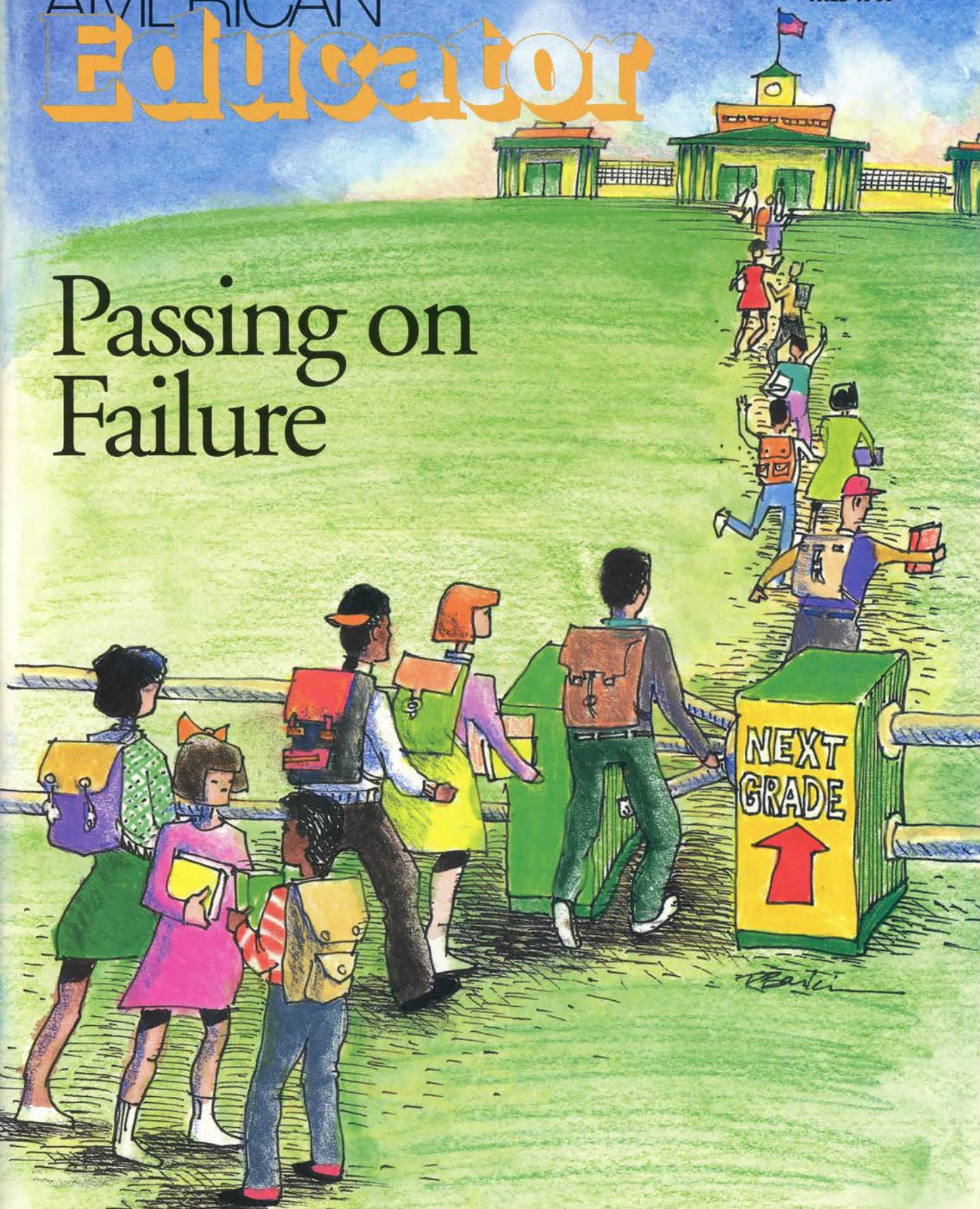


AMERICAN Educator

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
FALL 1997

Passing on Failure



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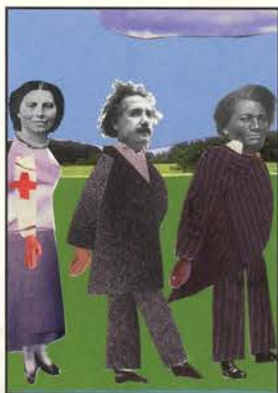
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Social promotion—moving students along to higher grades before they are ready—spells disaster for everyone involved. But traditional retention is not the answer, either. We need a comprehensive approach that will head off failure well before it occurs.

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PASSING ON FAILURE

*Social promotion is not the
way to help children who have
fallen behind.*

BY SANDRA FELDMAN

AS YOU know, I was recently elected president of the American Federation of Teachers. Some of you also know me as a local union leader in a "small town" called New York City, where I've spent countless hours in schools talking to teachers and kids. I know the problems of poor urban districts *very* well. So it doesn't seem strange when a place like New York decides to have a big literacy push to make sure that all our students leave third grade able to read. It's an idea we've supported for some time.

But it knocked my socks off when I heard the President of the United States, in his State of the Union address, hold out as a *national* goal that every child will be able to read well by the end of third grade.

Frankly, I was embarrassed. How is it that the President of the wealthiest, greatest nation in the world has to talk about universal third-grade literacy as a national goal? And what did that actually mean, given that American kids, on average, were in the top tier on the 1992 International Assessment of Reading, and that our fourth graders were at the very top this year in science in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study?

What it means, really, is that a substantial portion of our poor kids—and in America more than 20 percent of kids are poor—can't read as they should. And when you can't read properly, you can't learn as you should in other subjects, either.

Now poor children, especially urban children, are people I know well. Very well. Not only was I one of them, but I've spent my entire adult life among them. I

Sandra Feldman is president of the American Federation of Teachers. She delivered this speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on September 9. The results from the national survey on school district promotion policies and practices are drawn from a new report prepared by the AFT Educational Issues Department, as are the sidebars that accompany this article. For copies of the full report, see ordering information on p. 8.

know what problems they have and the burdens they bring to school. And I also know that the schools they attend, rather than getting more, get less. But I also know that, short of situations of serious damage, urban kids are perfectly capable of reading well and doing well in school in general.

So how does it happen that a child gets beyond third grade without solid skills in reading or math? How could it happen that a youngster could reach twelfth grade, let alone graduate from high school, without solid skills in reading, writing, and math? How did it happen that colleges have to offer remedial courses and businesses have to spend millions teaching new employees basic skills?

Good questions.

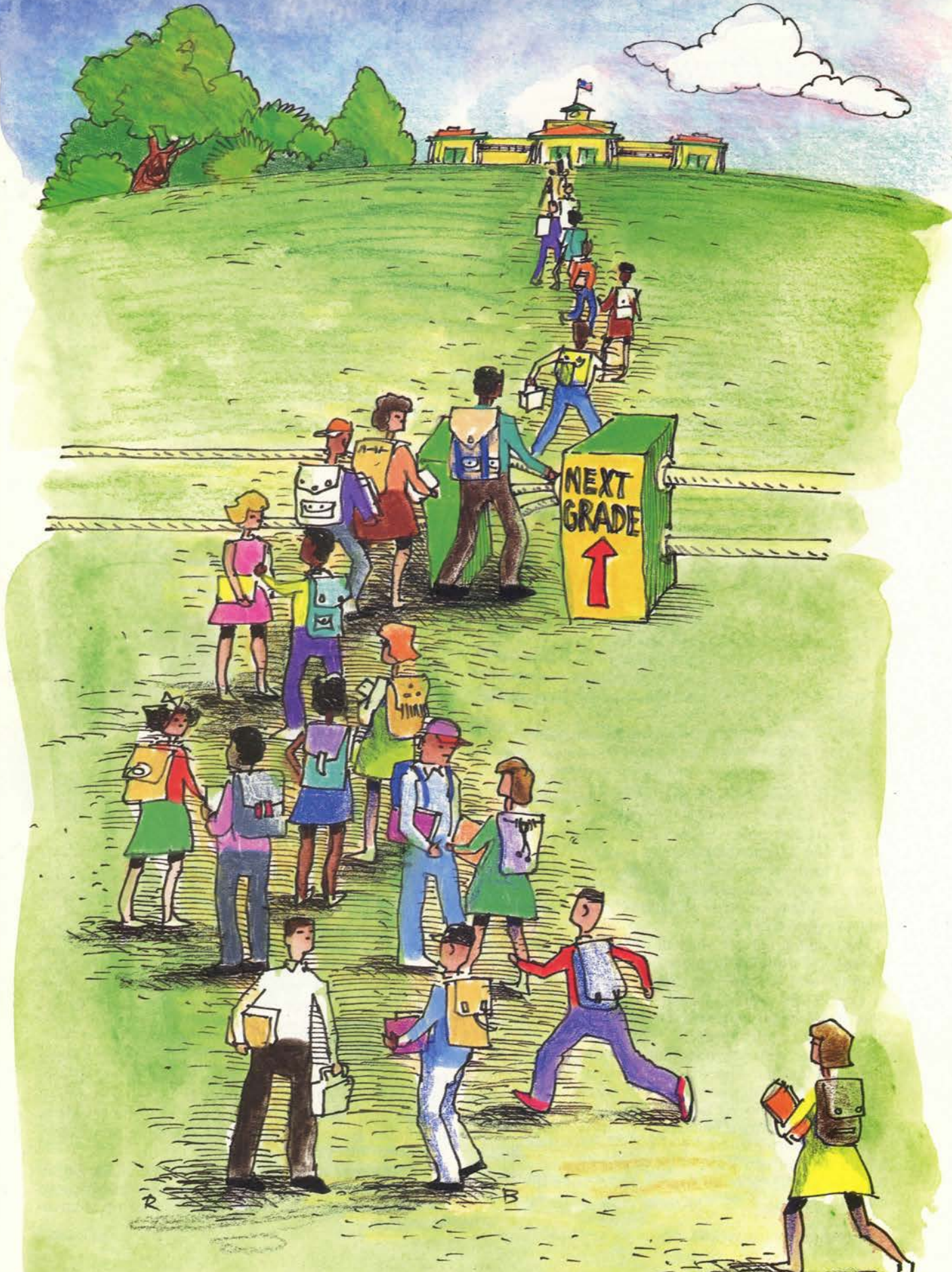
Now, we in the AFT spend a lot of time listening to our members, so we had a pretty good sense of the answers. And one of the persistent answers we were hearing was "social promotion"—the practice of sending students on to the next grade even though they weren't really ready.

But we wanted to check on what we were hearing. So, as part of our ongoing push for higher standards of conduct and achievement, we decided to conduct a national survey about student promotion policies. I am here today with the results of this AFT survey, the first such national survey ever conducted. We collected promotion policies from eighty-five districts across the country, including the forty largest. And we now have much clearer answers about why the richest nation on earth has to set a goal of all children reading well by the end of third grade and about why a youngster can graduate from high school without a solid foundation in the basic skills necessary to lead a productive life.

What did we find? We found that no district has an explicit policy of social promotion. That was odd. Were our members wrong? Could Chicago and other districts that are now banning social promotion be banning something that doesn't exist?

Not at all.

Because we also found that just about every district



Social Promotion: Everyone Loses

AS CRITICS point out, social promotion is an insidious practice that hides school failure and creates problems for everybody:

■ **For kids**, who are deluded into thinking they have learned the knowledge and skills necessary for success, who get the message that effort and achievement do not count, and most important, who often are denied access to the resources and support programs they need because their failure is not acknowledged by the system.

■ **For teachers**, who must deal with impossibly wide disparities in their students' preparation and achievement that result from social promotion, and who face students who know that teachers wield no credible authority to demand hard work.

■ **For parents**, who are lulled into thinking that their children are being adequately prepared for college, for civic responsibility, and for the world of work.

■ **For the business community**, which must invest millions of dollars in teaching new employees the basic skills they did not learn in school.

■ **For colleges and universities**, which must spend a sizeable portion of their budgets on remedial courses to prepare high school graduates to do college-level work, and for the professors who must lower their standards in order to accommodate an ill-prepared student body.

■ **For taxpayers**, whose support of public education is eroded by evidence that a high school diploma is not necessarily a guarantee of basic literacy and numeracy.

■ **For society**, in general, which cannot afford, in both economic and civic terms, a growing proportion of uneducated citizens who neither benefit from, nor contribute to, the commonweal.

has an *implicit* policy of social promotion. Almost all districts say that holding students back must be the option of last resort—which is a clear message to promote socially—and many of them also put explicit limits on retaining students—which is another clear message to promote socially.

For example, about one-half of the districts restrict the number of times a student can be retained. In Orange County, Florida, only one retention is permitted in elementary school. Houston restricts retention to once in kindergarten through fourth grade and once in fifth through eighth grade.

Still other districts essentially forbid retaining certain children, like students with limited English proficiency or learning disabilities, saying that these students are to be moved along according to "a pace that is appropriate to their abilities"—whatever that means.

Another major answer our survey revealed about why a student can leave third grade without reading well or graduate from high school without solid knowledge and skills is that, in most districts, *there*

In most districts, there are no agreed-upon standards defining what students should know and be able to do at various grade levels.



are no agreed-upon standards defining what students should know and be able to do at various grade levels.

As a result, there are no clear criteria for whether or not a student should be promoted. Instead, we see vague policies like Clark County, Nevada's: To be promoted, a student's "progress should be continuous and student advancement through the curriculum should be according to the student's demonstrated ability."

What does *that* mean?

Or take the policy of the Long Beach, Calif., School District: Promotion depends on a student's ability to "demonstrate sufficient growth in learning required basic skills." But what is "sufficient?" The policy is silent. And is "sufficient growth" the same as mastery? The policy gives no clue.

So how *are* promotion decisions made? We found that, in most districts, a student's grades in class and on standardized tests, along with teacher recommen-

dations, form the basis for promotion decisions.

Sounds sensible. But think about it: In the absence of clear, grade-by-grade standards for what students should know and be able to do, class grades are based on different things and, therefore, vary greatly. Some teachers grade based on student mastery; other emphasize effort; still others look at mastery or effort relative to perceived student ability; and still others may use different combinations of these. And the result is that some students arrive in the next grade unprepared for work at that level, even though they may have gotten A's and B's.

Standardized tests are also not a good guide to promotion decisions. First, they are not generally reliable when young children are involved. And second, they often aren't aligned with the curriculum—that is, with what the students have been taught.

That brings us to teacher recommendations, presumably the third leg of the three-legged stool that constitutes promotion decisions. But our survey revealed that this third leg is very shaky indeed: While teachers *participate* in promotion decisions in the majority of districts we surveyed, they have little *authority* over the decision. They have final authority at the elementary or middle school level in only *two* districts, and final authority at the high school level in only *one* district. In fact, more districts give parents final authority over a student's promotion than they do teachers!

In the majority of districts, final authority for promotion decisions rests with the principal. And here, once again, we see the effects of not having clear standards for students. Because in the absence of standards, teachers who grade strictly may have little support—and grades become negotiable. Principals can overturn a teacher's recommendation or change her grades. And, frequently, they do, either because they don't want the school to look bad or because of parent or

district pressure. Sometimes, it's because the resources aren't there to hold over too many children.

In fact, in a separate poll of teachers we conducted some time ago, we found that, although teachers are opposed to social promotion, they, like many principals, feel uneasy about retention because usually there are no options for the students—no program that's different and helpful, not even summer school, in many cases. And children who are retained without any extra help or different programs often continue to do poorly. It's a terrible bind.

AND THAT brings me to the next major finding of our survey: In the majority of districts we looked at, promotion policies are generally silent about providing special help to students who fail, or who are at risk of failing, or who are socially promoted.

Only about 15 percent mention tutoring; and only about 13 percent mention alternative programs and strategies, such as transitional classes, extended instructional time, customized instructional programs or other support services. About one-half of the promotion policies mention summer school, but discussions with school officials and union leaders indicate that in many instances funds to support summer school have been cut drastically, if not eliminated. In some districts, students must pay to attend summer school!

Now, some of you may be thinking, "Special programs may be nice, but they're costly. Isn't the solution simple? Clearly, if we don't want social promotion—and we don't—then retention is the answer."

...Which brings me to the last major finding from our survey: Ironically, and painfully, it turns out that not only is social *promotion* rampant, retention is, too. Despite the restrictions on holding back students, retention is used as often as it can be. Accurate figures are hard to get, but it is estimated that 15 percent to

Teachers' Role in Promotion Decisions

THE ROLE teachers play in social promotion decisions is complicated. Teachers do not like social promotion, but they are ambivalent about retaining students. Ninety-four percent of teachers in a recent survey* agreed with the statements: "...promoting students who are not truly prepared creates a burden for the receiving teachers and classmates. Automatic promotion inevitably brings down standards and impedes education." Yet, 54 percent of those same teachers indicated that they had promoted unprepared students in the past year. Why? Our polls indicate:

- Teachers do not have the authority to retain students.
- Teachers succumb to pressure from principals and parents to promote students that the teachers consider to be unprepared. Six in 10 teachers indicate that teachers in their school are pressured by principals and other administrators not to retain students, while 52 percent say parental pressure is a problem.
- Teachers fear that when students are retained, they will cause behavior and discipline problems in class.
- Teachers know that there is already a significant amount of retention occurring in schools.
- Teachers believe that the educational research indicates that retention is both harmful and ineffective.
- Teachers believe that there are insufficient educational alternatives to social promotion or retention for youngsters who do not master the grade-level material. They see their dilemma as having to choose between two unsatisfactory alternatives. Teachers often know that retention may result in students' repeating the same material, taught with the same instructional strategies that were ineffectual for those students in the first instance. To recommend retention in such a situation is not only a violation of all that teachers know about how children develop and learn, but it also lends support to what teachers perceive as a fundamental problem—the failure on the part of the administration to develop and support alternatives and prevention programs for children at risk of failure.

*Peter D. Hart Associates. *Academic Standards and Student Discipline: AFT Teachers Assess Their Schools*, 1996.

Why Students Fail

A VERY SMALL percentage of children fail because they do not have the innate capacity to acquire the complex knowledge and skills required for functioning in today's information age. The vast majority of children are unsuccessful in school for other, more complicated reasons.

- Some children don't prosper in school because they are immature or otherwise unready for school.
- Some don't learn because we feed them with an empty spoon; they are not provided a rich curriculum and/or instructional practices that support high achievement.
- Others don't acquire the necessary knowledge and skills because of excessive absenteeism.
- Some students achieve at minimal levels because they make little effort to acquire knowledge—either because they do not view academic achievement as crucial or instrumental to their goals, there are no consequences to failure, or other things, such as money or physical prowess, are more highly esteemed.
- Still others are the victims of ill-conceived theories about children and how they learn that result in failure—and in practices on the part of teachers, administrators, parents and students, and the wider society, that sustain low achievement.
- Some students don't learn because they have no incentive (positive or negative) to engage them in the educative process.
- And still others fail because of a combination of the reasons identified above.

