

AMERICAN **Educator**

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
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**Rethinking
Our Ideas
About
Intelligence
and
Learning**



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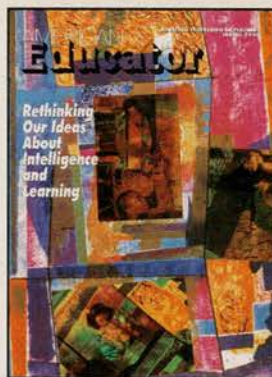
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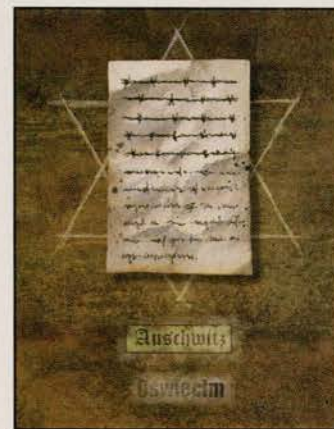
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Remember Tiananmen Square

*Support the Global
Petition Campaign*

Nearly ten years have passed since the Chinese government's brutal crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. Most of us will never forget the images sent around the world from Tiananmen Square: the goddess of democracy, with her torch held high; the thousands of peaceful demonstrators—students and workers—thronging the great square; the single young man facing a line of tanks. But we know that the ideals fueling the protest are yet to be realized—and, indeed, that government repression of men and



(Above) the goddess of democracy facing a portrait of Mao Zedong. (Below) students and workers in Tiananmen Square.



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women attempting to form political parties or organize free labor unions is more severe than ever. What can we do to help? One thing is to participate in the Global Petition Campaign.

Some leading Chinese dissidents, among them, Wang Dan, a student leader of the Tiananmen Square protest, are inviting people from every country to sign an Internet petition addressed to the Chinese government.

The petition calls on the government to free those still imprisoned as a result of the 1989 crackdown and all other "prisoners of conscience" and to extend, to all Chinese citizens, basic human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion. Wang Dan, who was released last year from prison in China and sent into exile, plans to present the petition to Jiang Zemin, president of the People's Republic of China on June 12.

AFT is one of the campaign's official sponsors, along with other labor organizations like the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; the Canadian Labour Congress; and our sister union, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union; as well as human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The petition, which was launched in January, now has signatories from more than 50 countries. We hear that even some brave people in mainland China are signing.

You can remember Tiananmen Square and the people who demonstrated for democracy by adding your name to the Global Petition (www.june4.org). Or you can send an e-mail indicating your support (petition@june4.org).

Make sure Jiang Zemin and the other Chinese Communist leaders know that the world has not forgotten and that we call on them to give the people of China the basic rights they are still being denied.

Sandra Yeldane

President
American Federation of Teachers



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CAUTION- PRAISE CAN BE DANGEROUS

BY CAROL S. DWECK

THE SELF-ESTEEM movement, which was flourishing just a few years ago, is in a state of decline. Although many educators believed that boosting students' self-esteem would boost their academic achievement, this did not happen. But the failure of the self-esteem movement does not mean that we should stop being concerned with what students think of themselves and just concentrate on improving their achievement. Every time teachers give feedback to students, they convey messages that affect students' opinion of themselves, their motivation, and their achievement. And I believe that teachers can and should help students become high achievers who also feel good about themselves. But how, exactly, should teachers go about doing this?

In fact, the self-esteem people were on to something extremely important. Praise, the chief weapon in their armory, is a powerful tool. Used correctly it can help students become adults who delight in intellectual challenge, understand the value of effort, and are able to deal with setbacks. Praise can help students make the most of the gifts they have. But if praise is not handled properly, it can become a negative force, a kind of drug that, rather than strengthening students, makes them passive and dependent on the opinion of others. What teachers—and parents—need is a framework that enables them to use praise wisely and well.

Where Did Things Go Wrong?

