young and Stay with It

Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the existence of printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become a part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.

Even after children learn to read by themselves, it's still important for you to read aloud together. By reading stories that are on their interest level, but beyond their reading level, you can stretch young readers' understanding and motivate them to improve their skills.

## Remember When You Were Very Young

Between the ages of 4 and 7, many children begin to recognize words on a page. In our society this may begin with recognition of a logo for a fast food chain or the brand name of a favorite cereal. But, before long, that special moment when a child holds a book and starts to decode the mystery of written words is likely to occur.

You can help remove part of the mystery without worrying about a lot of theory. Just read stories and poems and let them work their wonders. There is no better way to prepare your child for that moment when reading starts to "click," even if it's years down the road.

It will help, however, if we open our eyes to some things adult readers tend to take for granted. It's easier to be patient when we remember how much children do not know. Here are a few concepts we adults know so well we forget sometimes we ever learned them.

- There's a difference between words and pictures. Point to the print as you read aloud.
- Words on a page have meaning, and that is what we learn to read.
- Words go across the page from left to right. Follow with your fingers as you read.
- Words on a page are made up of letters and are separated by a space.
- Each letter has at least two forms: one for capital letters and one for small letters.

## Home Is Where the Heart Is

Children who are read to grow to love books. Over the years, these children will have good memories to treasure. They remember stories that made them laugh and stories that made them cry. They remember sharing these times with someone they love, and they anticipate with joy the time when they will be able to read for themselves.

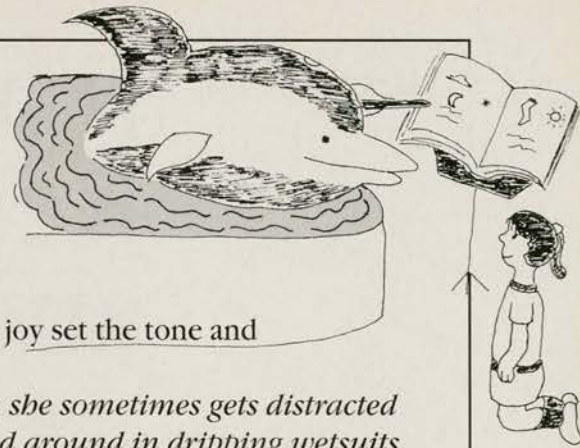
By reading aloud together, by being examples, and by doing other activities, parents are in a unique position to help children enjoy reading and see the value of it.

It's never too late to begin. **Start today.**





# Important Things To Know



It is important to keep fun in your parent-child reading and to let joy set the tone and pace. Here is a story to keep in mind.

*Shamu is a performing whale, to the delight of many. However, she sometimes gets distracted and refuses to do her tricks. When that happens, her trainers stand around in dripping wetsuits and wait for her stubbornness to pass. They know that when a 5,000-pound whale decides she doesn't want to flip her tail on cue, there is very little anyone can do about it. But whales like to play, and sooner or later Shamu returns to the game of performing for her audience. Shamu's trainers know this so they're always patient, they're always confident, and they always make performing fun.*

Although helping your child become a reader is certainly different from training a whale, the same qualities of patience, confidence, and playfulness in your approach will get results. If, from time to time, your child gets distracted and loses interest, take a break. Children love to learn. Give them a little breathing room, and their interest will always be renewed.

## It's Part of Life

Although the life of a parent is often hectic, you should try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.

If you have more than one child, try to spend some time reading alone with each child, especially if they're more than two years apart. However, it's also fine to read to children at different stages and ages at the same time. Most children enjoy listening to many types of stories. When stories are complex, children can still get the idea and can be encouraged to ask questions. When stories are easy or familiar, youngsters enjoy these "old friends" and may even help in the reading. Taking the time to read with your children on a regular basis sends an important message: Reading is worthwhile.

## One More Time

You may go through a period when your child favors one book and wants it read night after night. It is not unusual for children to favor a particular story, and this can be boring for parents. Keep in mind, however, that a favorite story may speak to your child's interests or emotional needs. Be patient. Continue to expose your children to a wealth of books and eventually they will be ready for more stories.

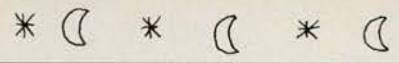
## Talking About Stories

It's often a good idea to talk about a story you are reading, but you need not feel compelled to talk about every story. Good stories will encourage a love for reading, with or without conversation. And sometimes children need time to think about stories they have read. A day or so later, don't be surprised if your child mentions something from a story you've read together.

## The More the Merrier

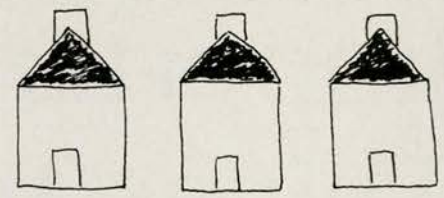
From time to time, invite other adults or older children to listen in or join in reading aloud. The message is: Reading is for everybody.