Policies to help underachieving students learn must address these underlying causes of failure. For some students, creating a negative incentive may be enough. Sending them a clear signal that learning counts, that failure to perform will result in retention may be sufficient to inspire this small number of students to devote attention to their studies. For a few others who have been absent, repeating the grade may make sense, since they were not exposed to the material in the first place. And for some children, particularly those with little or no access to high-quality early childhood programs, repeating the early grades may make sense. But for the vast majority of underachieving students, systemic change is required if success is to be achieved. Policies and practices have to be developed that address the problems of a lack of standards, undemanding curriculum, underprepared teachers, and administrative indifference to whether learning takes place. These policies must address what unique educational experiences and support services are necessary for children who fail or are at risk of failure. Absent attention to these issues, we are doomed to continue the ineffective pendulum swing between social promotion and retention.

19 percent of U.S. students are held back in the same grade each year. And in many large urban districts, upwards of 50 percent of the students who enter kindergarten are likely to be retained at least once before they graduate or drop out.

Now, a number of school districts—Chicago most prominent among them—have ended social promotion, and many more will follow suit. They are to be congratulated; ending social promotion is the right thing to do.

But just going to a policy of retention won't work. The fact is, neither social promotion *nor* retention is the answer—if the answer we're seeking is getting kids to achieve. In fact, throughout the 20th century, we've swung like a pendulum between these two policy approaches to student progression—and neither policy has done the job.

Now, if I had a gun to my head and had to choose between retaining or promoting a student who had not mastered the requisite material to be prepared for the next grade, I would choose retention over promotion.

But there *are* better choices. What are they? First, we need to take an "intensive-care" approach to students who are falling behind—*well before* we're at the point of promotion or retention decisions—by quickly identifying these students and concentrating every possible resource on getting them back on track quickly.

For example, Cincinnati's reform efforts include *immediate* intervention, such as providing students with

in-class, small-group instruction or multi-age grouping and also offering tutoring and summer school on top of that. For students in grades three, six and eight who still do not meet promotion standards but are at an age at which it is inappropriate to remain with younger students, there is something called "Plus Classes"—Three Plus, etc.—that have fewer students than regular classes do and an intensive, different approach to teaching students the specific knowledge and skills they haven't yet mastered.

In Albuquerque, the principal and parents must be notified early if retention is anticipated, and a special support program is designed for each child in danger of failing. Albuquerque also stipulates that no student can be retained without a specific intervention plan detailing the student's needs and how they will be met.

Second, we have to adopt rigorous standards that are clear to parents, teachers, and students. The stan-

To Order

Passing on Failure, the AFT's recently released 58-page report on school district promotion policies and practices, which also includes descriptions of programs designed to prevent failure before it happens, is available for \$5 from the AFT Order Department, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001. Ask for Item 249.

Neither social promotion nor retention is the answer.



dards should be accompanied by grade-by-grade curricula and assessments that make it possible for teachers to know *in time* when children are in trouble so they can seek *timely* intervention.

Corpus Christi is farthest along with this, combining clear and rigorous standards with an end to social promotion and an emphasis on intervention. Results of the first two years are encouraging: Scores on state reading, writing, and math tests are up significantly in all grades—which proves our youngsters *can* do what's required of them.

In fact, the students would have told us this. In their own way, they've been asking adults to take a stand on

standards; they've been asking to be taken seriously. Listen to a teenager from wealthy Westchester County, N.Y., quoted in a Public Agenda report: "It's so dumb. You don't even have to try in my school. So I think if they did raise the standards, I probably would be a harder worker." And listen to a California teenager: "I think adults don't take us seriously enough. We're really smarter than they think. It's how far and how they push us ... I think a lot of kids—even those getting D's and stuff—can do a lot better." How right the kids are.

Third—and I want to say this loud and clear—we must place well-educated, well-trained teachers in every classroom, but especially in the classrooms of our neediest and most vulnerable children. And we have to make it a top priority, both in schools of education and in districts' professional development programs, to *insist* that all teachers of young children are fully proficient in teaching reading.

Teacher preparation is woefully inadequate in this crucial area, especially when it comes to preparing teachers who will be teaching our most at-risk youngsters. And many of our experienced teachers, too, need ongoing support in teaching phonology, phonetics, orthography, and other language skills—because we know a lot more now about teaching reading, but that research hasn't reached the classroom.

I use those fancy words like "phonology" deliberately. Because I want to remind everyone of the sophisticated knowledge and skill it takes to teach reading to a group of twenty-five or thirty wiggling, restless children, many of whom have never before been exposed to the printed page. They're depending on their teacher to unlock the mysteries of eye-to-brain coordination, of decoding and comprehending squiggles on a page that result in the joy and pleasure of reading. It is daunting.

And it's as dumb and cruel to expect someone—even a brilliant young AmeriCorps type—to go in and do that with at-risk kids without proper training as it would be to think one of us could take out another's appendix, armed only with good will, a workshop, and the advice from a few books.

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS—clear standards, special *timely* help for children who need it, and additional reading training for teachers—can be put in place immediately. In some instances, we'll see immediate results; in others, results won't be evident for a couple of years, but progress will be evident immediately, not only in terms of students—as well as teachers—getting the help they need, but in the strong signal that will be sent to parents and the public that school districts will be deploying every available resource to ensuring that all kids, and not just our more advantaged kids, will read and generally achieve well by the time they leave third grade and that all students, and not just our more advantaged students, will graduate from high school with the requisite skills to go to college or get a decent job.

But perhaps our most significant recommendation—the one that will ultimately make the biggest difference—is not something we in school districts can do tomorrow—unless we get state and federal help. And that is to make available high-quality pre-school and

Explicit Standards Give Definition to 'Earned' Promotion

CLEAR ACADEMIC standards are essential to higher achievement and success for all. As Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat said: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." Without explicit grade-by-grade standards for students, anything goes, and anything is accepted—and sometimes even mediocre or poor work is rewarded as excellent.

Commonly shared grade-by-grade standards for students are essential. These standards

- support academic rigor and ensure fairness by defining the expectations for success for all students;

- eliminate the need for every teacher to set his or her own standards for grading and promotion decisions, or for requesting special services for students who are falling behind;

- give teachers the authority to demand that students work hard, without the risk of appearing arbitrary or mean;

- make academic expectations public and, therefore, accessible to students, parents, and the community;

- furnish the basis for professional development for teachers as they come to consensus about what evidence of student learning is appropriate, how to spot problems in achieving the standards, and what strategies enhance student progress toward meeting the standards; and, most important

- provide the basis for monitoring and managing student learning and making decisions about promotion, retention, and the need for additional educational services.

kindergarten programs for all children—and if not for all children, then definitely, urgently, immediately, for our neediest children.

Let me point to the example of France, which not only has high student achievement but also the smallest gaps in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged youngsters. A major reason for that is a system of preschools that was originally started for the children of working mothers and immigrant families to make up for the children's lack of academic readiness. And because France did not treat these preschools as a poverty program and gave these children the best, the preschool programs proved to be so effective that middle-class, full-time mothers are sending their kids, and the demand has made the pre-schools practically universal.

Look at what we're suggesting: A good preschool *educational* experience; special help like tutoring and extended day and extended year when children are falling behind; high standards, a challenging curriculum, and tests that measure what's supposed to be

taught; qualified, well-prepared teachers This all exists in schools across America. But not in all schools where we're working to educate our neediest youngsters. Not in all of our large urban districts. Far too few of them, relative to the need.

So the big question is, can we make it happen there? I believe we can. I know that in many places we are. We see achievement getting better; we see standards being raised; we see investment being made and scarce resources being spent more wisely. But we have to step it up. Our urban kids face terrible problems, and they need extra help. Instead, they get less. And then either they or their teachers, or both, are blamed for failure.

Too many adults in our society have given up on our poorest youngsters. Instead of raising hell and making sure poor kids get the common-sense things they need, the things middle-class kids in middle-class schools take for granted, we get political leaders and opinion makers calling for vouchers and privatization, as if those radical schemes will provide what every other advanced civilized nation in the world provides for *all* its kids: safe, orderly, well-supplied schools with high standards and highly educated, well-trained teachers.

Many of you are aware that, within the past few weeks, two polls came out showing growing public support for vouchers. They got a lot of press, and they deserved to. But what didn't get any press is something else in those polls, something that is far more significant. And that is that parents and the public want first and foremost for their public schools to be fixed. They believe that better discipline and more rigorous academic standards that are faithfully adhered to would be a far more effective reform than vouchers. And they are correct. To the extent that support for vouchers has grown, it is because of frustration with the pace of getting better discipline and higher standards in our schools, particularly in our poorest schools. Too many of our leaders, too many of the people in charge of our schools, still aren't taking the public's message seriously enough.

Friends, our society needs a lot of things. Those who want to eliminate all government regulation or a government role in education should be reminded of what "government" means in a democracy. It means us. It means "the people." It means the public. And if that is too abstract, let them ponder the 25 million pounds of meat with the E.coli bacteria that the "government" just had to have recalled.

We survived that. We would not survive the demise of a public education system. And we can't survive unless we have the best public school system in the world—including and especially for our toughest, roughest, neediest students, who are also, underneath it all, many of our sweetest, greatest kids.

I have seen it happen. I know it can be done.

There is nothing wrong with our kids that adults can't cure. And there is nothing wrong with our schools that we can't fix. We must—and can—prevent failure before it occurs. We must—and can—intervene swiftly and effectively if it does. And stopping the empty, useless cycle of social promotion and retention has to be high up on our agenda. □

STUDENT INCENTIVES AND THE COLLEGE BOARD SYSTEM

BY ARTHUR G. POWELL

Editor's Note: For a number of years, AFT has been urging that American schools adopt rigorous external standards in core academic subjects, and curricula and assessments that go along with the standards. We've also emphasized that even these reforms are unlikely to make much difference unless students have strong incentives to work hard to meet the standards. Systems of standards and incentives do exist—and spur students on to work and

achieve—in many other countries. But most people aren't aware that a comparable but more limited system once existed in this country. In Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition, from which the following article is excerpted, Arthur G. Powell tells the story of a home-grown system of external standards and incentives that grew up in college prep schools, or independent schools as they are now usually known, during the early years of the 20th century, and he looks at the powerful impact this system had on how teachers taught and students learned.

A CRUCIAL asset of independent schools over the past century has been the looming omnipresence of college admission as a powerful student and parent incentive. In these schools student willingness to exert mental effort has not required eager youth engaged in academic study for the pleasures it gives; nor has it depended on superb teachers able to stimulate enthusiasm for the life of the mind. Prep schools have had their share of such students and teachers, of course, and always wish for more.

But they also have had many students willing to work, willing to give the material a fighting, grudging



A college preparatory class at St. Albans School, Washington, D.C., in the 1930s.

chance. One typical senior said that “the future” was the reason he worked hard at his studies. “You know that if you work hard in high school you can get into a good college, and if you do well in college you can go on to a good career. You’re just thinking about your future and you have to work for it. It just doesn’t come.” He never expressed real interest in his studies, only willingness to engage in them and try.

Although students often attribute their motivation to work to parents, peers, and teachers, lurking behind these close-by influences is the concern about college. A junior who thought the college incentive exerted “tons” of influence on him said his parents had been talking about college since freshman year. By sophomore year he was already visiting different schools. “You really start to worry about it.”

The presence of this incentive in institutions defined as college preparatory should not be surprising. What was and is most significant is not the incentive itself, but how it began to be systematically mobilized to promote learning at the beginning of the twentieth century. What parents and students wanted for youth

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after school graduation—acceptance to certain colleges—became specifically contingent on how well they performed while in school. A desired goal for the future was directly linked to school academic performance. Incentives were utilized to create and sustain what were called academic standards.

It took an entirely new voluntary, nongovernmental organization, the College Entrance Examination Board, to organize student incentives as a lever to create and sustain school standards. From 1900, when it was founded, until 1942, the College Board administered a system of essay examinations that tightly linked the decision to admit a student to college with the standard of academic work done in school. A certain level of individual achievement virtually guaranteed admission to the college of one's choice. That tight linkage, rare in 1900 and rare today, was not easily achieved. Schools and colleges had to want it as much as families did—want it enough to cooperate and compromise with one another in ways they had not done before.

On the surface, the College Board was principally a treaty among colleges and between colleges and schools to solve logistical problems of college admission. When a market began to emerge for the modern independent school in the 1800s, many desirable colleges were simultaneously stiffening their entrance requirements. The pace and character of the changes differed according to what each institution aspired to become. But, in most of the better-known private Northeastern colleges, the trend was not only to demand more of students in traditional subjects, but to add requirements in “modern” subjects such as science and history, which began penetrating college curricula in the 1870s.

For tuition-dependent colleges the task was a difficult balancing act. They wished to attract more students just as their curricula began emphasizing the familiar modern subjects rather than religion and the classics. Professors of the newer subjects wished to teach students who had begun studying them while in school. They needed schools to offer those subjects and students to study them. How to get schools to supply both more freshmen and better-prepared freshmen was a vexing problem with several possible answers in the generation after the 1880s.

Most colleges needed live bodies to survive and consequently had virtually no admission requirements. For colleges with the luxury of entrance requirements, the most popular method was admission by certificate. This was a plan by which entire schools were approved or certified in advance by some external body—a state, a state university, a consortium of colleges. Cooperating colleges then agreed to admit any graduate recommended by the certified school.

Other colleges wanted greater control over the quality of entrants' preparation. A few actually established preparatory schools dedicated to meeting their own requirements—Hotchkiss for Yale, Lawrenceville for Princeton. An audacious proposal that Harvard absorb several existing prep schools, creating in effect an integrated K-16 program under one university authority, was seriously put forth.

But the more typical approach of these colleges was to have individual candidates take examinations, in-



College, prep school, and public school teachers gather to read the College Board examinations at Barnard College in 1935.

stead of certifying the schools they attended. This seemed a surer way to guarantee better-trained freshmen and force schools to teach what colleges wanted.

The emerging preparatory schools were strongly influenced both by the preference of their well-off constituencies and by the colleges their graduates wished to attend. In curriculum matters they were clearly dominated by higher education—Harvard's president Charles W. Eliot liked to say that “schools follow universities and will be what universities make them.” But college domination per se was not a major worry for prep schools. They really were, after all, college preparatory. Without that function a major reason for their existence would collapse. It did not occur to them that they would not be dominated in some academic way by higher education.¹

The major strain on school-college relations at the turn of the century was not college domination but the chaos caused by the incredible diversity of college admission and entrance examination requirements. The head of Andover, a relatively large school that sent graduates to many colleges, complained in 1885 that “out of over forty boys preparing for college next year, we have more than twenty Senior classes.” Unreasonable diversity in admissions requirements inconvenienced not just universities wishing to increase enrollments and raise entrance standards, but also and es-



Courtesy of Educational Testing Service

pecially the prep schools. So it was no surprise that a new agency, the College Entrance Examination Board, was created by the universities with representation from the schools. It prepared syllabi defining the content of major secondary subject areas and annual examinations based on the syllabi.

For four decades after 1900, the College Board did far more than just standardize admissions examinations among a small number of well-known colleges. It organized an intricate and coherent system of academic incentives to support serious academic standards. The system linked what students wanted—admission to the college of their choice—with what they had to do to get it, pass College Board examinations. The Board also organized school practice so students would perform well enough to demonstrate that their schools were effective and their standards sufficiently high. The Board pushed students to work hard and schools to do the same.²

Years later a veteran schoolman summarized the system's workings. Parents sought out an independent preparatory school "to do a specific and limited job—the necessary intensive preparations of the student for the rigorous College Board examinations." Prep schools occupied "a peculiar middle-man position in a process that was generally binding as long as the colleges and universities kept to their high academic standards and required for entrance success in these College Boards." The "selling point" of independent education was a "virtual guarantee to place the young student in any college or university, however difficult the

requirements."³

Four closely related characteristics account for the system's relative success in promoting hard academic work among often reluctant youth. All have close parallels with contemporary efforts to stimulate incentives and raise standards. First, the system developed and sustained a rough consensus about the content of academic standards—what college-bound students should know and be able to do. Second, it converted these standards into credible examinations with predictable consequences for individual students. Third, the standards and examinations directly influenced school curriculum, teaching, hiring practices, and professional development. Finally, the system fully understood its responsibility to deal with students of very diverse academic abilities. Its job was to prepare as many students as possible to undertake college work, not to select out the brightest among them.

Standards as Curricular Frameworks

Professor Carl Brigham of Princeton, a wise long-time observer of the College Board and principal creator of the SAT, admitted without apology in 1933 that the Board's major function was as an "institutional control." It controlled participating schools by the academic standards on which its yearly examinations were based. These standards were annually published descriptions of the essential concepts and themes in each of the fields where the Board examined. Called *Definition of the Requirements* for most of the 1900–41 period, they spelled out in greater or lesser detail, according to the subject or moment in time, what students should know and be able to do. Brigham described the *Definition* in 1934 as a "framework" in order to distinguish broad domains of knowledge from specific examination questions.⁴

Decades later one is struck by two aspects of the annual definition of subject requirements. They were quite ambitious educationally, considering the varied academic population they were intended to affect. They also embodied broad consensus among creators and users about the general nature, if not the particulars, of what academic standards should mean. The Board exerted a clear influence because it was a voluntary association run and used by people with roughly similar views and interests. Both aspects of the annual *Definition*—ambition and consensus—had similar sources.

There was general consensus behind what high standards meant because the individuals who established them shared many values about the primacy of academic education organized by the disciplines. These individuals were drawn primarily from higher education and particularly from various commissions of national scholarly associations. They included many of the most famous scholars of their day. In spite of disagreements about what was most important to learn within their fields, they shared a general ideal that high educational standards and high academic standards were one and the same. The College Board did not have to debate whether the disciplines should be the centerpiece of middle school and secondary education. Independent-school people generally as-

sented. A headmaster believed it was self-evident that the quality of a person's mind was determined by the kind of material he or she directed toward it. "If he confines his reading to trash, he will be a trivial person."⁵

But prep schools were not evangelists promoting the cause of serious academic work for all American youth. They were not (nor are they now) reformers seeking converts. If anything, they tended to promote themselves as the last refuge against educational barbarism. "We hold that every idea must be made as interesting as possible," one prep school advocate submitted, "but we refuse to water down its essence for the pseudo-democracy of leveling and mediocrity."⁶

The idea of high academic standards took on an exclusionary and old-fashioned tinge when the truth was almost the opposite. In fact, the College Board exams held a varied academic population accountable to serious and similar demands. The academic standards represented by each *Definition* were a triumphant victory of modern subjects—history, English, science, modern languages—over the traditional domination of the classics and formal mathematics. They were a victory for progressive and democratic forces, not for forces of reaction and exclusivity.

Curricular wars were fought within virtually all the disciplines. They ranged from the importance to be given this or that topic to the balance between mandated coverage and teacher freedom. In English, for example, the *Definition* gradually moved toward less prescription of content. The early English *Definition* specified one list of books about which students were to know "the most important parts" (for example, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Last of the Mobicans*). It also specified another list they had to know in much greater detail (for example, *Macbeth* and Burke's speech *Conciliation with America*). But by the end of the 1920s a Board Commission on English won a less-restrictive conception. The English *Definition* for 1934 had no required books and a simplified overview: "The requirement in English is designed to develop in the student (1) the ability to read with understanding, (2) knowledge and judgment of literature, and (3) accurate thinking and power in oral and written expression."⁷

Those involved furiously debated whether or not the changes lowered or raised standards, but the debate occurred within a context of basic agreement. The new "suggested" six-page reading list included fourteen Shakespeare, eight Shaw, and two O'Neill plays, four Conrad novels, and contemporary poets such as Frost and Yeats. Teachers were advised that the composition tasks would "assume continuous and thorough training in mechanics." The *Definition* specified that this training implied "mastery" of such matters as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary and "a command of varied and flexible sentence forms." The instruction required to produce such mastery, teachers were told, "necessitates constant and painstaking practice by the candidate in criticism and revision of his own written work." In such ways as this, subject by subject, the Board defined and refined what it meant by academic standards.⁷

The College Boards

The College Board examinations were created by committees of "examiners" with substantial private school representation. They were largely of the essay variety and usually three hours in length. The College Boards converted *Definition* standards into concrete tasks that defined how student performance would be demonstrated. They also extended the notion of standards to define what levels of performance were considered outstanding and minimally acceptable. The exams were administered nationwide in test centers during one hectic week each June. By 1940, more than 37,000 June examinations were taken in thirty-six subjects at 318 test centers.