I believe the self-esteem movement faltered because of the way in which educators tried to instill self-esteem. Many people held an intuitively appealing theory of

*Carol S. Dweck is a professor of psychology at Columbia University, who has carried out research on self-esteem, motivation, and academic achievement for thirty years. Her new book, *Self-Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development*, was just published by The Psychology Press.*

self-esteem, which went something like this: Giving students many opportunities to experience success and then praising them for their successes will indicate to them that they are intelligent. If they feel good about their intelligence, they will achieve. They will love learning and be confident and successful learners.

Much research now shows that this idea is wrong. Giving students easy tasks and praising their success tells students that you think they're dumb.¹ It's not hard to see why. Imagine being lavishly praised for something you think is pretty Mickey Mouse. Wouldn't you feel that the person thought you weren't capable of more and was trying to make you feel good about your limited ability?

But what about praising students' ability when they perform well on challenging tasks? In such cases, there would be no question of students' thinking you were just trying to make them feel good. Melissa Kamins, Claudia Mueller, and I decided to put this idea to the test.

Mueller and I had already found, in a study of the relationship between parents' beliefs and their children's expectations, that 85 percent of parents thought they needed to praise their children's intelligence in order to assure them that they were smart.² We also knew that many educators and psychologists thought that praising children for being intelligent was of great benefit. Yet in almost 30 years of research, I had seen over and over that children who had maladaptive achievement patterns were already obsessed with their intelligence—and with proving it to others. The children worried about how smart they looked and feared that failing at some task—even a relatively unimportant one—meant they were dumb. They also worried that having to work hard in order to succeed at a task showed they were dumb. Intelligence seemed to be a label to these kids, a feather in their caps, rather than a tool that, with effort, they could become more skillful in using.

In contrast, the more adaptive students focused on



the process of learning and achieving. They weren't worried about their intelligence and didn't consider every task a measure of it. Instead, these students were more likely to concern themselves with the effort and strategies they needed in order to master the task. We wondered if praising children for being intelligent, though it seemed like a positive thing to do, could hook them into becoming dependent on praise.

Praise for Intelligence

Claudia Mueller and I conducted six studies, with more than 400 fifth-grade students, to examine the effects of praising children for being intelligent.³ The students were from different parts of the country (a Midwestern town and a large Eastern city) and came from varied ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Each of the studies involved several tasks, and all began with the students working, one at a time, on a puzzle task that was challenging but easy enough for all of them to do quite well. After this first set, we praised one-third of the children for their *intelligence*. They were told: "Wow, you got x number correct. That's a really good score. You must be smart at this." One-third of the children were also told that they got a very good score, but they were praised for their *effort*: "You must have worked really hard." The final third were simply praised for their *performance*, with no comment on why they were successful. Then, we looked to see the effects of these different types of praise across all six studies.

We found that after the first trial (in which all of the students were successful) the three groups responded similarly to questions we asked them. They enjoyed the task equally, were equally eager to take the problems home to practice, and were equally confident about their future performance.

In several of the studies, as a followup to the first trial, we gave students a choice of different tasks to work on next. We asked whether they wanted to try a challenging task from which they could learn a lot (but at which they might not succeed) or an easier task (on which they were sure to do well and look smart).

The majority of the students who had received praise for being intelligent the first time around went for the task that would allow them to keep on looking smart. Most of the students who had received praise for their effort (in some studies, as many as 90 percent) wanted the challenging learning task. (The third group, the students who had not been praised for intelligence or effort, were right in the middle and I will not focus on them.)

These findings suggest that when we praise children for their intelligence, we are telling them that this is the name of the game: Look smart; don't risk making mistakes. On the other hand, when we praise children for the effort and hard work that leads to achievement, they want to keep engaging in that process. They are not diverted from the task of learning by a concern with how smart they might—or might not—look.

The Impact of Difficulty

Next, we gave students a set of problems that were harder and on which they didn't do as well. Afterwards, we repeated the questions we had asked after the first task: How much had they enjoyed the task? Did they want to take the problems home to practice? And how smart did they feel? We found that the students who had been praised for being intelligent did not like this second task and were no longer interested in taking the problems home to practice. What's more, their difficulties led them to question their intelligence. In other words, the same students who had been told they were smart when they succeeded now felt dumb because they had encountered a setback. They had learned to measure themselves from what people said about their performance, and they were dependent on continuing praise in order to maintain their confidence.