(ages 3-7)

# R and R: Repetition and Rhyme



**Repetition makes books predictable, and young readers love knowing what comes next.**

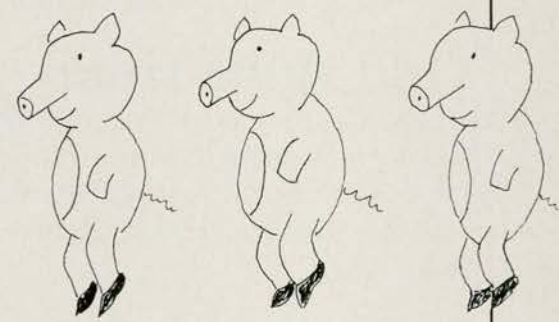
## What you'll need

Books with repeated phrases\*  
Short rhyming poems

\*A few favorites are:  
*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst;  
*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr.; *Horton Hatches the Egg* by Dr. Seuss; and *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper.  
There are many good booklists that highlight those books with repetitive refrains.

## What to do

1. Pick a story with repeated phrases or a poem you and your child like.
2. For example, read:  
Wolf Voice: Little pig, little pig, Let me come in.  
Little Pig: Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin.  
Wolf Voice: Then I'll huff and I'll puff, And I'll blow your house in!  
After the wolf has blown down the first pig's house, your child will soon join in with the refrain.
3. Read slowly, and with a smile or a nod, let your children know you appreciate their participation.
4. As children grow more familiar with the story, pause and give them the chance to "fill in the blanks."
5. Encourage your children to pretend to read, especially books that contain repetition and rhyme. Most children who enjoy reading will eventually memorize all or parts of a book and imitate your reading.

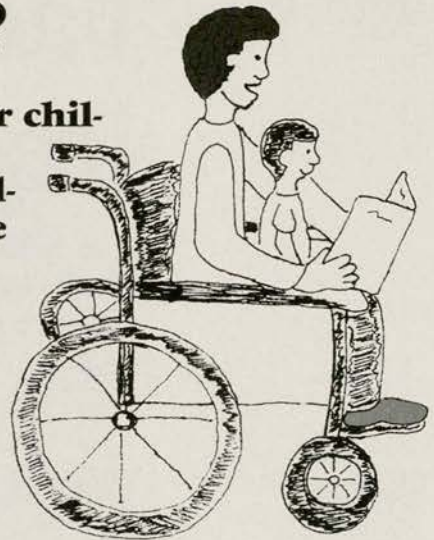


When youngsters anticipate what's coming next in a story or poem, they have a sense of mastery over books. When children feel power, they have the courage to try. Pretending to read is an important step in the process of learning to read.



# (ages 6-10) Read to Me

**It's important to read to your children, but equally important to listen to them read to you. Children thrive on having someone appreciate their developing skills.**



## What you'll need

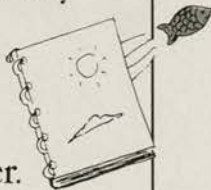
Books at your child's reading level

## What to do

1. Listen attentively as your child reads.
2. Take turns. You read a paragraph and have your child read the next one. As your child becomes more at ease with reading aloud, take turns reading a full page. Keep in mind that your child may be focusing on how to read, and your reading helps to keep the story alive.
3. If your children have trouble reading words, you can help in several ways.
  - Tell them to skip over the word, read the rest of the sentence, and ask what word would make sense in the story.
  - Help them use what they know about letters and sounds.
  - Supply the correct word.
4. Tell children how proud you are of their efforts and skills.



Listening to your children read aloud provides opportunities for you to express appreciation of their new skills and for them to practice their reading. Most important, it's another way to enjoy reading together.