The examinations were not only created outside individual schools; they were scored outside schools by teachers and professors who did not know the students whose work they evaluated. External assessment was done by hundreds of "readers" assembled at Columbia University during a week soon after the tests were given.

The examinations were graded against a single standard or criterion determined by the readers rather than compared against each other. A later, test-savvy generation would call the Board's assessment method "criterion-referenced."⁸

Annual academic essay examinations produced and assessed outside schools were common in Europe but almost unique in America. They profoundly affected participating schools, mostly for the better. Frank Ashburn of Brooks School called the Board's exams the prep schools' "staunchest ally" in standard-setting. He believed that they "probably did more than any other single factor to emphasize the value of good teaching." Wilson Farrand, a College Board leader since 1900 and headmaster of Newark Academy in New Jersey, thought the Boards were strongest where most American high schools were weakest. They provided standards of "thoroughness and genuine mastery of the subjects taught" instead of "sloppiness and superficiality."

The exams promoted thoroughness and mastery in part because they created incentives and standards for teachers. Their external creation and assessment introduced an outside judgment about teachers' performance as well as students' performance. The chairman of the Secondary Education Board (SEB) praised the College Board in 1936 for its "guiding and standardizing and controlling effect on school curricula and teaching." He did not fear a loss of teacher or school autonomy, but welcomed the stimulation of external accountability.⁹

The headmaster of Baltimore's Gilman School regarded the College Board as a "measuring stick" against which he could raise the educational standards of his school. They made it possible to "use continuing poor averages in any particular subject as a whip on masters who taught the subject." Teachers predictably responded by developing extensive practice or coaching sessions in which examinations from previous years were carefully reviewed. The "almost airtight system" developed to make Gilman boys study served its purpose well in the judgment of the school's historian. It raised educational standards from the level of "aver-



Students at Rosemary Hall, Greenwich, Connecticut, in a college preparatory class. They are wearing their spring uniform of gingham dresses, navy blazers with red trim, white socks, and saddle shoes.

age good schools to the level of the highest in the country."¹⁰

The thoroughness and mastery produced by the College Boards also exposed a classic tension about standards. On the one hand, the examination often encouraged memorization and cramming. Topics and sometimes questions were repeated from year to year. They could to some extent be studied for in advance. Sometimes knowledge alone could get students through without the need to demonstrate much analytical capacity of the sort a later generation would call "higher-order thinking." To some this was a weakness.

On the other hand, the examinations improved academic achievement. Many students needed a practical incentive to work hard. The link between the Boards and college admission provided that incentive. In 1932 the headmaster of St. Paul Academy in Minnesota believed that the exams made lazy privileged boys work hard for the first time because they had to. The mental exertion required was regarded as a good thing in itself—an outcome schools valued as a worthy lifetime habit quite aside from whatever momentary academic achievement it produced. In particular, the examinations could be attempted by students with limited academic skills for whom "uphill thinking is the best way to think." They enabled "hard and specific work" to

pay off.

Furthermore, prep school proponents emphasized that the examinations, like the *Definition*, were constantly improving in quality. Standards were becoming more ambitious. Gilman's founding headmaster vigorously denied in 1932 that they could be passed by candidates who had "only facts in their possession and no knowledge of their meaning nor power to think." On the contrary, the Boards were "tests of power which require a knowledge of facts." Power to think required knowledge. The head of Detroit Country Day School believed that the English examination had become "a test of creativeness and appreciation."

The last three-hour English essay examination ever given by the Board, based on the revised English *Definition*, lends backing to this assertion. In June 1941, one of four ques-

tions asked students to read W. B. Yeats's poem "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death." They had to respond to eight different assertions about the poem and would be graded on understanding the poem, accuracy in writing, and clarity in writing. Forty minutes. The question combined a concern for standards, for differences among the students, and for sensitivity to the real-world times in which they lived.¹¹

Teachers and Professional Development

The examination pressed teachers to perform to an outside common standard. The system clearly opposed the idea that teachers could or should define their fields as they wished. Instead, they taught to their predictions and hopes about how the next examinations might resemble those of prior years.

But there were compensations for teachers who saw their classroom freedom somewhat eroded. One was that externally set and scored examinations tended to make students and teachers allies rather than adversaries. Instead of grading final exams, teachers crossed their fingers and rooted for everyone. The objective was to move all students forward, not to stress differences in attainment. Gilman's historian concluded, "If

everyone passed ... the master was considered to have done a fine job."¹²

Another compensation was that thousands of the small cohort of private school teachers were not just passive recipients of College Board commands but active participants in the grand enterprise of creating and grading the examinations. This was surely one of the most powerful professional development experiences in American educational history. It was task oriented, deadly serious, and enormous fun. Teachers and heads welcomed the close ties that entrance examinations promoted with well-known colleges. They enjoyed the sense that in some respects they were all part of the same cause, profession, system—that the boundaries between good secondary schools and good colleges were permeable and not divided by high walls of differing status. This gave them a feeling of membership in a large and respected professional community—a feeling of dignity denied many American teachers.

The huge June gathering resembled an "educational congress." Between 1900 and 1941, it was perhaps the largest regular occasion at which high school and college teachers struggled together at a common task and from which teachers brought back to their schools helpful criticisms and broader points of view. The College Board believed that the annual reading session "helped immeasurably in upholding standards," but perhaps more important was the collegiality, stimulation, and prestige it gave to participating teachers.

Readership was a professional plum, readers hated to rotate off, and public school teachers resented private school dominance. (A practical problem was that many public schools were still in session when the examinations were read.) Their protests led to a 1934 College Board decision to change the reader ratio toward a goal of 4:3:2 among colleges, private schools, and public schools. Yet in 1941 more than 42 percent of readers were still drawn from independent schools. To the end, readership remained largely a private school privilege.

Student Variety

Before the 1950s, few students gained admission to prep schools on the grounds of special academic promise or aptitude. Committed to preparing most of their students for colleges such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, the schools contained a mix of the academically gifted, the average, and the truly slow. They enrolled far more scholastic diversity in the first part of the century than they do today. Some students were enrolled literally at birth, when gender was the only selective factor. Years later McGeorge Bundy recalled his schooldays at Groton in the 1930s. "If you weren't a notorious and incorrigibly stupid or lazy person you could go to any college you wanted. You really could."

All this was accepted at the time as simply the way things were. Prep schools catered to an economic class, not to an academic class. They routinely assumed that public high school graduates who attended prestigious colleges were, on the whole, more able and motivated than their own students. Frederick Winsor, Gilman's founding head and later the founding head of Middlesex School near Boston, told a Harvard alumni

meeting in 1930 that the job of private schools was to "give an education to all the sons of such men as you, if you want to send them to us, not to a selected few of your sons." It was not the "bright boy who specially needs the best and wisest of handling," Winsor went on, "but the boys below the average in intelligence." He assured the sympathetic crowd that true leadership in later life depended less on brainpower than on "determination and fight and character."¹³

Most independent-school commentators followed Winsor's reasoning. Their institutions should be broadly accessible to those who could pay. Being bright conveyed no special cachet. Some independent-school leaders trumpeted the "true talent of the slow, cautious, and searching mind" or unfavorably compared the "facile, lazy student as against the hard-working slower student." Slower students might not excel at their studies or care much about them, but they would often exert considerable leadership in extracurricular and social activities in school and college. The prep schools were undefensive about the academic quality of their student bodies. Their students could usually enter any college they wished if they worked hard.¹⁴

This was one of the most significant assets of the College Board system. Its essay examinations were not designed to be impossibly difficult. The examination game could be played for genuinely "high stakes" without seeming to be beyond the power of diligent students to control. The idea was not to keep students out of college but to ensure that they know enough to stay in.

The College Board essay examinations, though regarded as more rigorous than the written examinations of individual colleges that had preceded them, were constructed with a broad student-ability range in mind. They attempted to pull everyone up to a minimum standard in the possession of knowledge and the capacity to use it. Until the late 1930s, few influential educators—and extremely few school people—cared about winnowing the brightest students from the merely proficient ones. Harvard's President Conant defended the essay exams as "particularly necessary" for students "of somewhat less than the highest" academic ability.

Of course there were limits to what could be accomplished when academic raw material was extremely weak. The secretary of the College Board lamented in 1919 that some students with abominable Board scores aspired to college only for social advantages and should not be encouraged to advance beyond high school. The most thorough survey of boarding schools of its time found large differences in the average age of graduating seniors in 1921 at certain boarding schools compared with the Cleveland, Ohio, public high schools. Cleveland's average graduating age of 17.1 years contrasted with Lawrenceville School's average of 18.7. The reason for so many "over-age" private school seniors was parental desire that children with limited academic capacity attempt the Boards just one more time. Older students got better scores. If they passed, tutoring schools in towns like Cambridge and New Haven were ready to assist them with the greater rigors of college work.

A private school research group sardonically concluded in 1933 that the "non-academic pupil" had been an issue for years but that research had been deferred

because "just now many schools are engaged in laboratory experience with that very problem, after which a thorough study will have a better point of departure." Despite these concerns about the limits of educability, what was most significant about the relation between the College Board system and student aptitude was the expectation that a wide variety of aptitudes could succeed on a serious academic examination if the stakes were high and the preparation specific.¹⁵

IN 1942 important elements of the College Board system were dropped. The old system ceased to exist when top colleges became more concerned with the raw ability of prospective students than with the quality of their previous education. Some aspects were restored in altered form during the 1950s as the Advanced Placement Program. AP courses survive as the best systemic example of incentive-driven, externally assessed standard-setting in American education.

But the earlier, more elaborate system has been largely forgotten or stereotyped. This is unfortunate even though many of its procedures were primitive first steps. We should not remember the old system to repeat it or to make excessive claims for its effectiveness. Nonetheless, it contained several provocative features of great interest to anyone concerned with student incentives, academic standards, and assessment.

The old College Board system was voluntary and nongovernmental. Certain schools and colleges had particular problems that could be solved by inventing a new collaborative regulatory body. The new system was remarkably broad-based and democratic regarding student aptitude. The presumption was that varied student abilities could rise to meet the same standard, although it would be easier for some and harder for others. The system rested on a consensus that valued high academic standards and assumed that this consensus existed within an educational culture broader than that of individual schools. It was legitimate, given this consensus, to use external assessment to press both teachers and students to work harder than they otherwise would have done.

These features gave prep schools considerable educational advantages. They indicated systemic support for student incentives to learn. Privileged students became doubly privileged. Even if they were lazy and average, they were part of a system that forced them to work. This is a bitter irony. American schooling gave educational incentives to students who already were its most privileged, but few similar incentives to anyone else. □

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MOVE OVER, BARNEY

Make Way for Some Real Heroes

BY DENNIS DENENBERG

WILLIAM PENN was an obsession for Elaine Peden, the *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine* reported in 1991. Peden had devoted enormous time and energy to promoting recognition of Pennsylvania's founder. In 1984, she had persuaded Congress to extend honorary United States citizenship to both Penn and his wife, Hannah. But her successes in bringing Penn into the consciousness of Americans had been soured for her by disappointments. When she visited

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the restored William Penn statue on top of Philadelphia's City Hall, she expected to see again in the waiting area the seventy-five paintings of events in the life of the Penns done by high school students. Instead she found a blowup of the Phillie Phanatic, the cartoonish mascot of the city's professional baseball team. The city's founder was out: The city's newest fantasy figure was in.

The situation is not much better at our country's official museum. Recently, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History published a new brochure to guide kids through the museum. It is written around the Charles Schulz figures, with their pictures everywhere. So there's Snoopy leading our kids around our national history museum—instead of Sacagawea who led Lewis and Clark across our nation!

We continually think we have to "dumb down" things to amuse kids. Well, we don't have to. We can challenge them to think, and most of them will love it and rise to the occasion. Our national history museum



Orville Wright

Wilbur Wright

Clara Barton

Albert Einstein

Frederick Douglass

Mark Twain

John Glenn

exists to teach us about our history, and while pop culture is a part of it, it should not dominate the turf. Harriet Tubman risked her life to lead more than 300 slaves to freedom—imagine the exciting trail she could lead kids on through the museum. Instead, there's Lucy entertaining the kids, and probably boring them, too.

Classrooms and homes around the United States resemble that Smithsonian brochure and the Philadelphia City Hall waiting area. Pictures of great people have given way to fantasy creatures. At one time many—if not most—public school classrooms in America displayed portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Today, if such portraits appear at all, it is usually for a two-week period in February, during Presidents Day commemorations. In their place, Garfield (the cat, not the president), Michelangelo and Leonardo (the turtles, not the artists), and, of course, Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse and his numerous compatriots hold prominent positions. They, not great

women and men, are the figures young people see repeatedly—and come to think of as “heroes.”

I have visited hundreds of classrooms over the past twenty years. I have talked with teachers, observed displays, and examined curriculum materials, and I have become aware of how fantasy figures compete with real-life heroes for students' attention. Often, the fantasy ones are winning.

Cartoon and other fantasy characters pervade children's lives. Little Mermaids and big Beasts adorn the clothing kids wear and the lunch pails they carry. Think of kids in the world today. A little girl gets up in the morning. Her head probably rested on an Aladdin pillowcase. She goes down to breakfast and eats cereal from a box with a cartoon character on it, then gets dressed in a T-shirt with Bugs Bunny on it, picks up her Garfield lunch pail, and heads off to school where there is a bulletin board with cartoon figures on it.

(Continued on page 23)

ILLUSTRATED BY GUY SCHUM



Sacagawea

Teddy Roosevelt

Jackie Robinson

Martha Graham

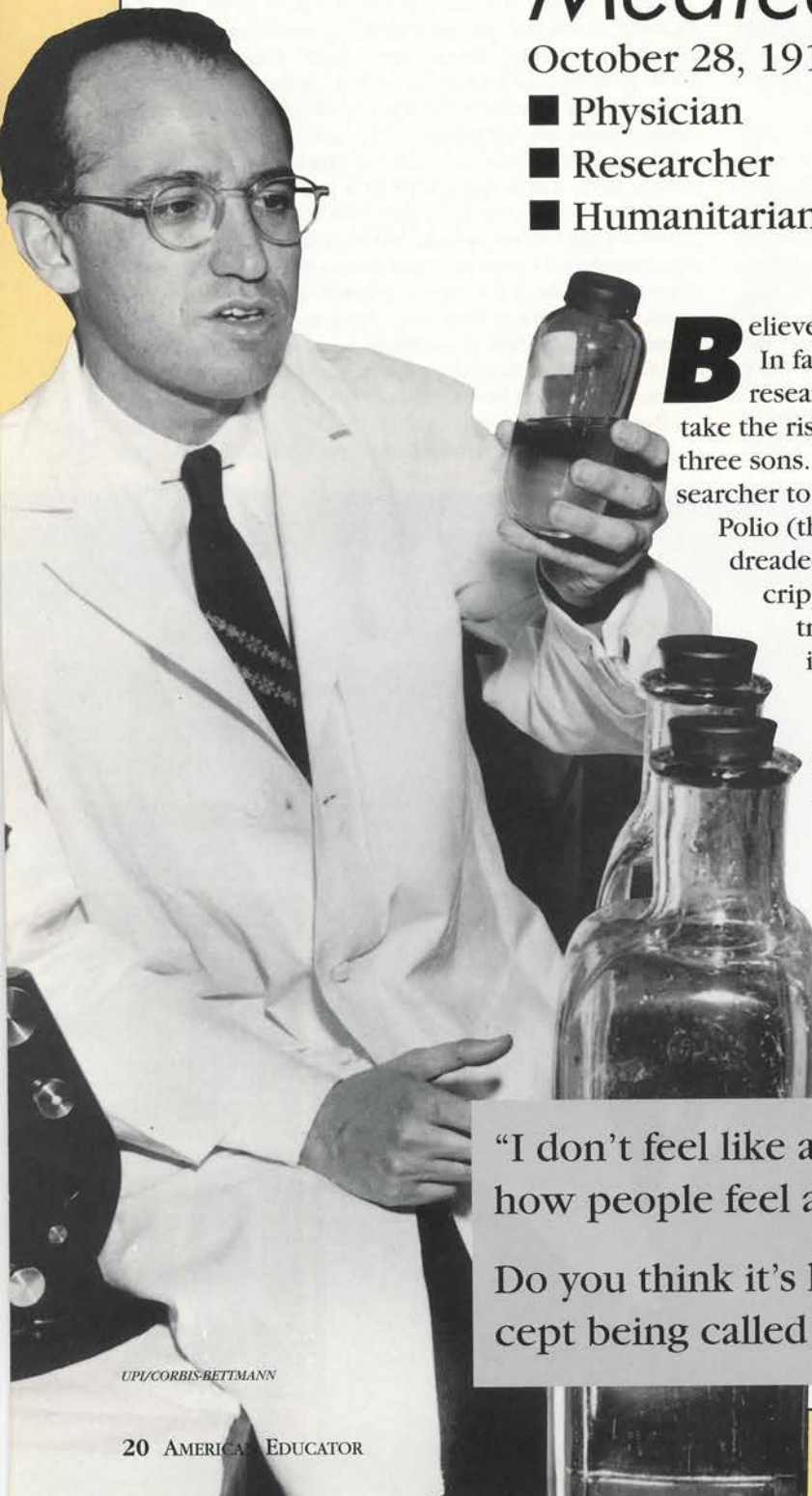
Ben Franklin

JONAS SALK

Medical Pioneer

October 28, 1914 - June 23, 1995

- Physician
- Researcher
- Humanitarian



Believe in what you do. Dr. Jonas Salk did. In fact, his belief in the quality of his medical research was so strong that he was willing to take the risk himself. So, too, did his wife and his three sons. It was not the usual practice for a researcher to test his own findings. Dr. Jonas Salk did. Polio (the short name for poliomyelitis) was a dreaded childhood disease. It left a young body crippled or it killed you. Most victims contracted the disease in infancy, which is why it was also known as infantile paralysis. But the most famous of all polio sufferers was struck by the disease when he was 39 years old—that was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Could a cure be found to stop this disease? Did people believe they would ever be free from the danger of

Dr. Salk checks samples of virus-laden fluid used in production of his vaccine as he returns to his University of Pittsburgh laboratory.

“I don’t feel like a hero, but I know that’s how people feel about me.”

Do you think it’s hard for real heroes to accept being called heroes? Dr. Jonas Salk did.

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POWER WORDS!

“I wasn’t going to inoculate anybody else without first inoculating myself and my own children.”

polio? Dr. Jonas Salk did.

He worked 16 hours a day, six days a week for years trying to find a way to prevent the disease from attacking kids. Finally, he created a vaccine to immunize people against polio. After successful tests on laboratory animals, it had to be tested on human beings. Who would be willing to take the risk? Dr. Jonas Salk did.

HERO HUNT

About a 100 years ago, a terrible disease called yellow fever killed many people. A famous medical researcher dedicated his life to finding a cure, and did so. A major research hospital in our nation’s capital is named in his honor.

He is _____ ?

Why did the tests involve a risk? Because the vaccine consisted of the actual polio virus. That’s right, to prevent the disease from occurring, you actually injected the disease into your body. Pretty scary thought. The vaccine consisted of killed polio virus cells, which then built up natural antibodies (fighting cells) in the body. Did people believe the new vaccine would work? Dr. Jonas Salk did.

Because they trusted him, Dr. Salk’s wife and children also volunteered to be “human

Franklin D. Roosevelt was 39 years old when he was struck by polio.

guinea pigs.” The tests were successful; none of the people

Dr. Salk, his wife, and three sons (left to right: Peter, 11; Jonathan, 5; and Darrell, 7) arrive in Ann Arbor, Michigan on April 11, 1955, to receive the report on the results of the Salk vaccine field trials.



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DIVE IN!

Jonas Salk, by Marjorie Curson (Silver Burdett, 1990), 144 pages. Illustrated. Part of the *Pioneers in Change* series.

who were injected with the vaccine got polio. It was the major breakthrough in the 1950s and was the beginning

of the end of polio's terrible effect. It was clear to everyone what Dr. Jonas Salk did.

A grateful nation and world applauded his achievement. He could have become a very wealthy man from his discovery, but he stated: "...[the vaccine] belongs to the people. Could you patent the sun?" No, such beneficial work should be freely shared—and that's what Dr. Jonas Salk did.



A nurse steadies the arm of Gail Rosenthal, age 8, as Dr. Jonas Salk injects the Salk polio vaccine during the 1954 field trials conducted in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, region. Gail was one of 1,830,000 children, ages five to nine, who with the consent of their parents participated in the field trials. Results were described the following year, April 12, 1955, in the Francis Report, which pronounced the vaccine "safe, effective, and potent."

EXPLORE!

Although Dr. Salk died recently, medical research continues at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. To find out what their latest research efforts are, you can write the Institute at P.O. Box 85800, San Diego, California 92186-5800; or email at <http://www.salk.edu>

By doing so, you can discover some of the latest scientific research efforts on AIDS, Alzheimer's disease, birth defects, the brain, cancer, gene therapy, hormones, and plants.

Dr. Salk himself, even at the age of 80, was actively involved in research to find a cure for AIDS or a vaccine to prevent its spread.

What do you know about AIDS? What do you know about other infectious diseases, such as the flu, pneumonia, or even the common cold?

As an American, you have access to incredible medical services. Some people say we have the best doctors and health facilities in the world. The cost of all these services has become very high. You can be a part of the effort to keep our health system top rate by learning ways to stay healthy.

Do you know the right kinds of food to eat? Do you know the importance of daily exercise? Do you know how you can lower the chance of catching diseases like AIDS?

The work of Dr. Jonas Salk and other medical researchers is worthless if we don't do our share to take care of our bodies. Dr. Jonas Salk did.

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Heroes

(Continued from page 19)

Teachers and parents choose such materials so frequently, they tell me, because they believe these figures have motivational value. Cartoon mice and ducks are familiar. "They can be comforting to kids," parents and teachers say.

Perhaps fantasy characters motivate and comfort. But junk food motivates and comforts, too. Like junk food, popular fantasy and cartoon characters are sweet, enticing to the eye—and empty of real value. Like junk food, they displace what is more important. They fill kids up. The kids no longer hunger for the nourishment they need to become healthy, fully mature adults.

Is it any wonder that teenagers become hooked on the next level of fad fantasy figures—the super-rich athletes and popular culture rock and entertainment stars. Their presence in the media is everywhere, with entire cable channels devoted to the icons of music and athletics. So the Barney T-shirts eventually become Smashing Pumpkins shirts, Power Ranger backpacks become Dennis Rodman gym bags, and the very innocent Little Mermaid poster in a child's bedroom is replaced by a nearly life-sized one of Madonna (and not the religious one!). Think about it: It's an easy transition from the fantasy world of Spiderman for kids to the unreal world of Michael Jackson for teenagers.

The over-presence of fantasy characters in our culture and in our schools and homes contributes, I am convinced, to a confusion for our children and adolescents about the value of real-life human accomplishments. It is not surprising, I think, that when in 1991, a Harrisburg-area school district asked its fifth to twelfth graders to name people they most admired, the teenagers chose rock stars, athletes, and television personalities, people who often seem to be larger than life. Other than Nelson Mandela, no famous people from any other field of endeavor were mentioned. No great artists, inventors, humanitarians, political leaders, composers, scientists, doctors—none were mentioned by the 1,150 students.

Likewise, when the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain asked a representative sample of twenty-five- to forty-five-year-olds to write a two-page essay about their favorite hero, there were a lot of blank pages; 60 percent of the group said they have no personal heroes.

I frequently am asked to give presentations on why heroes are important for children. I sometimes begin by putting on the familiar Mickey Mouse ears, and I lead my adult audience in a rousing rendition of the "Mickey Mouse Club" song. Almost everyone knows the words. Then I switch to a colonial hat and recite a portion of the Patrick Henry speech that ends with a very famous line (or at least what once was a very famous line). I leave it to the audience to finish the speech, but few can. The comparison with the Mickey Mouse song leads to a spirited discussion of what has happened to real heroes in our culture.

"Look around," I say to my audiences. "You're surrounded by people. Count thirty people, yourself among them. One of that thirty would probably have

polio if it weren't for Jonas Salk. That's how prevalent polio was. But when Salk died two years ago, we as a nation hardly took notice. Certainly, few young people have any sense of how that great doctor saved their generation from a crippling disease."

Have we lost a generation of people who don't have heroes, who don't know what a hero is or don't understand what a positive influence a hero can be in a person's life?

A HERO IS an individual who can serve as an example. He or she has the ability to persevere, to overcome the hurdles that impede others' lives. While this intangible quality of greatness appears almost magical, it is indeed most human. And it is precisely because of that humanness that some individuals attain heroic stature. They are of us, but are clearly different.

We look to heroes and heroines for inspiration. Through their achievements, we see humankind more positively. They make us feel good. They make us feel proud. For some of us they become definite role models, and our lives follow a different direction because of their influence. For others, while the effect may be less dramatic, it is of no less import, for these heroes make us think in new ways. Their successes and failures lead us to ponder our own actions and inactions. By learning about *their* lives, *our* lives become enriched.

Molly Pitcher saw what had to be done and did it. Women had a defined role in the war; they were a vital support to the fighting colonials. But when her husband was wounded, and the cannon needed to be fired, she knew what she had to do. Molly Pitcher was, and is, a heroine, and her story deserves to be told and retold. Neither a great statesman or soldier, she was an ordinary person who performed an extraordinary deed.

Michelangelo spent a lifetime at his craft, leaving the world a legacy of magnificent paintings and sculptures. His hard work was a daily reaffirmation of his belief in a human's creative potential. Through toil, he produced artistic monuments that have continued to inspire generations.

This world has had (and still has) many Molly Pitchers and Michelangeloes, people who set examples that inspire others. Some had only a fleeting moment of glory in a rather normal life, but oh, what a moment. Others led a life of longer-lasting glory and had a more sustained impact on humankind. All were individuals who, through their achievements, made positive contributions.

Where are the heroines and heroes for children today? They are everywhere! They are the figures from our past, some in the historical limelight, others still in the shadows. They are the men and women of the present, struggling to overcome personal and societal problems to build a better world.

Indeed they are everywhere, but most children know so very few of them. Quite simply, in our schools and in our homes, we have removed these great people from our focus. They have become "persona non grata" instead of persons of importance. The

(Continued on page 46)

ART ON THE PRAIRIE

BY EDWARD B. FISKE

THE TOPIC of the morning in Cindy Mangers' second-grade classroom was Picasso.

The students took turns reading out loud from a children's biography of the celebrated painter and calculated how old Picasso would be if he were still alive. They looked at poster-sized reproductions from his various periods and voted on where to put each one on a scale running from "realistic" to "abstract." They chuckled at a cartoon poking fun at a Cubist portrait. ("He's breaking me up.")

When a student read that, following the death of his best friend, Picasso "felt alone and sad," Ms. Mangers asked the class, "What color do we talk about when we think sad?"

"Blue."

The teacher then led her charges in a discussion of "The Old Guitarist" from Picasso's "blue period" and asked them to talk about what made them sad or happy. Several students mentioned the drowning of a friend last summer, and that afternoon the class wrote poems about sadness and happiness, including one that read:

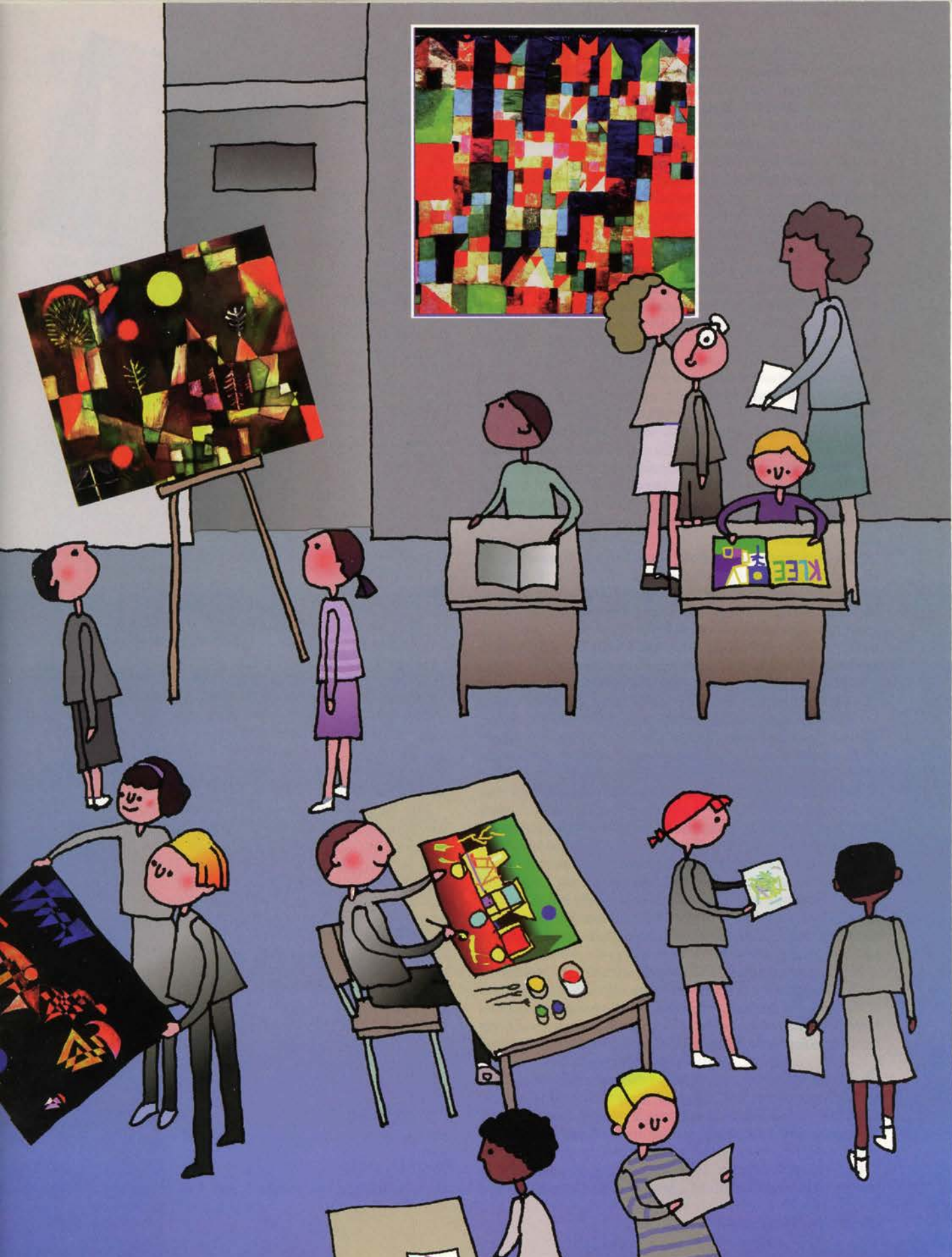
Edward B. Fiske, the former education editor of the New York Times and author of Smart Schools, Smart Kids (Simon & Schuster), writes frequently on education topics.

*I'm sad because my friend died.
It seems like everybody
Is going to the sky.*

The lesson on Picasso at the A.B. Newell Elementary School in Grand Island, Nebraska, was remarkable in many ways, starting with the fact that Cindy Mangers managed to keep a classroom full of seven-year olds engrossed in a discussion of a modern painter for nearly an hour. Although the ostensible subject was art, she also brought in language arts and mathematics and introduced complex ideas like abstraction.

The Picasso lesson that day at Newell Elementary is a good example of the kind of teaching being promoted by a well-funded national movement with the ungainly title of Discipline-Based Art Education, or DBAE. Promoted by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the movement, which is sometimes referred to as "comprehensive art education," seeks nothing less than the transformation of visual arts instruction in American schools.

In 1982 the Trust, which operates the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, established what is now known as the Getty Education Institute for the Arts. Its vision for art instruction was laid out in a 1984 report entitled "Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America's Schools." The institute set up a research and development site in Los Angeles to develop the concept, draft



curricula, and train teachers and administrators.

Getty's review of art education, carried out by the RAND Corporation, found that art in most schools was a "marginalized" activity seen as having recreational and therapeutic benefits but contributing little to the cognitive goals of schooling. Teachers at the elementary level concentrated almost exclusively on art creation—getting students to express themselves by making paintings and other artistic products—while high school teachers saw their role as training future artists.

The solution, Getty concluded, lay in establishing the visual arts as a regular academic discipline alongside the usual core subjects of math, language arts, social studies, and the natural sciences. "We decided that if art education ever is to become a meaningful part of the curriculum, its content must be broadened and its requirements made more rigorous," said Leilani Lattin Duke, director of the Institute.

Discipline-based art education thus identifies four "disciplines" within art instruction—art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. "One can create art, perceive and respond to its qualities, understand its place in history and culture, and make reasoned judgments about art and understand the grounds upon which those judgments rest," explained Elliott Eisner, a professor of education and art at Stanford University who has been involved with the movement for more than a decade.

The working assumption was that, as demonstrated in Cindy Mangers' Picasso lesson, each of these four aspects of the visual arts can be taught in a developmentally appropriate manner to children from kindergarten through high school.

Starting in 1987, under a new Regional Institute Grant (RIG) program, Getty set up "laboratories" in Florida, California, Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas to refine the theories and build a critical mass of school districts willing to implement the new ideas on a districtwide basis. The six institutes have worked with thousands of teachers and administrators from more than 415 districts in thirteen states. They have secured close to \$15 million dollars to match \$10.4 million from Getty.

The RIGs are consortia of teachers, administrators, schools, districts, universities, museums, foundations and professional organizations. "The operating assumption was that educational change will succeed only when it is undertaken by individuals working collaboratively at all levels within a community committed to change," said Brent Wilson, a professor of art education at Pennsylvania State University who served as chief evaluator of the RIG program from 1988 to 1996.

The regional institutes were given considerable latitude in defining and developing their program—something that is amply evident in one of the most successful of the regional institutes, the project in Nebraska.

NEBRASKANS are perhaps best known for their passion for football, and they take pride in the fact that, on home game Saturdays, the University of Nebraska football stadium contains 5 percent of the state's population, thus ranking as its third-biggest "city." The prairie they occupy, once an ocean floor, is mostly flat, which contributes both to a strong sense

of place and a mentality that presumes that human beings can see for great distances. Not surprisingly, when Nebraskans organized themselves to bid for Getty support for arts education, they called their consortium "Prairie Visions."

Prairie Visions is unique among the six regional institutes in that it was organized not by a major university but by the Nebraska Department of Education. Sheila Brown, a music educator who serves as the department's director of visual and performing arts education, built

a consortium that included all nine of the state's universities as well as its major museums, art centers, the state arts and humanities council, the state art teachers association and one hundred school districts, both public and private. Several local foundations also supported the work.

The heart of the Prairie Visions model is a three-week summer professional development institute for teams of art and general classroom teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. The institute is led by a faculty of professionals ranging from kindergarten teachers to university faculty members. Participants spend a week working at the Joslyn Museum in Omaha and the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in Lincoln and another week in regional venues. The teams then return to their schools for the final week to work on program planning and curriculum development.

Since the first session in 1988, more than 1,300 teachers and school administrators have gone through the Prairie Vision Summer Institutes, including 270 of the state's art specialists. Graduates come from districts that embrace half of the public school population.

Discipline-based art education in Nebraska takes different forms at the various levels of schooling. In elementary schools, most Institute-trained teachers are generalists who use their new skills not only to teach art in a more sophisticated way but to enhance their



teaching of the full range of subjects. At the St. John Lutheran School in Seward, for example, one of twenty-six private schools that are part of the movement, Maxine Fiala, a kindergarten teacher, has rearranged her entire curriculum so as to make effective use of art.

One day recently Mrs. Fiala organized a lesson around roosters. She read the students a book by Eric Carle entitled *Rooster's Off to See the World* and then had them look at representations of roosters by artists from Japan, China, and the United States. Students counted the number of roosters in the painting, and a boy donned a black robe and pretended that he was a Chinese painter stirring ink from an inkwell that the teacher had brought back from a trip to China.

The teacher asked the students to describe the kind of lines used by the various artists—"fat," "curved," "slanted"—and to notice how they drew feathers in different ways. She called attention to the different postures struck by the various roosters and asked the children which one they would adopt when they made their own drawings. "I'll have mine pecking for food," said one student. "Mine will be up in the air saying, 'Cockadoodledoo,' so the beak will have to be open," said another. To inspire their own drawings, Mrs. Fiala then produced a cage with a live rooster.

Mrs. Fiala has integrated art into the kindergarten curriculum in numerous other ways. She uses Winslow Homer's "Snap the Whip" to teach the letter "P" and Paul Klee's "The Goldfish" to teach about wildlife. Each week an art masterpiece becomes the basis for a variety of activities, such as finding the artist's country on a map and observing clothing styles in the paintings of Francisco Goya or Auguste Renoir.

"In my classroom, art is no longer just the 'cutesy' craft projects children do around holidays or a fifteen-minute activity at the end of a story or lesson," said Mrs. Fiala. "I use art to generate joy in learning, develop critical thinking, and help students communicate their feelings. Picasso's masterpiece 'Mother and Child,' for example, is marvelous because it depicts such a beautiful, loving relationship between a mother and child." Sheila Brown, the Prairie Visions director, described such exercises as "a good example of how to integrate art into the rest of the curriculum while maintaining respect for the integrity of the art."