# (ages 6-10) Family Reading Time

**A quiet time for family members to read on their own may be the only chance a busy parent gets to read the paper.**



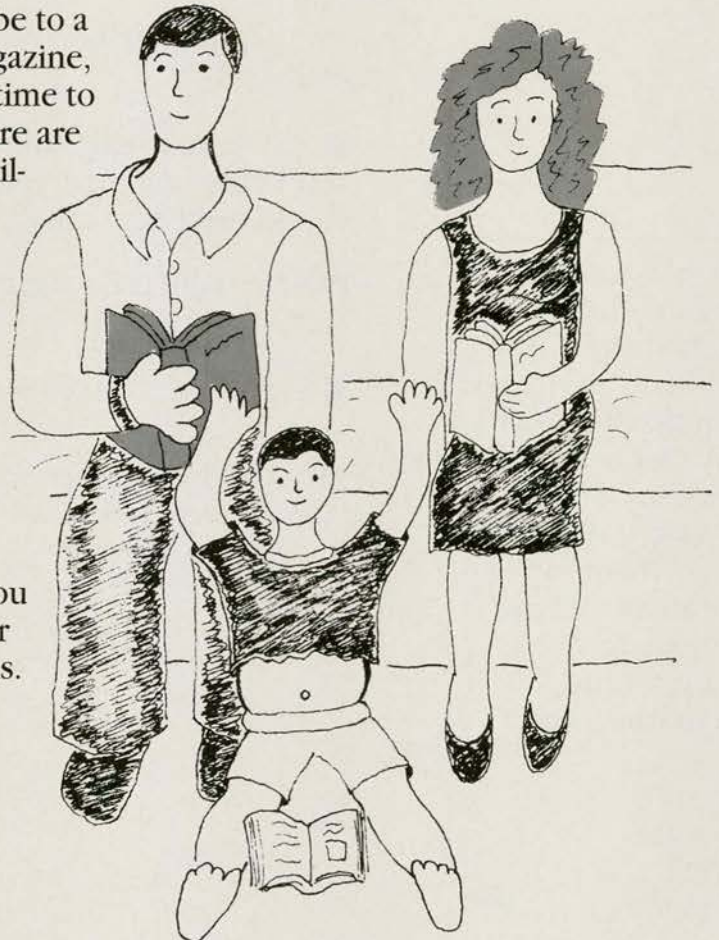
## What you'll need

Your own reading materials

Reading materials for your children

## What to do

1. Both you and your child should pick out something to read.
2. Don't be concerned if your beginning readers pick materials that are easier than their school reading books. Practicing with easy books (and the comics) will improve their fluency.
3. If you subscribe to a children's magazine, this is a good time to get it out. There are many good children's magazines, and youngsters often get a special thrill out of receiving their own mail.
4. Relax and enjoy while you each read your own selections.



A family reading time shows that you like to read. Because you value reading, your children will too.





# (ages 3-10) World of Words

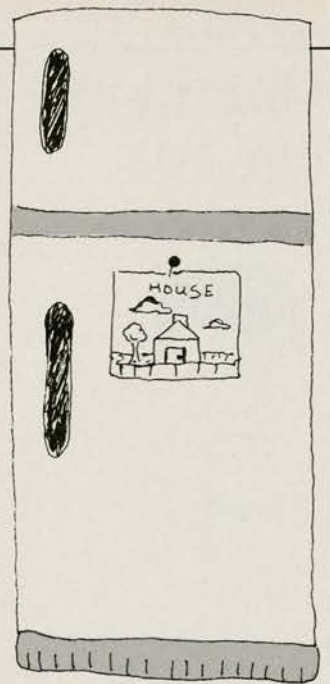
Here are a few ways to create a home rich in words.

## What you'll need

Paper  
Pencils, crayons, markers  
Glue (if you want to make a poster)  
Newspapers, magazines  
Safety scissors

## What to do

1. Hang posters of the alphabet on bedroom walls or make an alphabet poster with your child.
2. Label the things in your child's pictures. If your child draws a picture of a house, label it "house" and put it on the refrigerator.
3. Have your child watch you write when you make shopping or to-do lists. Say the words out loud and carefully print each letter.
4. Let your child make lists, too. Help your child form the letters and spell the words.
5. Look at newspapers and magazines with your child. Find an interesting picture and show it to your child as you read the caption out loud.
6. Create a scrapbook. Cut out pictures of people and places and label them.



By exposing your child to words and letters often, your child will begin to recognize the shapes of letters. The world of words will become friendly.



(infant to  
age 10)

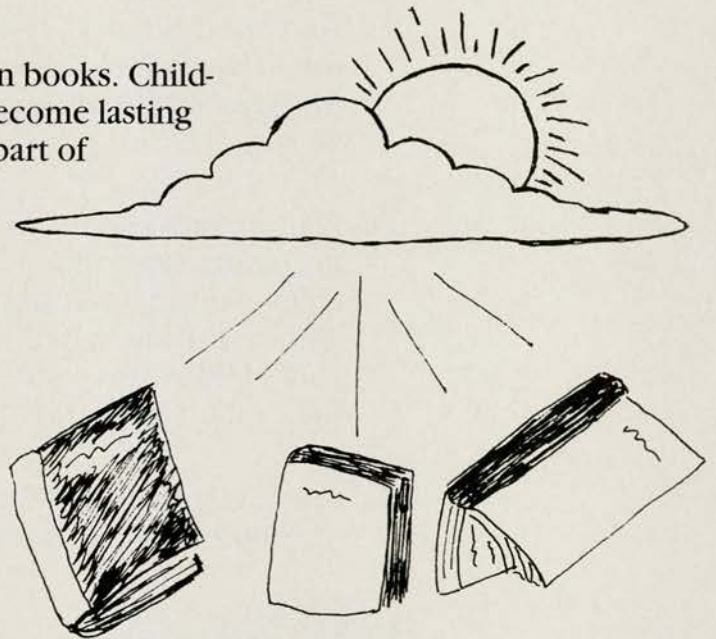
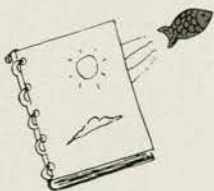
# Book Nooks