Earlier this year, Mrs. Fiala took photographs of nine gumball machines, conducted a poll of how many children liked each color, did a graph of the results and

then had students paint their own gumball machines. When the paintings were done, a student named Eric volunteered, "I know what we can do. Let's cut them all out and glue them together on a big piece of paper." Mrs. Fiala replied, "Oh, like Andy Warhol's '100 Cans.'" "No," said Eric. "I thought of that in my brain." The students' montage now hangs in the hallway next to a reproduction of the Warhol classic.

AT THE middle school level discipline-based art education is employed both by subject matter teachers and by art specialists seeking to broaden the range of skills they teach in their studios. One day recently Arlen Meyer, who has taught art at St. John for thirty years, put his sixth-grade students through an exercise in which they analyzed their own acrylic works in progress in relation to the work of great masters.

Students studied their landscape paintings, decided which formal elements were the most important and then picked a reproduction on the wall that shared these characteristics. One student compared his to a Monet because "we use the same pastel colors with not much neutralizing." Another saw similarities with a Rousseau because of "strong blotches of color." Mr. Meyer said that such exercises not only lend credibility to students' work but also "show them that there is a variety of solutions to a problem."

High school teachers have used DBAE principles to enhance their teaching of subjects such as history and social studies. At Columbus High School in Columbus one day recently, a group of eleventh-grade students in an inter-disciplinary American Studies course gave a presentation on the 1920s in which they related the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and other artists to cultural phenomena such as jazz, radio and Lindberg's flight to Paris. "I'm not a talented artist, so I hated it at first," commented Lindsay Berlin, one of the students. "But now I have a sense of why artists drew the way they did, and I feel more comfortable. It all fits together."

Rose Kotwas, who teaches art at Lincoln High School in Lincoln, said that she has used her Prairie Visions teaching to "show students how to make things based on information, not just abstract models" and to "show how art relates to the workplace." While doing research on the history of perfume bottles, she learned that Rene Lalique, a jeweler and glassmaker in turn-of-the-century Paris, and Francisco Cody, a perfumer, were the first entrepreneurs to market bottles designed for a particular scent. Before having her students design their own perfume bottles, she had them establish standards of quality—an exercise that fits into the category of "aesthetics."

Discipline-based art education has also changed the way museums treat youthful visitors. Docents at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery & Sculpture Garden in Lincoln who have received Prairie Visions training have now abandoned traditional lecture tours and instead lead students in critical discussions of the works of art.

Nancy Childs recently took a dozen sixth-grade students to a gallery with contemporary paintings and asked them to "find something that you feel strongly

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WHAT CHILDREN'S POETRY IS FOR

BY J. BOTTUM

A RECENTLY published anthology of children's poetry—designed, its British editor declared, "to speak to today's children"—includes two difficult poems that do not initially seem likely candidates for children's poetry.

The first is Edgar Allan Poe's small rhythmic 19th-century gem that begins,

*Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.*

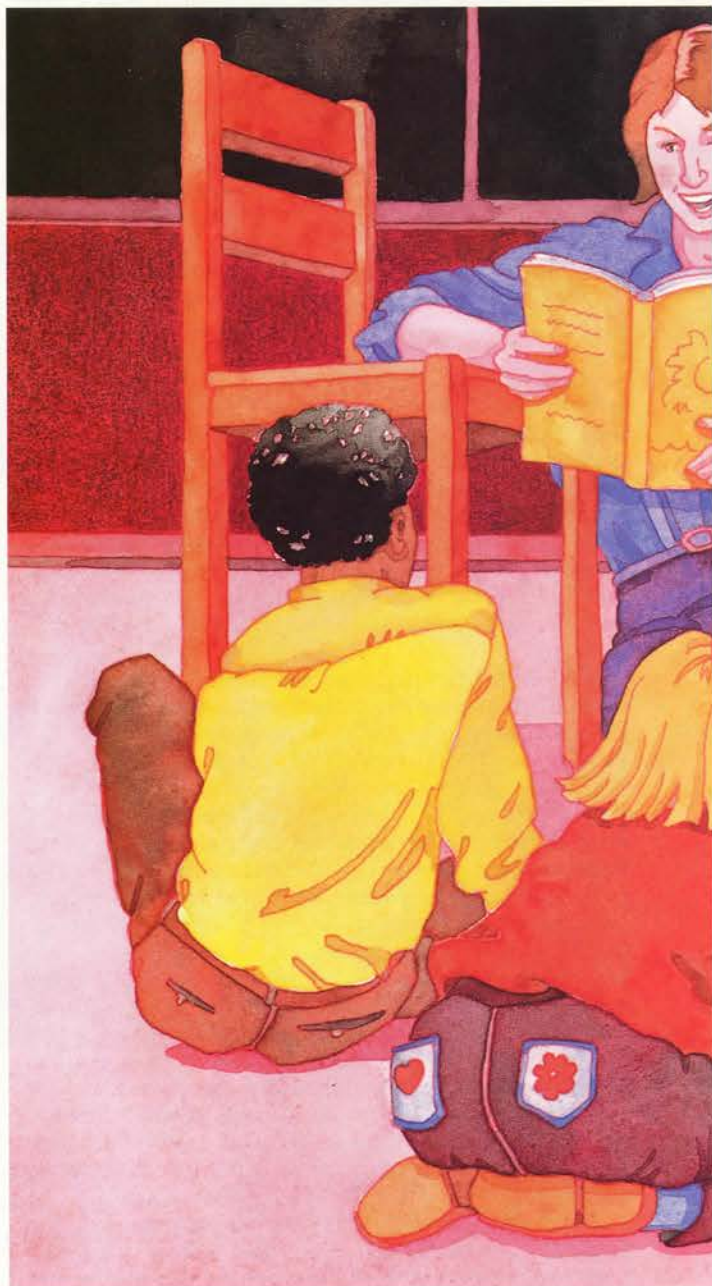
The second is Delmore Schwartz's 20th-century lyrical lullaby—entitled "O Child, Do Not Fear the Dark and Sleep's Dark Possession"—that begins,

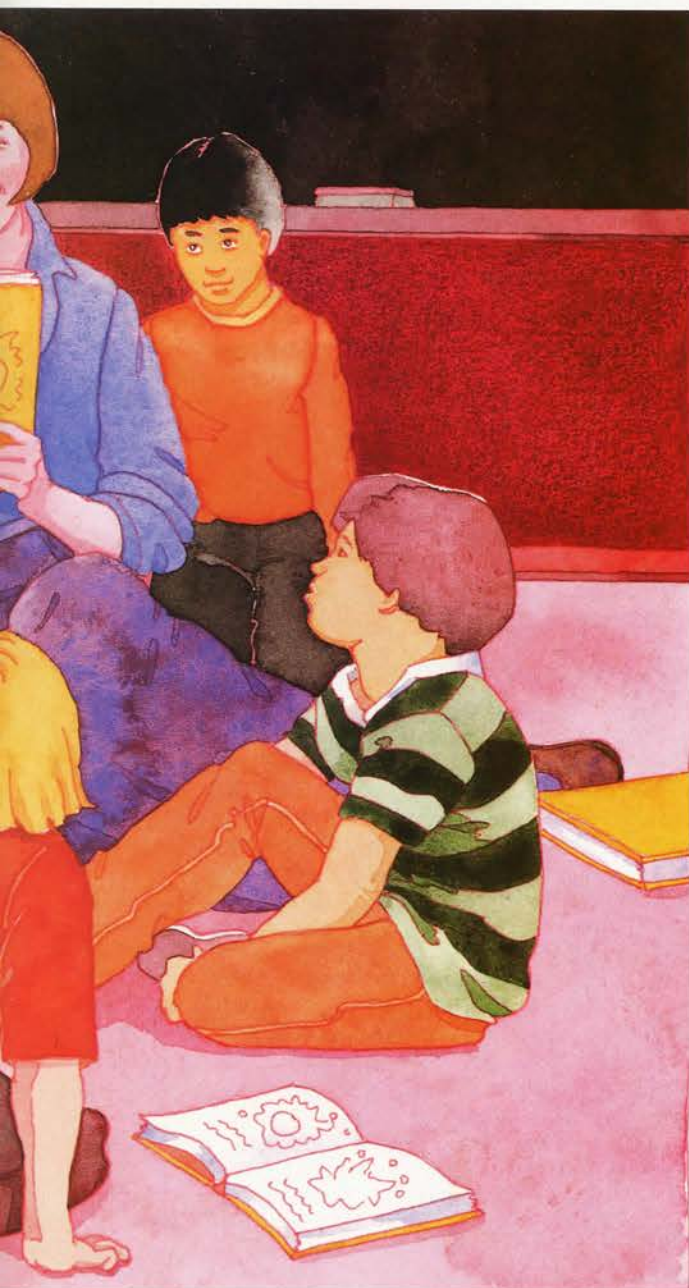
*O child, when you go down to sleep and sleep's
secession
You become more and other than you are, you be-
come the procession
Of bird and beast and tree: you are a chorus,
A pony among horses, a sapling in a dark forest.*

These are both well-constructed, well-found verses: serious, competent, and betraying some genuine poetic inspiration in their American authors. But I have the feeling that anyone who tries actually reading these poems aloud to a classroom full of children, or even to a single child propped up in bed with pillows, will quickly find that Poe's poem is successful as children's verse while Schwartz's poem is not. And if we could determine the reasons for this dissimilarity in the reception of the two poems, we would have gone a long way toward discovering what it is that makes good poetry for children—and what it is that we may reasonably hope to gain by teaching children to read it.

One obvious difference between Poe's verse and Schwartz's poem is the effect of the form. Though "Eldorado" mixes such masculine rhymes as "long" and "song" with such feminine rhymes as "shadow" and "Eldorado," the rhymes are all strong, hard couplings and the short, heavily accented, two-foot lines hammer them home. In Schwartz's lullaby, the ex-

J. Bottum is literary editor of the Weekly Standard.





ILLUSTRATED BY BOBBI TULL

tended, lightly accented, six-foot lines force the rhymes off a long distance—and even then those rhymes are feminine and, in the case of “chorus” and “forest,” false.

Another obvious difference derives from the complexity of the writing. There are difficult words in each of the stanzas, words the hearers are unlikely to know—though young children are perhaps marginally more likely to know “secession” than “bedight,” and “secession” is certainly a more useful word in contemporary speech to teach them. But there is still an advantage to “Eldorado,” for understanding “secession” is key to following Schwartz’s poem in a way that understanding “bedight” is not to following Poe’s. So, too, with such phrases as “more and other than you are,” there is a grammatical density in Schwartz that a child would be hard-pressed at first hearing to sort out—and that is utterly missing in Poe.

Yet a third obvious difference between the poems is the result of simple historical accident: Regardless of whether or not he is a better poet, the fact remains that Poe wrote a hundred years before Schwartz, and his work’s long tenure in the genre of popular Victorian parlor verse, the greatest era of poetry reading in the history of English, gives him a patina of familiarity that Schwartz could never hope to obtain in the 1950s. “O Child, Do Not Fear the Dark and Sleep’s Dark Possession” does not rank among Schwartz’s best works, but even a universally admired poem like his “Ballad of the Children of the Czar” will never awaken the resonances effortlessly maintained by Poe in “The Raven,” “Annabel Lee,” “The Bells,” and “To Helen.” Indeed, even the word “Eldorado,” meaning a long-sought but unobtainable goal, has permanently entered the English language thanks to Poe.

These three differences—of form, complexity, and familiarity—offer some explanation of why, when read to children, Poe’s “Eldorado” is much more likely to be a success than Schwartz’s verse. And these three differences offer as well, I think, some explanation of what we ought to look for in any successful children’s poetry.

The Role of Form

The importance of form is obvious even at a quick glance through any standard children’s anthology: *Mother Goose’s Nursery Rhymes*, for instance, Louis

Untermeyer's once-bestselling (and generally underrated) *Golden Treasury of Poetry*, or Iona and Peter Opie's classic 1973 edition of *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*.

There is, for instance, a *Mother Goose* rhyme that goes:

*How many miles is it to Babylon?
Threescore miles and ten.
Can I get there by candle-light?
Yes, and back again.*

A professional student of prosody (as the technical study of the rhythms of poetry is called) might say that the verse shows two rhythms: a falling rhythm composed basically of dactyls in the four-foot lines (*HOW man-y / MI-les / IS it to / BAB-y-lon?*) alternating with a rising rhythm composed basically of iambs in the three-foot lines (*YES / and BACK / aGAIN*). Or perhaps a prosodist might give a different explanation of the verse's rhythmic variety. But the far more difficult thing to explain is how the verse tells us in the first place that it requires to be read aloud in a galloping trot—though that is something that thousands of children reciting the verse have known intuitively without any notion at all of what a dactyl might be.

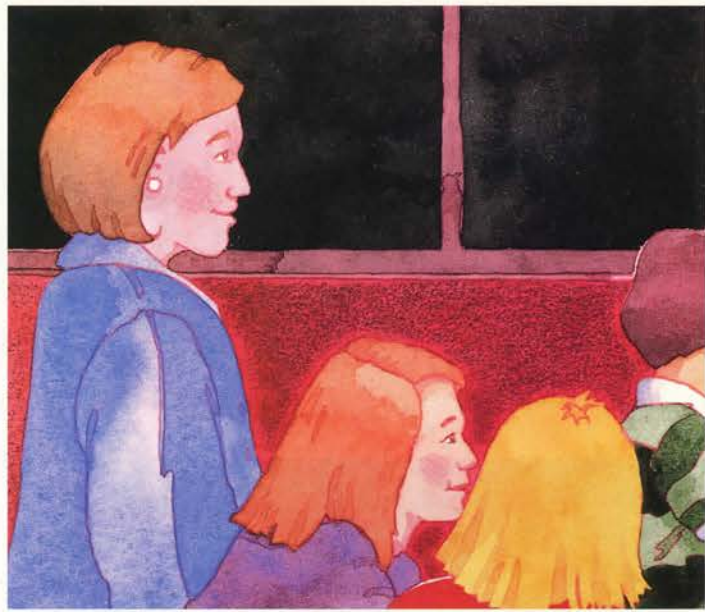
Similarly, when A. A. Milne, the early 20th-century author of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, writes:

*James James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.*

a prosodist might tell us that Milne is nearly recreating, in a stressed English line, the rhythms of a quantitative Sapphic strophe straight out of Horace's Latin odes. There may be some interested in the fact that the rhythm technically runs *- / uu / uu / uu / - / - / - / uu / uu / - / - / -*, just as there may be some interested in identifying the flaw in the ninth foot ("Mother" is one unstressed syllable short). But it's awfully hard to imagine any child being interested, just as it's hard to imagine any child who couldn't immediately hear the rhythm in the poem without ever having heard of either Sappho or Horace.

It's worth noticing that both these verses are as strongly rhymed as they are strongly accented in meter. And, in fact, strong rhythms and strong rhymes seem to characterize every successful children's poem. But figuring out quite why that should be so is difficult.

Such strong meters and rhyme schemes are certainly not characteristic of adult verse. (An exception might be comic and pornographic poetry—the English poet W. H. Auden once complained that every time he tried to write in heavily stressed alexandrines it came out obscene—but part of the joke in such verse is the way it plays ironically with forms familiar to us first in children's poems.) But children seem to respond first to unity in poetry. Heavy meter and insistent rhyme are a kind of sorcery in which words appear suddenly not just as pointers—referring signs, unreal in themselves,



that merely pick out things in the world—but both as designators of things and as real, individual things in their own right: "Every word," Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed, "was once a poem."

Perhaps we could put this more simply by suggesting that meter and rhyme serve three functions for children. The first is to confirm something of the mystery children feel about language—the magic power that words have to connect things. The second is a kind of deep empowerment, a making of words into things that children may feel that they can own. And the third function is a reflection of children's deeply conservative desire that the world make sense in all its parts—that language not be some arbitrary and meaningless system of reference, but a graspable and unified explanation of a universe in which grammar and reality are one.

The Role of Complexity

We can overprotect children from difficulty, absurdly refusing to expose them to things beyond their knowledge when the purpose of education is to teach students things they don't know. But there's a difference between exposing children to things beyond their knowledge and exposing them to things beyond their comprehension.

For a contemporary child, and indeed, for every child who read it since it first appeared in 1678, John Bunyan's Christian allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, will be full of things unknown. But its popularity for three centuries as a children's classic—perhaps, after the Bible, the most-often-republished book in the English language—testifies to the intuition of the purchasing parents that there is nothing in *Pilgrim's Progress* beyond a child's comprehension.

As countless contemporary teachers and parents have discovered, the same point might be made about C. S. Lewis's 20th-century Christian allegory in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the other volumes in his *Chronicles of Narnia*. Or the point might be made about Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, *Jungle Books*,



and other tales of India: half the fun of reading Kipling, as the literary critic Lionel Trilling observed, is that he studs his prose with undefined Hindustani words like "sais" or "sahib" but gives just enough information for a twelve-year old to parse them out by a kind of triangulation from context and other words which gives the child reader a sense both of accomplishment and of being in on a secret and arcane knowledge.

To take a somewhat absurd counterexample, however, we might imagine the disaster we would find reading T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* to a child. The poem is certainly full of references a child would not know—the fifty pages of notes Eliot appended to the poem at his publishers' insistence is proof that the poem is full of references nearly anyone would not know. But more to the point is the fact that the poem is not just beyond any child's knowledge; it is beyond any child's comprehension, requiring for its understanding things that it would be foolish—or even cruel—to expect a child to see: the complicated sexual relations between men and women, the power of historical example on politics, the psychology of myth, and the way in which the enervated populations of Western Europe after World War I felt that Christianity and the revolutionary impulses of the French Revolution had reached a near mutual exhaustion.

The same point might be made about Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a book-length poem with much the same view as *Pilgrim's Progress* but with a latinate grammar and an intellectual theology unfair to ask a child to grasp. And the point might in fact be made even about nearly any one of Shakespeare's sonnets. A well-trained child might be able to parse one of the sonnets, much as British schoolboys were once expected to take apart a Latin ode by Horace. But it would be only a cold and analytical process, lacking everything that makes the sonnets poetry. The emotions to which Shakespeare gives voice require for their comprehension adult experience. And though children might be

taught to identify the rhyme schemes and the metaphors, they can no more grasp their meaning than a circus pony can understand math.

The amount of intellectual and emotional complexity a child can stand will obviously vary greatly from age group to age group and from child to child. But all the best children's verse has a grammatical correctness and a straightforward narrative that makes it run. Consider the opening of Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman," a poem it's hard to imagine bettered for reading to almost any school-age child:

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn door.

There are obviously hard words here, and things—like the "highwayman" himself—with which a child might not be familiar. But in addition to its trotting rhythm and strong rhymes, there is in Noyes's poem a straightforward narrative flow and a grammatical simplicity that insures that a word missed here or there will not ruin the verse. And it is this effect that we rightly demand from successful children's poetry.

The Role of Familiarity

There is marvelous children's verse being written today, as for instance Jack Prelutsky's 1990 "Mother Goblin's Lullaby" that begins:

*Go to sleep, my baby goblin,
bushaby, my dear of dears,
if you disobey your mother;
she will twist your pointed ears.*

So too there was a great deal of truly horrible parlor verse produced for children in the nineteenth century, as for instance such work by the late-Victorian newspaper versifier Ella Wheeler Wilcox as:

*Have you heard of the Valley of Babyland,
The realms where the dear little darlings stay
Till the kind storks go, as all men know,
And ob! so tenderly bring them away?*

But the fact remains that a greater effect in education is obtained by reading to a child a well-known poem than a little-known poem. Part of the reason for this is the simple fact of the knowledge being shared. The vision held by Matthew Arnold in the nineteenth century—that universal knowledge of poetry would take the place of the universal knowledge of the Bible he could already feel fading in England—has certainly not come about. But there is *some* knowledge of poetry shared in America, and if the metaphorical resources of the language are not to be reduced entirely to references to 1960s television programs, that shared knowledge needs to be preserved.

(Continued on page 44)

SETTING LIMITS IN THE CLASSROOM

BY ROBERT J. MACKENZIE

MY JOB as a child therapist brings me into frequent contact with the most aggressive researchers in a large school district. I see the kids who don't stop at the signals their teachers hold up in the classroom, the ones who push everything to the limit. Loren, a second grader, is a good example. He was referred after a series of suspensions for disruptive and uncooperative behavior in the classroom.

"Loren won't listen to anyone," commented his teacher. "He thinks he can do whatever he wants. I've had numerous conferences with his parents, and they say he acts the same way at home. We're all at a loss for what to do."

When Loren arrived at my office with his parents, he plopped himself down in one of my comfortable blue swivel chairs and began sizing me up. Then he went right to work on me. We hadn't exchanged a word, but his research was under way.

What do you think Loren and many other children do when they first sit in my chairs? Right. They spin them, and sometimes they put their feet in them, too. They know it's not OK. Their parents know it, and so do I, but the kids do it anyway. They look at me, then at their parents, and go ahead and see what happens. This is limit-testing behavior. When it happens, I know I am about to learn a great deal about how the family communicates about limits.

I don't need behavior rating scales, standardized tests, or lengthy clinical interviews to see what's going on. I just watch the child, the chairs, and the parents for ten to fifteen minutes, and I usually have all the information I need to see what's going on.

Loren's parents responded to his chair spinning the way most permissive parents do. They ignored it. They pretended it wasn't happening and focused instead on telling me about all of the disruptive things Loren did

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at school. Loren continued spinning. Five minutes passed. Not one signal had been given.

Ten minutes into our session, I could see Loren's father was becoming annoyed. He made his first attempt at a signal. He said Loren's name softly and gave him a look of disapproval.

Loren did what most kids do when this happens. He acknowledged the gesture, stopped briefly, then resumed his spinning as soon as his father looked away. Loren and his parents were reenacting a script, the same one they go through dozens of times each week whenever Loren misbehaves.

With his behavior, Loren was asking the same questions he asks at home and in the classroom: "What's OK? What's not OK? Who's in control? How far can I go? And what happens when I go too far?" He knew his parents weren't going to do anything about his behavior, so he was conducting his research to determine my power and authority and the rules that operated in my office. Between disapproving looks from his father, Loren continued to spin. I waited to see what would happen next.

A few more minutes passed, then Loren's father did what many other parents do at this point. He reached over and stopped the chair with his hand. His signal elicited the same response as before. Loren acknowledged the gesture, waited for his father to remove his hand, then continued spinning.

Loren's parents were doing their best to say stop, but Loren knew from experience that stopping was not really expected or required. All of the gestures were just steps in a well-rehearsed drama. The spinning continued. I could see why he wasn't responding to his teacher's signals in the classroom.

Fifteen minutes went by, and Loren still had not received a clear signal from his parents. Their anger was apparent. Finally his exasperated mother turned to me and said, "See what he does! This is the same thing we have to put up with at home!"

At this point, I intervened and helped Loren answer some of his research questions. In a matter-of-fact voice, I said, "Loren, I'd like you to use my blue chairs, but I have two rules you'll have to follow—don't spin them and don't put your feet in them. I'm confident



DAVIS.

you can follow my rules, but if you don't, you'll have to sit in my orange chair for the rest of the session." I keep an old plastic orange chair in my office for these situations.

What do you think Loren did? Sure, he did the same thing most strong-willed children do. He tested. Not right away, but within a few minutes, he gave the chair another spin and looked for my reaction. He heard my words, now he wanted hard data. He wanted to see what I would do.

So I did what I always do when this happens. I pulled out the orange chair and said calmly, "This will be your chair for the rest of the session. You can try my blue chairs again next session." Then I stood next to him and waited for him to move with a look of expectation. Reluctantly, Loren moved into the orange chair.

What did Loren and I just work out? I just answered his research questions. He heard stop, and he experienced stopping. Now he knows what I expect and what will happen if he decides to test the next time he visits my office. Loren has all the information he needs to make an acceptable choice.

You're probably wondering what happens when children refuse to get out of the blue chair. The interesting thing is that most don't test when they get the information they need to make an acceptable choice. I see more than a hundred chair spinners a year in my counseling work. Only a few continue to test when I bring out the orange chair.

What happens when they do? The process is still the same. The questions haven't changed. They are still asking, "Or what? What are you going to do about it?" So I try to give them the data they're looking for in the same matter-of-fact manner. I turn to their parents and say, "Your child doesn't want to get out of my chair. Do I have your permission to move him?"

In ten years, I've never had a parent say no. Most are so embarrassed over their child's behavior, they can't wait to get out of my office. Others are very curious to see if I can actually get their child to cooperate.

Once I get their permission, I turn to the child and say, "Your parents say I can move you into the orange chair, but I'd prefer that you move yourself. What would you like to do?" I take a few deep breaths and wait patiently for fifteen or twenty seconds.

What do you think they do? A very few, maybe two or three each year, wait until I get up out of my chair before they are convinced I will act. Then they move into the other chair. The vast majority move on their own. Why? They move because they have all the information they need to make an acceptable decision. Their questions are answered. Even aggressive researchers can make acceptable choices when provided with clear signals. Their cooperation demonstrated the power of a clear message.

When children like Loren misbehave at school, the focus is on their problem behavior not the hidden forces that operate beneath the surface to shape that problem behavior. This is where my investigative work begins. I try to determine why the teaching and learning process breaks down. Is the problem teaching? Or learning? Or is something else going on? I try to answer these questions by examining the ways rules are

taught both at home and in the classroom.

Why Consequences Are Important

Consequences are like walls. They stop misbehavior. They provide clear and definitive answers to children's research questions about what's acceptable and who's in charge, and they teach responsibility by holding children accountable for their choices and behavior. When used consistently, consequences define the path you want your students to stay on and teach them to tune in to your words.

If you've relied on permissive or punitive methods in the past, you will probably need to use consequences often during the first four to eight weeks that you implement the guidance strategies I describe. Why? Because your aggressive researchers will probably test you frequently to determine if things are really different. This is the only way they will know that your rules have changed and that your walls are really solid. You are likely to hear comments such as "You're not fair!" or "You're mean!" as they attempt to break down your walls and get you to revert back to your old behavior.

This is what Mr. Harvey discovered when he attended one of my workshops looking for more effective ways to handle the daily testing, resistance, and argument he was encountering in the classroom. It didn't take him long to recognize that his permissive approach was part of the problem. His limits were soft, and his consequences, if he used them at all, were late and ineffective. His kids were taking advantage of him, and he was eager to put an end to it. After he completed my workshop, he made an announcement to his class.

"I'll be running the classroom differently from now on," Mr. Harvey began. "I'm not going to repeat my directions anymore or remind you to do the things you're supposed to do. I'm not going to argue or debate if you don't want to do it. I will only ask you once. If you decide not to cooperate, then I will use consequences to hold you accountable." He explained logical consequences and the time-out procedure.

"He doesn't mean it," whispered one student. "Yeah, he knows who's really in charge here," chuckled another. Their reaction was understandable. Their previous experience gave them little cause to regard his words seriously.

But Mr. Harvey kept his word. When he gave directions or requested their cooperation, he said it only once. No more repeating or reminding. When the kids ignored him or tuned out, he used the check-in procedure. When they tried to argue or debate, he used the cut-off technique. [See sidebars, page 35 and 36.] If they persisted, he followed through quickly with logical consequences or time-out.

"What got into him?" wondered several students at the end of the first week. "Yeah, we liked him better the old way."

The methods worked. For the first time, Mr. Harvey's students were accountable for their poor choices and behavior. They were learning to be responsible, but their testing didn't let up for a while.

In fact, their testing intensified during the first few

The Check-In Procedure

WHEN WE give a clear message with our words, but students don't respond as expected, sometimes we're not sure if our message was heard or understood. We wonder: "Did my message get across? Am I being ignored? Is it time to move on to my action step?"

The check-in procedure is a simple technique that helps us answer these questions without getting hooked into the old repeating and reminding routine. When in doubt, check-in with the child by saying one of the following:

"What did I ask you to do?"

"Did you understand what I said?"

"Were my directions clear?"

"Tell me in your words what you heard me say."

For example, morning snack is over, and it's time for Mrs. Jansen's preschoolers to get ready to go out to the playground. "Put your napkins, wrappers, and other garbage in the waste can," she says. Most of them do, except for Stacey who just looks at her blankly, then heads to the door with her classmates.

"Did she hear what I said?" wonders Mrs. Jansen. "She doesn't act like she did." Mrs. Jansen is tempted to ask Stacey a second time when she remembers the technique she learned in the book — when in doubt, use the check-in procedure. She gives it a try.

"Stacey, what did I ask you to do before you go outside?" asks Mrs. Jansen.

"Pick up my mess," replies Stacey.

"Then do it, please," says Mrs. Jansen matter-of-factly. Stacey goes back to pick up her mess.

In this case, Stacey was limit testing. She had the information she needed but chose to ignore it. She fully expected to hear a lot of repeating and reminding before she would actually have to pick up her mess, if she would have to pick it up at all. The check-in procedure helped her teacher to clarify their communication, avoid a dance, and eliminate the payoffs for tuning out all at the same time.

Now, let's consider another scenario. Let's say that when Mrs. Jansen checks in with Stacey, she responds with the same blank stare because she really was tuned out completely. What should Mrs. Jansen do?

She should give Stacey the information that Stacey missed the first time and preview her action step. Mrs. Jansen's message might sound like this: "Put your napkins, wrappers, and other garbage away before you go outside. You won't be ready to leave until that job is done." Now Stacey has all the information she needs to make an acceptable choice. All Mrs. Jansen needs to do is follow through.

The check-in procedure also can be used in situations where children respond to our requests with mixed messages; that is, they give us the right verbal response but continue to do what they want. Sam, a high-school senior, is an expert at this. He sits in his seventh-period literature class and doodles when he's supposed to be writing a short plot summary. There are thirty minutes left in the period. The teacher notices his lack of progress.

"Sam, you have thirty minutes to finish up," he says as he passes by Sam's desk.

"I will," says Sam, but ten minutes go by, and he hasn't written a sentence. He hopes to avoid the assignment altogether or talk his way out of it when the bell rings. His teacher suspects this also and decides to check in.

"Sam, what did I ask you to do?" inquires his teacher.

"I'll finish up," says Sam in a reassuring voice.

The teacher clarifies Sam's message. "Your words say that you will, but your actions say you won't. Let me be more clear. You won't be ready to leave until you finish your plot summary. I'll be happy to stay with you after school if you need more time to finish up." Now his teacher's message is very clear.

"Darn! It didn't work," Sam says to himself. He gets out a clean piece of paper and hurries to complete the assignment before the bell rings.

weeks. His aggressive researchers did everything they could to wear him down and get him to revert back to his old ways. It didn't work. He didn't give in or compromise, even when they told him he was mean or unfair. He was prepared for their resistance.

An initial increase in testing during the first four weeks is a normal and expected part of the learning and change process. After all, Mr. Harvey told his students things were going to be different. How could they know for sure that he really meant what he said? Of course, they had to test and see for themselves. When they did, Mr. Harvey answered their questions with instructive consequences.

Four weeks after he started, Mr. Harvey noticed a change. The change was subtle at first, not dramatic.

There was less testing and more cooperation. The kids were tuning back in to his words. They were beginning to change their beliefs about his rules.

Your consequences will accomplish your immediate goal of stopping your students' misbehavior when it occurs, but teaching them to tune back in to your words will take time. How much time? This depends on your consistency, the length of time you've been using soft limits, and the amount of training your students need to be convinced that your rules have changed.

As you accumulate hours of consistency between your words and actions, you will notice less testing and less need for consequences. This will be your signal that your students are tuning back in. They are be-

The Cut-Off-Technique

THE CUT-OFF technique is an effective method for interrupting dances when children try to hook us into arguing, debating, bargaining, or compromising our limits. As the name implies, the cut-off ends the interaction by specifying a consequence if it continues. The "Or what?" question is answered. If children continue testing, follow through with your consequence. Either way, the dance stops, and your students receive the clear message they need.

When children try to engage you in arguments, debates, bargaining, or other forms of verbal sparring, say one of the following:

"We're done talking about it. If you bring it up again, then..." (Follow through with your action step.)

"Discussion time is over. You can do what you were asked, or you can spend some quiet time by yourself getting ready to do it. What would you like to do?" (Follow through with a time-out consequence.)

For example, a group of sixth-grade boys play catch with a football on the blacktop area. Their errant passes barely miss younger children playing nearby. The yard-duty teacher intervenes.

"Guys, it's not OK to play catch on the blacktop," says the teacher matter-of-factly. "You can play on the grass away from the younger children."

"We're not hurting anybody," says one boy.

"Why can't they move if they don't want to get hurt?" asks another.

The teacher isn't sure his message got across. He decides to check in. "Did you guys understand what I asked you to do?" he inquires.

"Yeah, but I don't see why we should," says one boy. The others nod in agreement.

"I'm not going to debate with them about why they should follow the rules," the teacher thinks to himself. He decides to end this potential power struggle before it begins. "We're done talking about it," he says. "If you pass the ball on the blacktop again, I'll have to take it away, and you'll spend the rest of the recess on the bench."

Now his message is really clear. The boys know their options. They have all the information they need to make an acceptable decision. Whether they cooperate or test, either way, they will learn the rule he's trying to teach. No dances this time.

Emily's first-period teacher also uses the cut-off technique effectively when Emily arrives late to class and tries to talk her way out of a tardy slip.

"I was only a couple of minutes late, Miss Stevens," pleads Emily. "It won't happen again. I promise."

"I hope not," replies Miss Stevens "but you still need to pick up a tardy slip before I can let you back in class."

"It's not fair!" insists Emily, hoping for a little bargaining room. It nearly works. Miss Stevens is about to argue the issue of fairness when she remembers the technique she read about in the book.

"We're done talking about it, Emily," says Miss Stevens matter-of-factly. "If you want to discuss it further, we can arrange a time with your counselor after you pick up your tardy slip." That wasn't what Emily wanted to hear. Reluctantly, she heads to the attendance office.

ginning to change their beliefs about your rules.

What Makes a Consequence Effective?

The effectiveness of your consequences depends largely on how you apply them. If you apply them in a punitive or permissive manner, your consequences will have limited training value. You'll be teaching different lessons than you intend, and you, not your students, will be responsible for most of the problem solving. If you apply consequences in a democratic manner, however, your signals will be clear, and so will the lessons you're trying to teach. Consequences are most effective when used democratically.

Let me illustrate this point by showing how three teachers can use the same consequences for the same misbehavior with varying degrees of effectiveness. Mr. Wallace uses the permissive approach. When he sees Kenny cheating at tetherball, he gives Kenny a lecture on the importance of honesty and fair play and asks him to sit out his next turn. "What a joke!" Kenny says to himself. Within minutes, he's back to his old tricks.

Mrs. Hunter uses the punitive approach. When she sees Kenny cheating at tetherball, she singles him out for humiliation. "Nobody likes to play with a cheater!" she says in a loud, accusatory voice. "If you can't play fair, you won't play at all. No more tetherball for a week."

"A week!" exclaims Kenny. "That's not fair!" He walks off feeling resentful and considers ways to get back.

Miss Fisher uses the democratic approach. When she sees Kenny cheating, she calls him aside respectfully. "Kenny, you can't play tetherball if you don't play by the rules," she says matter-of-factly. "You need to find another game to play for the rest of this recess. You can try tetherball again next recess." No lectures. No humiliation. No long or drawn-out consequences. Next recess, Kenny plays by the rules.

Each of the teachers in these examples decided to limit Kenny's tetherball time as a consequence for not playing by the rules. Mr. Wallace applied the consequence permissively. His message was respectful, but his consequence lacked firmness. It was too brief.

Kenny continued testing.

Mrs. Hunter applied the consequence punitively. Her message was more than firm. It was harsh and not very respectful. Kenny understood the rule she was trying to teach, but he didn't feel good about the way her message was delivered. He left their encounter feeling resentful with no greater desire to cooperate.

Miss Fisher applied the consequence in a democratic manner. Her message was both firm and respectful. Her consequence achieved the right balance between the two extremes. It wasn't too long, and it wasn't too brief. It was instructive. No feelings were injured. No relationships were damaged. Kenny received the information he needed to make a better choice. He didn't need a week to show that he could cooperate.

Miss Fisher was effective because she understands how to use consequences. Let's look at the properties effective consequences share in common.

Immediacy

It's snack time, and Ricky, age four, decides to blow bubbles in his carton of milk. His classmates are amused, but not his teacher. She gives him some choices. "Ricky, it's not OK to blow bubbles in your milk. You can drink it the right way, or you'll have to put it away. What would you like to do?"

"I'll drink it the right way," says Ricky. He does, too, for a while, but as soon as his teacher leaves, he decides to test. He puts the carton to his lips and blows some more big bubbles. Without any further words, his teacher removes the milk carton. Ricky will have another chance to drink the right way next time they have snacks.

Consequences are most effective when they are applied immediately after the unacceptable behavior. The immediacy of the consequence helped Ricky make the cause-and-effect connection between his misbehavior and the consequence he experienced. The lesson was instructive. If his teacher had chosen instead to overlook his misbehavior and withhold his milk during the next snack period, her consequence would have had much less impact.

Consistency

Tina, an eighth grader, loves to visit with her friends between classes, but her next class is PE, and she doesn't want to be late. Last time she arrived late to PE, she had to go to the office for a tardy slip and lost points for missing calisthenics.

"I'll be careful," Tina says to herself. She keeps an eye on her watch and continues to visit. With one minute to go, she sprints for class and nearly makes it. Her teacher greets her at the door.

"Hi, Tina," says Mrs. Perles, as she points in the direction of the attendance office. "I'll see you after you pick up a tardy slip."

"Not again!" says Tina remorsefully. She searches for a good excuse. "I had trouble with my locker," she says convincingly. "Can't this be an exception, please?"

Mrs. Perles holds firm. "Sorry, Tina," she says. "You can explain your situation to Mr. Harris, our vice principal, if you wish, but there's nothing more I can do."

Tina is determined to avoid consequences if she can. When she appeals her case to Mr. Harris, he also

holds firm. "Ten minutes is plenty of time to get to class," he says. "I'm sure you'll be more careful next time."

"Rats!" Tina says to herself. "He's as tight as Mrs. Perles." She picks up her tardy slip and heads back to class.

Consistent consequences are vital to effective guidance. Your consistency helps children collect the data they need to arrive at the conclusions you intend. Some students, like Tina, need to collect a lot of data before they are convinced, but the process is the same for all. Tina will learn that she is expected and required to show up for class on time.