**With very little effort, parents can introduce children to the wide world of books.**

## What to do

- 1.** Visit the library. Get a library card in your child's name and one for yourself if you don't have one. Go to the children's section and spend time reading and selecting books to take home. Check out books yourself to show your child everyone can use and enjoy books and the library. Be sure to introduce your child to the librarian, and ask about special programs the library has for children.
- 2.** Start your own home library. Designate a bookcase or shelf especially for your child. Encourage your child to arrange the books by some method—books about animals, holiday books, favorite books.
- 3.** Keep an eye out for inexpensive books at flea markets, garage sales, used bookstores, and discount tables at bookstores. Many public libraries sell old books once a year. You will find some real bargains!
- 4.** Make your own books. Child-made books become lasting treasures and part of your home library.

When collecting books is an important family activity, parents send the message that books are important and fun.





# (ages 3-10) Family Stories

**Family stories enrich the relationship between parent and child.**

## What to do

1. Tell your child stories about your parents and grandparents. You might even put these stories in a book and add old family photographs.
2. Have your child tell you stories about what happened on special days, such as holidays, birthdays, and family vacations.
3. Reminiscence about when you were a child. Describe things that happened at school involving teachers and subjects you were studying. Talk about your brothers, sisters, or friends.
4. Write a journal about a trip you have taken with your child to create a new family story. Recording the day's special event and pasting a photograph into the journal ties the family story to a written record. You might also include everyday trips like going to the market or the park.

It helps for children to know that stories come from real people and are about real events. When children listen to stories, they hear the voices of the storyteller. This helps them hear the words when they learn to read aloud or read silently.





# (ages 3-10) P.S. I Love You

**Something important happens when children receive and write letters. They realize that the printed word has a purpose.**

## What you'll need

Paper  
Pencil, crayon,  
or marker



## What to do

1. Send your child little notes (by putting them in a pocket or lunch box, for example). When your child shows you the note, read it out loud with expression. Some children will read the notes on their own.
2. When your child expresses a feeling or thought that's related to a person, have your child write a letter. Have your child dictate the words to you if your child doesn't write yet.

For example:

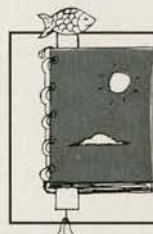
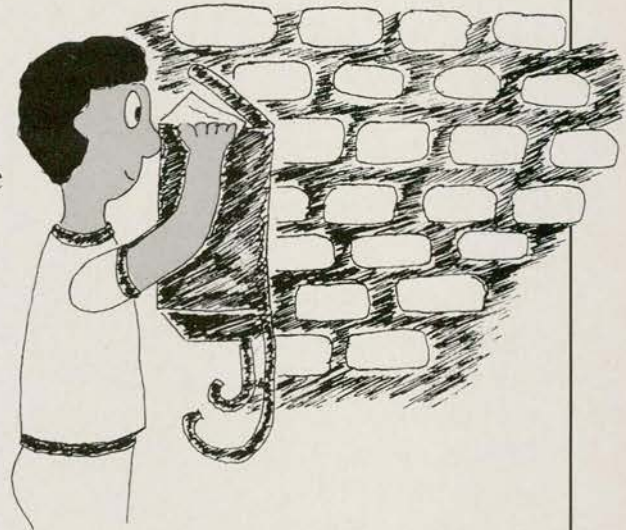
Dear Grandma,

I like it when you make ice cream. It's better than the kind we buy at the store.

Your grandson,  
Darryl

P.S. I love you.

3. Ask the people who receive these notes to respond. An oral response is fine—a written response is even better.
4. Explain the writing process to your child: "We think of ideas and put them into words; we put the words on paper; people read the words; and people respond."



Language is speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each element supports and enriches the other. Sending letters will help children become writers, and writing will make them better readers.



# (ages 6-10) Easy as Pie

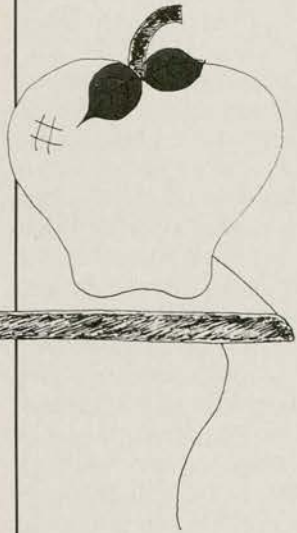
**Preparing meals is another good way for children to practice language skills.**

## What you'll need

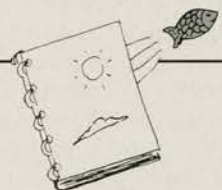
Paper  
Pencil  
Cookbook or recipes  
Food supplies

## What to do

1. Ask children to help you prepare a grocery list.
2. Take them to the market and have them find items on the list.
3. Have them help put away the groceries and encourage them to read the labels, box tops, and packages as they store them.
4. Have them read the ingredients from a recipe.
5. Prepare a meal together and let them take needed items from shelves and storage areas.
6. Talk about the steps in preparing a meal—first, second, and so on.
7. Praise the efforts of your early reader and encourage other family members to do the same.