As the example illustrates, consistency has many dimensions. There's consistency between our words and our actions. There's consistency between the classroom and the office, and there's consistency between the way consequences are applied from one time to the next. Tina experienced consistency in all of these areas. She received the clearest possible signal about her school's rule.

Let's say, for the sake of argument, that Tina's PE teacher is only 60 percent consistent about enforcing her rule about showing up for class on time. What can she expect from Tina and others? More testing? Of course. In reality, the rule is only in effect 60 percent of the time. How will the kids know when it is and is not in effect? They will have to test. Inconsistency is an invitation for testing.

Relatedness

When we fail to pay our phone bills for several months, does the phone company respond by disconnecting our cable TV service? No. That would not stop us from using our phone without paying. Instead, they use a consequence that is logically related to the behavior they want to change. They shut off our phone service and charge us a reinstallation fee when they hook us back up. This teaches us to be more responsible about paying for our phone service.

Children also learn best when the consequences they experience are logically related to their behavior. It makes little sense to take away a child's recess privileges or an upcoming field trip because that child decides to bother a classmate during instruction. What does annoying others have to do with recesses or field trips? The consequences and the offending behavior are not logically related.

A more instructive consequence would be to temporarily separate the student from others and provide him with some time to get back under control. The message might sound like: "Jimmy, you need to move your desk about five feet away from Ben. You can move back to your old spot after lunch." Jimmy hears stop and experiences stopping. The consequence is both immediate and logically related to the behavior we want to change. Jimmy has the data he needs to make a better choice.

Duration

Stephanie, a second grader, makes disruptive noises while her classmates work quietly at their seats. The teacher tries to ignore the noise, but it gets louder. Finally, she walks over and asks Stephanie to stop. Stephanie does, for a while, then starts up again a few

minutes later.

"I've had enough of your rudeness!" says the teacher angrily. She sends Stephanie to the office and tells her not to return until after lunch. It's only nine-thirty.

Sure, the consequence stopped Stephanie's disruptive behavior, but it also eliminated all her opportunities to demonstrate that she could cooperate and behave acceptably during the remainder of the morning. A brief five- or ten-minute time-out would have accomplished the teacher's purpose adequately.

When it comes to applying consequences, more is not necessarily better. Consequences of brief duration often achieve our training goals more effectively than long-term consequences, particularly with preschool and elementary-school children. Why? Because brief consequences, applied consistently, give children more opportunities to collect data and make acceptable choices. More teaching and learning occur.

This principle is difficult for many teachers who operate from the punitive model to accept. From their perspective, if a little is good, then a lot must be wonderful. They tend to go overboard with the length or severity of their consequences, then they add to their own frustration by expecting change to happen rapidly. They don't realize that long, drawn-out consequences actually slow down the training process by providing fewer opportunities for learning. Worse yet, teachers must endure the resentment their consequences cause.

Consequences of unclear duration also create problems. Byron, a third grader, is a good example. When he disrupts class, his teacher asks him to go to the time-out area until she feels he's ready to return to his seat.

"How long is that?" Byron wonders. "Five minutes? Ten? Twenty? Possibly all morning?" Byron isn't sure, but he knows one way to find out. Every few minutes he calls out, "Is it time yet?" His annoyed teacher considers adding more time.

Effective consequences have a beginning and an end that are clear and well-defined. Unclear or open-ended consequences invite the type of testing Byron did. If his teacher had specified five minutes as the amount of time Byron needed to spend in time-out, her consequence would have been clear. Byron probably wouldn't have persisted with his disruptive questioning.

Respect

Drake, a sixth grader, enjoys negative attention, and he has discovered a good way to get it. When it's his turn to be blackboard monitor, he runs his fingernails down the center of the board and gets the intended response. His teacher isn't amused.

"Drake, you can erase the board quietly or we can find someone else to do the job. What would you like to do?"

"OK," says Drake with a mischievous smile. "I'll do it the right way." He does, too, for the rest of the morning, but when he's finishing up a job later that afternoon, he runs his fingernail down the board once again.

"Take your seat please, Drake," says his teacher matter-of-factly. She turns to the class. "Who would like to be Drake's replacement for the rest of the week?" A

half dozen hands shoot up.

Drake received a clear message about his teacher's rules and expectations. He also received an important object lesson in respectful problem solving. No one was blamed or criticized. No feelings were hurt, and no relationships were damaged.

Now, consider how this situation might have been handled by another teacher who uses the punitive approach. When Drake runs his fingernail down the board the first time, this teacher explodes.

"I knew I couldn't trust you with even a simple task," she says angrily. "You obviously need a few years to grow up before you're ready for this type of responsibility. Now take your seat!" Sure, her consequence stops Drake's misbehavior, but what does he learn in the process?

The method we use is the method we teach. The method itself communicates a message about acceptable behavior. When we apply consequences in hurtful ways, we teach hurtful problem solving.

Clean Slates

It's been three weeks since Kyle, a seventh grader, was suspended from school for instigating a food fight in the cafeteria. He threw a carton of milk and hit another student in the head. Although Kyle has been well behaved in the cafeteria ever since, his fourth-period teacher continues to remind him almost daily about the poor choice he made and the consequence he experienced.

Kyle's teacher can't seem to let go of the consequence. Her focus is stuck on stopping the unacceptable behavior when it should be directed to encouraging Kyle's present cooperation. Kyle needs a clean slate and a fresh opportunity to show that he can make an acceptable choice and behave responsibly.

What You Can Expect

When you begin holding your students accountable with effective consequences, you are likely to encounter an initial increase in testing and resistance. Don't be alarmed. This is temporary. It's a normal part of the learning and retraining process.

Your students have already formed beliefs about how you are supposed to behave based on months and sometimes years of experience. They are not likely to change these well-established beliefs overnight just because you said things are going to be different. They will need to experience more than your words to be convinced.

Imagine how you would react if a close friend told you he was going to behave differently. Let's say this person had always been critical and judgmental of others in the past, and now he claims that he's going to be more tolerant and accepting. Wouldn't you want to see the change for yourself over time before you believed it? Most of us would. Students are the same.

Telling students that you're changed may not be enough to change their beliefs or their behavior. They will want to experience the change for themselves over time before they are likely to revise their beliefs and accept the fact that you are different. You will have to show them with your consistent behavior.

In the meantime, you should expect them to test

Effective consequences have a beginning and an end that are clear and well-defined.



your new methods and to do everything they can to get you to behave "the way you are supposed to." If you've been doing a permissive dance in the past, they will probably continue to ignore you, tune you out, challenge your requests, and dangle delicious baits to get you back out on the dance floor. If you've been punitive, they will probably continue to annoy you and provoke your anger.

Consequences will play an important role during this retraining period. You will probably need to use them frequently. The more hours of consistency you achieve between your words and actions, the quicker your students will learn to tune back in, reduce their testing, and cooperate without the need for consequences.

How long will this take? This depends on a number of factors—the age of your students, your consistency, temperaments, and how much history you and your students need to overcome. Most teachers who apply

the methods with good consistency report a significant reduction in testing during the first eight weeks. Younger children, ages three to seven, respond more quickly. Older children and teens require longer. Your consistency will accelerate the learning process for children of all ages.

The notion of a quick fix is very appealing. We all want our students' behavior to improve as quickly as possible, but we also need to recognize that these patterns did not develop overnight. Retraining takes time. Expectations of a quick fix will only set you and your students up for unnecessary frustration and disappointment. Allow the teaching-and-learning process the time it needs to do its part.

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES: NATURAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

IT'S SNACK time in Mrs. Clarey's kindergarten class. She passes out small paper cups filled with nuts and raisins to her students, and they all go outside to eat their snacks on the lawn. Two of her students, Dustin and Max, decide to play a game with their food. They toss their snacks into the air and try to catch them in their mouths. Most ends up on the ground.

"Their snacks won't last long like that," Mrs. Clarey thinks to herself. She's right. Within minutes, the boys come up and ask for more.

"Sorry," she replies. "One cup each is all we get."

Mrs. Clarey let the natural consequence of losing snacks teach the lesson Dustin and Max need to learn. Like many of us, she was probably tempted to say "I told you so" or to provide a lecture on the poor choice of playing with their food. She also knew that any further words or actions on her part would take responsibility away from the boys and sabotage their real-life learning experience. Dustin and Max will probably think carefully next time they decide to play that game.

Natural consequences, as the name implies, follow naturally from an event or situation. They send the right action messages to children because they place responsibility where it belongs—on the child. Natural consequences require little or no involvement from teachers. We can easily sabotage the training value of this guidance strategy when we become overinvolved, try to fix the problem, add more consequences, give lectures, or add an "I told you so."

Some teachers find natural consequences easy to use and welcome opportunities to let children learn from their own mistakes. For others, particularly those who operate from the punitive model, natural consequences are not easy to use. When something happens, they have to fight their desire to take charge and control the lesson. Doing nothing when you want to do something can be frustrating.

If you find yourself wanting to take charge and control the lesson, practice limiting your involvement to restating the obvious facts of the situation. For example, if your students kick the soccer ball onto the roof after you asked them to play away from the building, you might say, "When the ball is on the roof, it's not

available to play with." No further words or actions are needed.

Let's look at some of the many situations where you can use natural consequences.

Situations for Using Natural Consequences

1. *When playground equipment or learning materials are lost, damaged, or stolen due to carelessness, misuse, or lack of responsibility.*

Natural consequence: Don't repair or replace the lost or damaged items until enough time has passed for students to experience the loss.

Mr. Ackers, a principal at an inner-city elementary school, loves basketball. He'll do almost anything to encourage his students to play. When the kids ask him to lower the rims on one of the courts so they can stuff the ball through the basket, he is happy to help out.

But Mr. Ackers soon notices a problem. Some kids continue to hang on the rims after they stuff the ball. "The rims won't last long if they keep that up," Mr. Ackers says to himself. When he explains this concern to the kids, they promise to be careful, but many continue to hang on the rims. By the end of the week, one rim is so badly damaged it is unusable. So the kids play half-court games with the remaining lowered rim. It's not long before that one is damaged, too.

"We need new rims to practice stuffing," the kids say the next time they see Mr. Ackers. He recognizes his opportunity to use a natural consequence.

"Rims are expensive," he says. "They don't last long when people hang on them. It will be a while before we can replace them." He wants the kids to experience the loss for several weeks or perhaps a month before he replaces the rims. Next time, they'll probably think twice before hanging on them.

2. *When children make a habit out of forgetting.*

Natural consequence: Don't remind them or take away their responsibility by doing for them what they should do for themselves.

Nine-year-old Kendra has a habit of forgetting her homework and lunch money in the mornings. Each time this occurs, one of her parents drops the forgotten item off at school. Noticing that this had become a pattern, Kendra's teacher suggests that the parents not make any extra trips for a two-week period.

"Kendra is a good student," says the teacher. "If she misses one or two lunches or assignments, it's not going to hurt her." Her parents agree.

On Tuesday of the first week, Kendra forgets her lunch money. When lunchtime arrives, she asks her teacher if her parents dropped off her lunch money. "Not yet," says her teacher.

That night, Kendra complains to her parents. "You forgot my lunch money! I couldn't eat lunch today."

"I'm sure you'll remember it tomorrow," says her father matter-of-factly. Nothing further was said.

Kendra did remember her lunch money, but on Thursday she left without her homework. Around mid-morning she asks her teacher if her parents dropped it off. "Not yet," says her teacher. Kendra received a zero on the assignment.

Nine-year-old Kendra has a habit of forgetting her homework and lunch money in the mornings. Each time this occurs, one of her parents drops the forgotten item off at school.



Once again, she complains to her parents. "You forgot to bring my homework. I got a zero on that assignment!"

"You're a very good student," says her mother. "I'm sure you'll remember it tomorrow." She did.

3. *When children fail to do their part.*

Natural consequence: Let them experience the result.

Austin, a ninth grader, knows he's supposed to take his dirty gym clothes home on Fridays to be washed, but when he opens his locker Monday morning, he sees the bag of dirty clothes. The aroma is unmistakable.

"Oh no!" he says to himself. "What am I going to do?" He decides to present his dilemma to his gym teacher.

"May I be excused from gym class today. Mr. Edwards? I left my gym clothes in my locker over the weekend. They really stink."

Mr. Edwards understands the situation. He also recognizes his opportunity to let the natural consequence teach Austin the lesson he needs to learn.

"Sorry, Austin," says Mr. Edwards matter-of-factly. "There's nothing I can do. You can wear them the way they are or lose half a grade for not dressing. It's up to you."

Austin decides to wear them. His classmates give him plenty of room to do his calisthenics. Austin took his gym clothes home that evening. He didn't forget again.

4. *When kids dawdle or procrastinate.*

Natural consequence: When possible, let them experience the consequence of their procrastination.

Michelle, a tenth grader, is a pro at procrastination. Each morning, Monday through Friday, she waits until the last possible moment to get ready for school. After she misses her bus, which she does most of the time, she pleads with her parents for a ride. Reluctantly, one of them bails her out then lectures her about responsibility all the way to school.

"This is crazy!" complains Michelle's mom to her daughter's guidance counselor. "She makes it to school on time, but we end up late."

"What would happen if you and your husband left for work on time without prodding, reminding, or offering Michelle a ride after she misses her bus?" asks the counselor.

"She would miss her bus and have to walk about a mile and a half to school," replies Michelle's mom. "I'm sure she would be late."

"Right," agrees the counselor, "and she would have to pick up a tardy slip at the attendance office before she could be admitted to class. After three tardy slips, she would have to put in an hour of detention. Maybe you should let the natural consequences of her procrastination teach the lesson Michelle needs to learn."

That evening, her parents sat down with Michelle and explained that things were going to be different. "We're not going to prod or remind you anymore in the mornings," said her mom, "and we're not going to bail you out with rides if you miss the bus."

"I'll believe it when I see it," Michelle thinks to herself.

She became a believer the next morning. Not a word was said when she went into her usual stall, not even when she missed her bus at 7:30. Her parents left for work on time. At 7:45, Michelle wasn't even dressed. She walked to school and picked up a tardy slip. The second day followed the same pattern, but that's all it took for her to get the message. The third day, she caught her bus and arrived at school on time. Natural consequences helped her make a better choice.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES: STRUCTURED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES are a highly effective guidance procedure popularized by Rudolf Dreikurs and proponents of Adlerian psychology. Un-

like natural consequences that follow naturally from an event or situation, logical consequences are structured learning opportunities. They are arranged by an adult, experienced by the child, and logically related to the situation or misbehavior.

Logical consequences send clear action messages. They stop misbehavior. They teach our rules, and they answer research questions that were not answered with our words. When children experience logical consequences, they know where they stand and what we expect.

Some teachers have difficulty using logical consequences because they are unsure about when to use them or how to set them up. But logical consequences are easy to use when you think in simple terms and follow some general guidelines. Consider the following example.

It's music time in Mrs. Allen's third-grade class. The kids have been practicing the song "Hot Cross Buns" with their recorders all week. They've nearly mastered it. The practice goes well until Lisa decides to prolong the rehearsal. Each time she reaches a certain point in the song, she blasts away with a high note.

The first time, everyone laughs, even Mrs. Allen. They think it's an accident. The second time, only Lisa laughs. Mrs. Allen gives her some choices.

"Lisa, you can practice the right way, or you'll have to put away your recorder and sit quietly while the rest of us practice. What would you like to do?"

"I'll practice the right way," says Lisa. The practice resumes. When the class reaches that familiar point in the song, Lisa can't resist. She let out another high note.

"Put your recorder away, Lisa," says Mrs. Allen matter-of-factly. "You can join us for music again tomorrow."

Lisa's teacher is using a logical consequence to support her rule about cooperating during music. Since Lisa chose not to use her recorder the right way and cooperate with the lesson, she temporarily loses her recorder and the privilege of practicing with the class. The consequence removes some of Lisa's power and control, but not her responsibility. In effect, she chose the consequence she experienced.

Guidelines for Using Logical Consequences

Logical consequences have their greatest impact when they are immediate, consistent, temporary, and followed with a clean slate. The following guidelines should be helpful.

1. *Use your normal voice.*

Logical consequences are most effective when carried out in a matter-of-fact manner with your normal voice. Language that sounds angry, punitive, or emotionally loaded conveys over-involvement on your part and takes responsibility away from the child. When this occurs, an instructive lesson can backfire into a power struggle and generate resentment. Remember, our goal is to discourage unwanted behavior, not the child performing the behavior.

2. *Think in simple terms.*

Many adults have difficulty using logical conse-

quences because they think too hard and get confused by all the details. The appropriate logical consequence is usually apparent when we think in simple terms. For example, most misbehavior involves at least one of the following circumstances: children with other children, children with adults, children with objects, children with activities, or children with privileges. In most cases, you can apply a logical consequence by temporarily separating one child from another, a child from an adult, a child from an object such as a jump rope, a child from an activity such as a game, or a child from a privilege such as recess or computer use.

3. Before rules are violated, set up logical consequences with limited choices.

For example, Glenda, age six, knows she's supposed to keep her hands to herself in the bus line, but the temptation to horse around is great. She reaches over and tugs on the back of Carly's backpack.

"Hey, cut it out!" shouts Carly. The teacher sees what's going on and gives Glenda some choices.

"Glenda, you can keep your place in line if you keep your hands to yourself. If not, you'll have to stand by me at the back of the line. What would you like to do?"

"I'll keep my hands to myself," replies Glenda.

"Good choice," says the teacher.

The teacher in this example intervened early and was able to arrange a logical consequence by giving Glenda limited choices. Glenda received all the information she needed to make an acceptable choice. In this case, she chose to cooperate. If she had decided instead to continue horsing around, the teacher would have followed through and moved her to the back of the line. Either way, Glenda was held accountable for her behavior.

4. After rules have been violated, apply logical consequences directly.

Sometimes, we don't arrive on the scene until after our rules have already been violated. In these situations, we should apply our logical consequences directly.

For example, Thad and Byron, two sixth graders, are supposed to be working on a science experiment. Instead, they pinch each other with tweezers from their dissection kits. Their teacher intervenes with logical consequences.

"Put away the tweezers," she says matter-of-factly. "Chad, please sit at the back table for the next ten minutes, and Byron, you can sit in the empty chair next to my desk. You both can have your tweezers back in ten minutes if you use them the right way."

When the teacher arrived on the scene, her rules had already been violated. The time for limited choices had passed. The boys needed a clear action message to stop their misbehavior and reinforce the classroom rules. By separating them from their dissecting tools and each other, she succeeded in teaching the intended lesson.

5. Use timers for dawdling and procrastinating.

Timers are useful in situations when children test and resist limits by dawdling or procrastinating. Liz and Becky are a good example. These two fourth graders live for recess. They're usually the first ones

out the door when the bell rings and the last ones to return when recess ends. It's the last part that has become a problem, but their teacher has a plan for holding them accountable.

The next time the girls arrive late from recess, their teacher greets them at the door with a stopwatch. She clicks the watch as they walk through the door and announces, "You both owe me forty seconds from your next recess. You can leave forty seconds after every one else."

Forty seconds may not sound like much of a consequence, but it can be an eternity to two fourth graders who want to be the first ones out the door. After several of these experiences, Liz and Becky started returning to class on time.