The purpose of reading is to get meaning from the page. By using reading skills to prepare a meal, children see positive results from reading.





## SCHOOL DISORDER

(Continued from page 9)

advantages also to being an enrolled student, such as bus passes and lunch tickets, which can be sold as well as used. Consequently, many remain enrolled although they are actually occasional or chronic truants. The existence of a large population of enrolled nonattenders blurs the line between intruders and students. School officials understand this all too well, but the compulsory school attendance laws prevent them from doing much about it. (Toby, 1983)

Keeping more children in school who do not want to be there interferes with traditional learning. Consequently, functional illiteracy has spread to more students, resulting not necessarily in the formal withdrawal from school of marginal students but, more usually, in "internal" dropouts. School systems are making strenuous efforts to educate such students whom they would have given up on in a previous generation. Such students used to be described as "lazy," and they were given poor grades for "conduct." It is perhaps not surprising that the public schools have had great difficulty providing satisfaction, not to mention success, to students whose aptitudes or attitudes do not permit them to function within the range of traditional standards of academic performance. One response is to "dumb-down" the curriculum with "relevant," intellectually undemanding courses that increase the proportion of entertainment to work.

### The Extension of Civil Rights to Children

A third trend indirectly affecting school order is the increasing sensitivity of public schools to the rights of children. A generation ago it was possible for principals to rule schools autocratically, to suspend or expel students without much regard for procedural niceties. Injustices occurred; children were "pushed out" of schools because they antagonized teachers and principals. But this arbitrariness enabled school administrators to control the situation when serious misbehavior occurred. Student assaults on teachers were punished so swiftly that such assaults were almost unthinkable. Even disrespectful language was unusual. Today, as a result of greater concern for the rights of children, school officials are required to observe due process in handling student discipline. Hearings are necessary. Charges must be specified. Witnesses must confirm suspicions. Appeals are provided for. Greater due process for students accused of misbehavior gives unruly students better protection against teachers and principals; unfortunately, it also gives well-behaved students less protection from their classmates.

Related to the extension of civil rights in the school setting is the decreased ability of schools to get help with discipline problems from the juvenile courts. Like the schools, the juvenile courts also have become more attentive to children's rights. Juvenile courts today are less willing to exile children to a correctional Siberia. More than 20 years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that children could not be sent to juvenile prisons for "rehabilitation" unless proof existed that they had *done* something for which imprisonment was appropriate. The 1967 *Gault* decision set off a revolution in juvenile court procedures. For example, formal hearings with young-

sters represented by attorneys became common practice for serious offenses that might result in incarceration.

Furthermore, a number of state legislatures restricted the discretion of juvenile court judges. In New York and New Jersey, for example, juvenile court judges may not commit a youngster to correctional institutions for "status offenses," that is, for behavior that would not be a crime if done by adults. Thus, truancy or ungovernable behavior in school or at home are not grounds for incarceration in these two states. The differentiation of juvenile delinquents from persons in need of supervision (PINS in New York nomenclature, JINS in New Jersey) may have been needed. However, one consequence of this reform is that the public schools can less easily persuade juvenile courts to help with school-discipline problems. In some cases, the juvenile court judge cannot incarcerate because the behavior is a status offense rather than "delinquency." In other cases the alleged behavior, such as slapping or punching a teacher, is indeed delinquency, but many judges will not commit a youngster to a correctional institution for this kind of behavior, because they have to deal with what they perceive as worse juvenile violence on the streets. Thus, for its own very good reasons, the juvenile justice system does not help the schools appreciably in dealing with disorder. Only when disorder results in violence will the juvenile courts intervene; their response is too little, too late.

Increased attention to civil rights for students, including students accused of violence, was also an unintended consequence of compulsory school attendance laws. The Supreme Court held in *Goss v. Lopez* not only that schoolchildren were entitled to due process when accused by school authorities of misbehavior and that greater due-process protections were required for students in danger of suspension for more than 10 days or for expulsion, than for students threatened with less severe disciplinary penalties. The Court held also that the state, in enacting a compulsory school attendance law, incurred an *obligation* to educate children until the age specified in the law, which implied greater attention to due process for youngsters still subject to compulsory attendance laws than for youngsters beyond their scope. Boards of education interpreted these requirements to mean that formal hearings were necessary in cases of youngsters in danger of losing the educational benefits the law required them to receive. Such hearings were to be conducted at a higher administrative level than the school itself, and the principals had to document the case and produce witnesses who could be cross-examined.

In Hawaii, for example, which has a compulsory education law extending to age 18, Rule 21, which the Hawaii Department of Education adopted in 1976 to meet the requirement of *Goss v. Lopez*, aroused unanimous dissatisfaction from principals interviewed in the Crime Commission's study of school violence and vandalism. They had three complaints. First, in cases where expulsion or suspension of more than 10 days might be the outcome, the principal was required to gather evidence, to file notices, and to participate in long adversarial hearings at the district superintendent's office in a prosecutorial capacity, which discouraged principals from initiating this procedure in serious cases. Thus principals downgraded serious offenses in order to deal with them expeditiously, by means of informal hearings. Second, Rule 21



## ***Part of the reason for the decline of homework in public secondary schools is the erosion of teacher authority.***

forbade principals to impose a series of short suspensions of a student within one semester that cumulatively amounted to more than 10 days unless there was a formal hearing. Although intended to prevent principals from getting around the requirement for formal hearings in serious cases involving long suspensions, what this provision achieved was to prevent principals from imposing any discipline at all on multiple offenders. Once suspended for a total of 10 days in a semester, a student could engage in minor and not-so-minor misbehavior with impunity. Third, the principals complained that their obligation to supply "alternative education" for students expelled or suspended for more than 10 days was unrealistic in terms of available facilities.

### **The Blurring of the Line Between Disability And Misbehavior**

"Special education" serves a heterogeneous group of students, some with physical handicaps, others with behavior problems from which emotional handicaps are inferred without independent psychiatric justification. Inferring personality disturbances from deviant behavior has a long, disreputable history in the criminal courts where defense attorneys have creatively described stealing and fire-setting as "kleptomania" and "pyromania" when the behavior had no intuitively plausible explanation. In 1975 Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which provided "not only that every handicapped child is entitled to a free public education, but that such an education shall be provided *in the least restrictive educational setting.*" (Hewett and Watson, 1979) Thus the philosophy of mainstreaming handicapped children—exceptional children, as they are sometimes called—became national policy. Some of the handicaps are verifiable independent of classroom behavior: deafness, blindness, motor problems, speech pathologies, retardation. But learning disabilities and behavior disorders, especially the latter, are more ambiguous. Does a child who punches other children in his classroom have a behavior disorder for which he should be pitied, or does he deserve punishment for naughtiness?

The state of Hawaii ran into this dilemma in attempting to implement Public Law 94-142. The Hawaii Board of Education promulgated Rule 49.13, which asserted

that "handicapped children in special education programs may not be seriously disciplined by suspensions for over 10 days or by dismissal from school for violating any of the school's rules." This meant that there were two standards of behavior, one for ordinary students and one for "handicapped" students. But students who were classified as handicapped because of a clinical judgment that they were "emotionally disturbed" (usually inferred from "acting out" behavior) seemed to be getting a license to commit disciplinary infractions.

According to a 1980 Hawaii Crime Commission report, *Violence and Vandalism in the Public Schools of Hawaii*:

[I]t was the consensus of 14 principals from the Leeward and Central School Districts of Oahu that the special disciplinary section under Rule 49 created a "double standard" between regular students who were subject to varying degrees of suspensions and special education students who were not. These principals believe that such an alleged double standard fosters a belief among special education students that they are immune from suspension under regular disciplinary rules and, therefore, can engage in misconduct with impunity.

"Special education" students placed in that category because of supposed emotional disturbance may have violence-prone personalities. On the other hand, they may only be assumed to have such personalities because they have engaged in inexplicably violent behavior. They might be able to control their behavior if they had incentives to do so. In formulating Rule 49.13, the Department of Education of the state of Hawaii has been explicit about denying responsibility to special education youngsters, but the same heightened concern about the special needs of presumed emotionally disturbed students is common in other American public school systems. One result of not holding some children responsible for violent behavior is that they are more likely to engage in violence than they would otherwise be.

### **The Erosion of Teacher Authority**

The social changes that have separated secondary schools from effective family and neighborhood influences and that have made it burdensome for school administrators to expel students guilty of violent behavior or to suspend them for more than 10 days partially explain the eroding authority of teachers. Social changes are not the entire explanation, however. There also have been *cultural* changes undermining the authority of teachers. There was a time when teachers were considered godlike, and their judgments went unquestioned. No more. Doubtless, reduced respect for teachers is part of fundamental cultural changes by which many authority figures—parents, police, government officials have come to have less prestige. In the case of teachers, the general demythologizing was amplified by special ideological criticism. Bestselling books of the 1960s portrayed teachers, especially middle-class teachers, as the villains of education—insensitive, authoritarian, and even racist.