6. Use logical consequences as often as you need them.

Logical consequences are training tools. Use them as often as needed to stop misbehavior and support your rules. If you need to repeat the same consequence three or more times a day for the same misbehavior, don't be too quick to assume that the consequence is ineffective. More likely, you're dealing with an aggressive researcher who needs to collect a lot of data before he or she will be convinced you mean business. Well-established beliefs and behavior patterns don't change overnight.

Situations for Using Logical Consequences

Logical consequences have instructive applications in a wide variety of situations. The following are just a few of the many possibilities.

1. When children misuse classroom materials, instructional items, or playground equipment.

Logical consequence: Separate the child from the item temporarily.

Derek, a third grader, knows it's not OK to swing on the tetherball rope but does it anyway and gets caught.

"Stop swinging on the tetherball rope, Derek," says the yard-duty teacher. "You need to find another game to play today. You can try tetherball again tomorrow."

2. When children make messes.

Logical consequence: Clean it up.

Todd and Kirk, two seventh graders, write graffiti in the boy's bathroom and get caught. Graffiti has been a serious problem at their school. A lot of money has been spent on cleaning it up. The staff is concerned, but they are divided about the best way to deal with the problem.

The principal wants to send a message to other students. He suggests suspending the boys for a week and turning the matter over to the police.

The dean of boys thinks the principal's plan is too harsh. "They need to understand the seriousness of what they did," he says. He recommends eight weeks of mandatory counseling.

The vice principal has another idea. He proposes a logical consequence. "Todd and Kirk helped make the mess. Shouldn't they clean it up?" He suggests giving them some choices. "They can put in forty hours of their own time cleaning up graffiti, or they can be suspended, and the matter can be turned over to the po-

Natural and logical consequences, used correctly, have helped thousands of teachers to regain control of their classrooms and to enjoy more satisfying and cooperative relationships with students.



lice." Everyone liked the plan.

When the choices were presented to the boys, they decided to avoid the police and put in forty hours of clean up. The lesson wasn't lost on others.

3. When children won't cooperate with other children.

Logical consequence: Separate the uncooperative child from others temporarily.

Cleve, a first grader, throws sand at others in the sandbox. When his classmates complain, the yard-duty teacher uses a logical consequence.

"We don't throw sand," says the teacher. "You need to find somewhere else to play this recess. You can play in the sandbox again next recess if you don't throw sand."

4. When children try to hook us into arguments or treat us disrespectfully.

Logical consequence: Separate yourself from the child temporarily.

Roberta, a ninth grader, wants to leave class early to get a good seat at a spirit rally. When her teacher denies the request, Roberta does her best to turn a no into a yes.

"Come on, Mr. Richards," pleads Roberta. "Be fair!"

"You'll have plenty of time to get a seat if you leave with everyone else," he replies.

"Yeah, but not a good seat," argues Roberta. "I don't want to sit in the very back. What's the big deal, anyway?" Her voice has a sarcastic tone. Mr. Richards decides to cut off the discussion.

"We're done talking about it," he says. "If you bring it up again, you'll have to spend some time by yourself."

"Why?" Roberta protests. "Are you afraid you might be wrong?"

"Take your books and have a seat at the back table," says Mr. Richards. "I'll let you know when it's time to rejoin the group." He said the discussion was over, and he backed up his words with a time-out.

5. When children waste or misuse instructional time.

Logical consequence: Make up the wasted time.

Kendall, a third grader, has twenty minutes to complete a page of math problems before recess. Fifteen minutes go by. He hasn't done a single one. He hopes to avoid the assignment altogether.

"Put your worksheets on my desk when you're done and line up for recess," says the teacher. Kendall is the first to turn in his assignment. He hopes she won't check his work. She does.

"You're not ready, Kendall," says his teacher matter-of-factly. "Your work isn't finished."

"I'll finish it at home tonight," he says, hoping she'll go for it. She doesn't.

"The assignment is due now," she says. "Since you've chosen not to finish it during class time, you'll have to finish it during recess." Kendall spends his recess completing his worksheet. He'll probably think carefully next time he wants to avoid an assignment.

6. When children fail to handle activities responsibly.

Logical consequence: Separate the child from the activity temporarily.

Roy, a fifth grader, knows he's supposed to sit quietly at school assemblies but decides to show off for his friends. His teacher takes him aside.

"Roy, you can sit with your friends if you're quiet. If you're not, I'll have to move you. What would you like to do?"

"I'll be quiet," says Roy, but within minutes, he's talking loudly and being disruptive. His teacher intervenes a second time.

"Roy, you need to sit next to me," she says matter-of-factly.

Natural and logical consequences, used correctly, have helped thousands of teachers to regain control of their classrooms and to enjoy more satisfying and cooperative relationships with students. If you are willing to invest the time and energy needed to learn the skills, you, too, can share the rewards. □

Children's Poetry

(Continued from page 31)

But there is another and better reason to read William Blake's "The Tyger" to a child, and Robert Browning's "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," Eugene Field's "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verse*, and all of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear and Edgar Allan Poe. And that reason has to do with handing on a language as rich as the language we received.

One reason we read poetry to children is to maintain the deposit of word and phrase—prior generations' investment in the language. There is a purpose in putting "young Lochinvar is come out of the West" and "The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees" in children's anthologies—and "'Twas the night before Christmas" and "what is so rare as a day in June?" and "I hear America singing" and "Under a spreading chestnut tree" and all the rest of the Victorian parlor classics. The person who is not given these references as a child is finally deprived as an adult, for the language will never thicken and clot around old memories.

And that use of poetry for children serves yet another function. Good as some modern work is, it's all somehow thin, lacking a real sense of the titanic waves of emotion that mark a child's life: either a sort of wild excitement, a mad glint in the poem's eye, or an oceanic sadness swelling underneath the lines. The poetry from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that have become established as children's classics fall naturally into either the categories of nonsense verse or mythical tales of heroes and villains and frenzy and weeping and death. Lewis Carroll's verse would be mostly bad puns and logic games were it not that he, more than any other poet, conveys childhood's madness. Kenneth Graham, after he finished *The Wind in the Willows*, edited a collection of children's poems in which he mocked, "The compiler of Obituary Verse for the delight of children could make a fine fat volume with little difficulty." But there is something about the *rightness* of sorrow in children's verse that Poe knew when he wrote "Annabel Lee" and Stevenson knew in nearly all his poems.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES most good children's poetry from bad is at least these three elements: an emphasis on form, a not too elaborate grammatical and narrative complexity, and a reasonable familiarity and established place in the language. It's worth noticing, however, that this has the harsh consequence that children are unable to write good children's verse—and we make a mistake when we demand they do so.

There is an obvious differ-

ence between poetry written for children and poetry written about children. But beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, a third genre emerged—a genre of "poetry by children"—with popular magazines running innumerable contests aimed at producing a great child poet. The most successful of such endeavors was the *St. Nicholas* children's magazine, and the most successful author it had promoted by the early twentieth century was undoubtedly the young Edna St. Vincent Millay.

None of this early journalistic verse by children, however, not even Millay's, has stood the test of time, and the vast majority of it was printed by editors with a pretty clear notion that adults rather than children were the primary readers. But the genre received a new life in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the poet Kenneth Koch published the widely noticed *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry*, his account of a year as poet-in-residence at a New York City public school.

Koch argued that teaching the composition of poetry empowered children in the language in a way that nothing else would do. The point is at least debatable, though the desired result of children who speak clearer and more colorful English than previous generations was never tested empirically and seems in my admittedly limited experience to be false. But, regardless, the movement to introduce poetry writing into the schools did not manage to produce any poetry that other children would care to read.

The reason for this is fairly clear: Poetry is very hard. The contemporary British literary critic George Steiner has observed that child prodigies are well known in such fields as mathematics, chess, and music, while there has never been a child prodigy in poetry. Rimbaud in French and Keats (and to a lesser degree Millay) in English were writing interesting verse in their late teens and early twenties, but no one younger has ever managed a poem of any importance. Steiner's explanation is that poetry requires an emotional knowledge and maturity not necessary in mathematics, chess, or music. But a further explanation—at least of the failure of children to produce good verse for children to read—might be the difficulty of the heavily stressed meter and the strong rhymes.

And if children in fact will not produce good poetry—and if very few of them will grow up to be poets—then the teaching of children to write poetry in lieu of reading poetry to them has the terrible effect of creating students who have never learned how to read—or to love—a poem. □



Art on the Prairie

(Continued from page 27)

about." One student pointed to a somewhat surrealistic painting by T. L. Solien entitled "Intruders" that, he suggested, "looks like the Wizard of Oz." Ms. Childs engaged the students in a discussion of the various formal elements of the painting—"Is it balanced?"—and asked how it made them feel. "It's scary," volunteered one student. She asked them what they thought it meant and, "Do you think it deserves to be in an art gallery?"

Thus far there is little empirical data on how discipline-based art education has impacted on academic performance in Nebraska, though initial results of a state-sponsored survey are scheduled to be released in March. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence abounds that Nebraska students exposed to discipline-based art instruction are more sophisticated about the visual arts.

Laurie Confer, a docent at the Sheldon Gallery, said she and her colleagues have noticed changes in the school children arriving for museum tours. "They use vocabulary like 'abstract expressionism,' and they certainly feel a lot more at ease than their parents—or even college students—looking at a Motherwell," she commented. Arlen Meyer, the art specialist at St. John, added that "students are arriving at middle school with a better background."

Parents report that the new approach to teaching occasionally affects their vacation plans. When Bill Chadck drove his eighth grade son to Chicago for a Cubs baseball game, he was asked to swing by the Art Institute of Chicago. "Andy specifically wanted to see 'American Gothic,'" he said. "We headed for the Impressionist floor, and he would point to the various paintings and say 'that's a Monet' or 'that's a Matisse.' I thought the Cubs game would be the highlight, but they lost. So it was the art museum."

Cindy Mangers of Newell Elementary tells of receiving a telephone call last summer from a student who had just returned from a trip to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. "The whole family came over during vacation to tell me about it," she said. Ms. Mangers also reports that, when they return from museum trips, her kindergarten students cut out pictures of paintings, create play galleries, and give tours to their stuffed animals.

Observers say that the times are ripe for the discipline-based approach in several ways. George Neubert, the director of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery who says that he was "initially quite skeptical" about Prairie Visions, suggests that the movement benefits from the fact that "technology has raised people's awareness of visual imagery."

Whereas the traditional "product-oriented" approach to art instruction was consistent with child-centered educational approaches of the 1960's and 1970's, the emphasis in the 1990's on academic standards would seem to be more hospitable to the teaching of aesthetics, criticism, and art history. "It's the antithesis of the flower children doing their own thing," said Brent Wilson, an evaluator of the Nebraska program.

Despite such forces working in its favor, the disci-

pline-based art education movement faces serious problems as it seeks to move beyond well-financed pilot projects to more broad-scale implementation.

The first five years of Getty's program succeeded in establishing a grassroots network of individuals, schools, and organizations that fueled a national movement for DBAE. But these programs are costly and, in an era of steady state budgets, it is unclear whether adequate funding will be available to train a sufficient number of teachers and administrators to make this approach normative in American education.

Like other academic reform movements, DBAE faces the problem that old habits die hard. "A lot of people just don't want to change," said Jeff Stern. "They feel threatened if you start teaching art history instead of art production." Advocates also concede that there are legitimate questions to be answered related to preserving the integrity of art. "Art has to remain art," said Mr. Meyer. "You have to teach it as content, not just as enrichment. If you sell art as a hand-maiden to social studies, then you trivialize art."

Proponents concede that the DBAE approach is much easier to implement at the elementary school level, where there is no prescribed curriculum and where inter-disciplinary approaches are more well established, than it is in subject-oriented middle and high schools. It is also tough to implement in large schools. "If a teacher is dealing with 2000 kids and seeing them twice a month, there is no way to make major change," said Mr. Meyer.

Ms. Duke said that discipline-based art education now faces the basic problem that confronts any movement: how to move from the research and development phase to full-scale implementation in schools. "We need to find the strategic pressure points, but we also need to be clear about our message. The business community, for example, does not understand why the arts are important. We need more on the pull side."

In order to demonstrate its relevance to school improvement, Prairie Visions is about to embark on a large-scale assessment project. "Prairie Visions is built on the premise that if teachers come to the Institute and learn, then students will be able to give us back what we teach the teachers," said Sheila Brown. To test this out, the Nebraska State Education Department has mounted a study of Prairie Visions schools and a control group using instruments such as tests of knowledge about art, attitude surveys, and examples of situations in which students were asked to produce art and then criticize it.

Mr. Wilson observed that, while discipline-based art education has undoubtedly demonstrated its power to improve the level and sophistication of teaching about the visual arts per se, it is still struggling to demonstrate the relevance of art to the broad academic goals of school. "The overriding question," he said, "is how to wedge art education into schools where the real agenda is higher test scores."

Mrs. Fiala has no doubts on this score. "It's amazing what kindergarten children can learn when serious art-works are incorporated into their learning," she said. She recalled that one of her students, Ian, recently sat at his kitchen table painting a tree. "Look Mom," he said. "I'm using pointillism like Seurat." □

Heroes

(Continued from page 23)

greats are still around; they have merely been removed from everyone's view.

"Once upon a time..." kids had heroes, and lots of them. Some of these great individuals were real (Lincoln, et al.); others were legendary (such as Paul Bunyan and Casey Jones); still others like Hercules were of a different realm altogether. Most of them were male and white, as if heroics somehow knew gender and racial lines of distinction. Frequently, kids pretended to be these heroes or at the very least their followers. Since not every boy could be King Arthur, the others could be Knights of the Round Table. Yes, it was clearly better to be the King, but even as a knight, one got to slay a dragon now and then. All—kings and knights—were capable of great deeds!

These heroes seemed to be everywhere. They were part of the curriculum, so textbooks and other reading materials (even the classic comic books) provided details of their adventures. The movies portrayed them in action, adding an exciting visual dimension. Heroes truly came alive for kids, who not only learned about them but, often, learned values from them.

Whether or not "the Father of Our Country" ever did chop down a cherry tree is not a question of significant historical importance. What is telling is that for generations the story helped children understand the meaning of honesty. Even heroes had faults, but they were moral enough to admit their errors.

The inclusion of heroes in schools served dual purposes. In addition to learning about specific great individuals, students also were exposed to the ethical nature of those persons. The presence of heroes provided a focus for children's dreams and wishes, and those heroes were cloaked in mantles of virtuous behavior.

As the advertising industry grew, however, heroes became displaced persons and virtually disappeared from children's views. Through the wonders of the mass media, a whole new array of characters become a daily part of American culture. Cartoon creatures and company advertising mascots existed for many decades, but not until the advent of megacommunications did they intrude into everyone's lives in a seemingly unending manner. Billboards, print ads, television and radio programs, commercials, videotapes, and many other avenues provide ads "ad infinitum." Even while relaxing on the beach, one's attention is pulled skyward to read the fly-by advertisements.

The issue is not so much that they have joined the ranks of known figures, it is rather that they have totally replaced real heroes for children. Today the role models are often whatever the latest commercial fad creatures happen to be. Once the new character catches the public's attention, the merchandising machine marches on. The T-shirts, buttons, books, book bags, greeting cards, games and toys, trading cards, movies, and, of course, television series all follow in rapid succession.* The presence of the latest sensation dominates the child's world. Consciousness leads to demands for the newest marketable item bearing the creature's image. And everywhere—in the child's

mind, in the home, and in the classroom—the character assumes a new status of heroic proportions. It's out with Ben Franklin entirely; here comes the Mouse!

I THINK parents and teachers should replace many of these fantasy characters with *real* heroes, real-life women and men. We should "de-mouse" (to start with the most successful cartoon character of all time) not only the classroom, but our homes, as well. We should offer people of significance equal space and time.

For what I like to call a "De-Mousing Starter's List," I would choose people whom I think American children should know. We need to show our children that heroes come from both sexes, every race, every ethnic background, and every field of human endeavor. Young people need to encounter images of Thomas Edison, Jane Addams, George C. Marshall, and Cal Ripken, Jr. They need to come in contact with Lech Walesa and Mother Theresa, with Stephen Hawking and Rosa Parks. They should learn about the real Michelangelo instead of knowing only his modern-day amphibian namesake.

To de-mouse a school or home I would examine the materials used to teach and motivate children and I would offer alternatives. Here are some examples:

■ Many teachers set up their elementary classrooms with a jobs board to show which child does which job (wash the chalkboard or distribute papers) for the week. Typically, children are switched to different jobs in a Monday morning ritual. The display is often decorated with some cartoon character, usually with the caption, "Do a good job for me," coming from its mouth. These teachers might instead center the display around Benjamin Franklin, "the man of many jobs." Small drawings representing his various occupations (inventor, writer, firefighter) might be pinned on the bulletin board. When classroom jobs change, a few minutes could be taken to discuss one of Franklin's jobs. By the end of the school year, the students would have learned about a great American as they accomplished a weekly routine. And every day, instead of looking at Goofy, they would be looking at Ben.

Or, as one first-grade teacher has done, there could be a Mother Theresa jobs board, featuring "Mother Theresa's Helping Hands."

■ Teachers in elementary school often give names to their reading groups. The California Raisins read one thing, while the Snoopys and the Gummi Bears read something else. Why not name the groups the Madame Curies, the Susan B. Anthonys, and the Harriet Tubmans or the Olympians, the Titans, and the

**One individual who has resisted the commercialization of his creation is Bill Watterson, famous for his brilliant Calvin and Hobbes strip. Now retired from drawing the strip (because he felt his ideas were becoming redundant), Mr. Watterson did something unheard of in the fad business. How many stuffed Hobbes tigers do you see in the store? How many Calvin and Hobbes backpacks? T-shirts? bed sheets? juice glasses? and so on and so on.... NONE! Because Mr. Watterson believes fantasy figures belong on the comic page, not in every aspect of our children's lives. Hooray for a real hero—Bill Watterson, to whom principles are more important than money.*

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Persephones?

■ Principals might honor a great person by a year-long celebration, including portraits, displays, performances, T-shirts and bookbags, even a special lunch on the person's birthday. Schoolwide themes—one perhaps in honor of our national parks and the many people (e.g., John Muir) who helped to establish and sustain them—might be equally effective.

■ Parents might without comment put Madame Curie's picture on the refrigerator. This "mystery person" can be a source of discovery for everyone in the house (and visitors, too). Who is she? What contributions did she make to society? Are there people like her today? Every month a new mystery guest might appear, with different family members taking turns choosing the famous person.

LET ME emphasize that in the efforts to bring great people to the attention of children, balance and focus must be watchwords. Flooding the classroom, school, or home with dozens of pictures of famous people may have little effect. I would be selective and concentrate on a few people at a time, so that a genuine understanding and appreciation can be established. And I would focus on the essence of the individual's contribution to humanity, not the minutia that so often end up obscuring a hero's greatness.

Balanced, focused attention to significant people may mean that even Walt Disney becomes a hero. We should, perhaps, give time and space to the cartoonist whose studio has helped create such an unbalanced attention to fantasy creatures.

No doubt many parents and teachers have already taken up the cause. It is time for the rest of us to return great individuals to the pedestals they deserve. Young people need to see that humans can and do make a difference. Children can learn that they too are capable of reshaping life in a positive way. By reintroducing heroes to children, parents and teachers can show them that there are real people worthy of recognition and emulation. □

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