Part of the reason for the decline of homework in public secondary schools is the erosion of teacher authority. When teachers could depend on all but a handful of stu-



dents to turn in required written homework, they could assign homework and mean it. The slackers could be disciplined. But in schools where teachers could no longer count on a majority of students doing their homework, assigning it became a meaningless ritual, and many teachers gave up. Professor James Coleman and his research team found that private and parochial school sophomores in high school reported doing, on the average, at least two hours more of homework per week than public school sophomores. Many teachers felt they lacked authority to induce students to do *anything* they did not want to do: to attend classes regularly, to keep quiet so orderly recitation could proceed, to refrain from annoying a disliked classmate.

A charismatic teacher can still control a class. But the erosion of teacher authority meant that *run-of-the-mill* teachers are less effective at influencing behavior in their classes, in hallways, and in lunchrooms. What has changed is that the *role* of teacher no longer commands the automatic respect it once did from students and their parents. This means that less forceful, less experienced, or less effective teachers cannot rely on the authority of the role to help them maintain control. They are on their own in a sense that the previous generation was not.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE

Faced with the worrisome problem of school violence, Americans look for simple solutions like hiring additional security guards or installing metal detectors. Security guards and metal directors *are* useful, especially in inner-city schools where invading predators from surrounding neighborhoods are a major source of violence. But dealing with *student* sources of everyday school violence requires more effective teacher control over the submerged part of the violence iceberg: disorder.

Teachers, not security guards, already prevent disorder in most American high schools. They do it by expressing approval of some student behavior and disapproval of other student behavior. This is tremendously effective in schools where the majority of students care about what teachers think of them. Expressing approval and disapproval is useless (and sometimes dangerous) in schools where students have contempt for teachers and teachers know it. In such schools, particularly those in inner cities, many teachers are too intimidated to condemn curses, threats, obscenities, drunkenness, and, of course, the neglect of homework and other academic obligations. It would help enormously if all families inculcated moral values before children started school and if all teachers motivated students better in the earliest grades so that they are hooked on education by the time they reach high school. But, unfortunately, many students arrive without these desirable formative experiences.

The problem is how to empower teachers in schools where they are now intimidated by students who are not as receptive to education as we would like them to be. Teachers cannot empower themselves. Ultimately, teachers derive their authority from student respect for education and the people who transmit it. Japan provides a classic illustration of what respect for teachers, inculcated in the family, can accomplish. Japanese high school

## *The age limit for high school entitlement should be raised from 21, the usual age at present, to 100.*

teachers are firmly in control of their high schools without the help of security guards or metal detectors. No Japanese high school teacher is afraid to admonish students who start to misbehave, because the overwhelming majority of students will respond deferentially. Japanese high school teachers know that their students care about the grades they receive at school.

Students have good reason to care. Japanese teachers give grades that employers as well as colleges scrutinize; they also write letters of recommendation that prospective employers take seriously. In short, Japanese high school students are deeply concerned about the favorable attitudes of their teachers. As a result, Japanese teachers can require lots of homework. Homework is a major factor in the superior academic performance of Japanese students in international comparisons. But effective teacher control has consequences for school safety too. Japanese high school teachers never are assaulted by their students; on the contrary, high school students pay attention to their teachers and graduate from high school in greater proportions (93 percent) than American students. They *want* to go to school because they are convinced, correctly, that their occupational futures depend on educational achievement.

It is unlikely that American high school students will ever respect their teachers as much as Japanese students do theirs. Japan's culture is more homogeneous than American culture, and Japan's high schools have a closer connection with employers than American high schools do. Japanese employers as well as Japanese colleges want to see the grades that students receive in high school, and they pay attention to letters of recommendation from teachers. Furthermore, Japan's high schools have the advantage of containing only voluntary students. (Compulsory education ends in junior high school in Japan.) But there are several measures we can take that will greatly enhance teacher control in American high schools.

The first one is to break through the anonymous, impersonal atmosphere of jumbo high schools and junior highs by creating smaller communities of learning within larger structures, where teachers and students can come to know each other well. A number of urban school districts—New York and Philadelphia among them—are already moving ahead with this strategy of schools within schools or “house plans,” as they are sometimes called. Such a strategy promotes a sense of community and encourages strong relationships to grow between teachers and students. Destructive student subcultures are less likely to emerge. Problems are caught



before they get out of hand; students do not fall between the cracks. And teacher disapproval of student misbehavior carries more sting in schools where students and teachers are close.

The second measure we can take—one that would significantly empower teachers—is to have employers start demanding high school transcripts and make it known to students that the best jobs will go to those whose effort and learning earn them. This idea, which John Bishop and James Rosenbaum have written about, and which Al Shanker has devoted a number of his *New York Times* columns to, is an important one. Employers currently pay little or no attention to high school transcripts. Very few ask for them. They don't know what courses their job applicants took or what grades they got. The only requirement the typical employer has is that the applicant possess a high school diploma. Whether that diploma represents four years of effort, achievement, and good behavior—or four years of seat time and surliness—is a distinction not made.

And the students know it. Rosenbaum describes the consequences:

Since employers ignore grades, it is not surprising that many work-bound students lack motivation to improve them. While some students work hard in school because of personal standards or parental pressure or real interest in a particular subject, students who lack these motivations have little incentive since schoolwork doesn't affect the jobs they will get after graduation, and it is difficult for them to see how it could affect job possibilities ten years later.

The consequences are far reaching . . . . Many kinds of motivation and discipline problems are widespread: absenteeism, class cutting, tardiness, disruptive behavior, verbal abuse, failure to do homework assignments, and substance abuse. . . .

While employers ask why teachers don't exert their authority in the classroom, they unwittingly undermine teachers' authority over work-bound students. Grades are the main direct sanction that teachers control. When students see that grades don't affect the jobs they will get, teacher authority is severely crippled.

Employers, of course, would have to hold up their end of the bargain: good jobs for good grades. Once the system was credible, significant numbers of students would take heed, and teachers would be re-armed—not with hardware, but with the authority to command serious attention to the work of school.

Third, we should show that American society takes education seriously by insisting that it is not enough for a youngster to be on the school rolls and show up occasionally. Dropout prevention is not an end in itself; perhaps a youngster who does not pay attention in class and do homework *ought* to drop out. Our policy in every high school, including inner-city high schools with traditionally high dropout rates, should be that excellence is not only possible, it is expected. Those who balk at giving prospective dropouts a choice between a more onerous school experience than they now have and leaving school altogether should keep in mind that students would make the choice in consultation with parents or other relatives. Most families, even pretty demoralized ones, would urge children to stay in school when offered a clear choice. The problem today is that many families

don't get a clear choice; the schools attended by their children unprotestingly accept tardiness, class cutting, inattention in class, and truancy. A child can drop out of such a school psychologically, unbeknownst to his family, because enrollment doesn't even mean regular attendance. In effect, prospective dropouts choose whether to fool around inside school or outside school. That is why making schools tougher academically, with substantial amounts of homework, might have the paradoxical effect of persuading a higher proportion of families to encourage their kids to opt for an education. Furthermore, education, unlike imprisonment, depends on cooperation from the beneficiaries of the opportunities offered. Keeping internal dropouts in school is an empty victory.

A fourth measure will demonstrate that we really meant it when we said we would welcome dropouts back when they are ready to take education seriously. School boards should encourage community adults to come into high schools, not as teachers, not as aides, not as counselors, not as security guards, but as students. A recent front-page story in the *New York Times* (November 28, 1993) illustrated the practicality of this proposal. Dropouts from an impoverished neighborhood not only hungured for a second chance at a high school education but became role models for younger students. At Chicago's DuSable High School, an all-black school close to a notorious public housing project, a 39-year-old father of six children, a 29-year-old mother of a 14-year-old son, who, like his mother is a freshman at DuSable, a 39-year-old mother of five children—returned to high school. They had come to believe that dropping out a decade or two earlier was a terrible mistake. Some of these adult students are embarrassed to meet their children in the hallways; some of their children are embarrassed that their parents are schoolmates; some of the teachers at the high school were initially skeptical about mixing teenagers and adults in classes. But everyone at DuSable High School agrees that these adult students take education seriously, work harder than the teenage students, and, by their presence, set a good example.

Adult students are not in school to reduce school violence. But an incidental byproduct of their presence is improved order. For example, it is less easy to cut classes or skip school altogether when your mother or even your neighbor is attending the school. The principal at DuSable High School observed one mother marching her son off to gym class, which he had intended to cut. Unfortunately, most school systems do not welcome adult students except in special adult school programs or G.E.D. classes. Such age-segregated programs will continue to enroll most of the high school dropouts who later decide they want a high school diploma because work or child-care responsibilities will keep all but the most determined in these age-segregated programs. But education laws should not *prevent* persons over 21 from re-enrollment in high school. The age limit for high school entitlement should be raised from 21, the usual age at present, to 100. Especially in inner-city high schools, much can be gained by encouraging even a handful of adult dropouts to return to regular high school classes. Teachers who have an adult student or two in their classes are not alone with a horde of teenagers. They have adult allies during the inevitable confrontations with misbe-



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having students. Even though the adults say nothing, their presence bolsters the will of teachers to maintain order.

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It is important also to remind ourselves that plenty of schools—including ones in the worst crime-ridden neighborhoods—are oases in the midst of despair, where teachers have managed, against all odds, to maintain a good environment for learning. America's goal must be nothing short of making all schools safe havens where children can come to learn and grow. □

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