In contrast, the students who had received praise for their effort on the easier task liked the more difficult task just as much even though they missed some of the problems. In fact, many of them said they liked the harder problems even more than the easier ones, and they were even more eager to take them home to practice. It was wonderful to see.

Moreover, these youngsters did not think that the difficulty of the task (and their relative lack of success) reflected on their intelligence. They thought, simply, that they had to make a greater effort in order to succeed. Their interest in taking problems home with them to practice on presumably reflected one way they planned to do this.

Thus, the students praised for effort were able to keep their intellectual self-esteem in the face of setbacks. They still thought they were smart; they still enjoyed the challenge; and they planned to work toward future success. The students who had been praised for their intelligence received an initial boost to their egos, but their view of themselves was quickly shaken when the going got rough.

As a final test, we gave students a third set of problems that were equal in difficulty to the first set—the one on which all the students had been successful. The results were striking. Although all three groups had performed equally well on the first trial, the students who had received praise for their intelligence (and who had been discouraged by their poor showing on the second trial) now registered the worst performance of the three groups. Indeed, they did significantly worse than they had on the first trial. In contrast, students who were praised for working hard performed the best of the three groups and significantly better than they had originally. So the different kinds of praise apparently affected not just what students thought and felt, but also how well they were able to perform.

Given what we had already seen, we reasoned that when students see their performance as a measure of their intelligence, they are likely to feel stigmatized when they perform poorly and may even try to hide the fact. If, however, students consider a poor performance a temporary setback, which merely reflects how much effort they have put in or



ILLUSTRATED BY JOAN WEBER. PHOTOGRAPH BY RITA REED

thought of intelligence as something innate—a capacity that you just had or didn't have. Students who had been praised for effort told us they thought of intelligence more in terms of their skills, knowledge, and motivation—things over which they had some control and might be able to enhance.

And these negative effects of praising for intelligence were just as strong (and sometimes stronger) for the high-achieving students as for their less successful peers. Perhaps it is even easier to get these youngsters invested in looking smart to others. Maybe they are even more attuned to messages from us that tell them we value them for their intellects.

How can one sentence of praise have such powerful and pervasive effects? In my research, I have been amazed over and over again at how quickly students of all ages pick up on messages about themselves—at how sensitive they are to suggestions about their personal qualities or about the meaning of their actions and experiences. The kinds of praise (and criticism) students receive from their teachers and parents tell them how to think about what they do—and what they are.

This is why we cannot simply forget about students' feelings, their ideas about themselves and their motivation, and just teach them the "facts." No matter how objective we try to be, our feedback conveys messages about what we think is important, what we think of them, and how they should think of themselves. These messages, as we have seen, can have powerful effects on many things including performance. And it should surprise no one that this susceptibility starts very early.

Melissa Kamins and I found it in kindergarten children.⁴ Praise or criticism that focused on children's personal traits (like being smart or good) created a real vulnerability when children hit setbacks. They saw setbacks as showing that they were bad or incompetent—and they were unable to respond constructively. In contrast, praise or criticism that focused on children's strategies or the efforts they made to succeed left them hardy, confident, and in control when they confronted setbacks. A setback did not mean anything bad about them or their personal qualities. It simply meant that something needed to be done, and they set about doing it. Again, a focus on process allowed these young children to maintain their self-esteem and to respond constructively when things went wrong.

Ways of Praising

There are many groups whose achievement is of particular interest to us: minorities, females, the gifted, the underachieving, to name a few. The findings of these studies will tell you why I am so concerned that we not try to encourage the achievement of our students by praising their intelligence. When we worry about low-achieving or vulnerable students, we may want to reassure them they're smart. When we want to motivate high-achieving students, we may want to spur them on by telling them they're gifted. Our research says: Don't do that. Don't get students so invested in these labels that they care more about keep-

their current level of skill, then it will not be a stigma. To test this idea, we gave students the opportunity to tell a student at another school about the task they had just completed by writing a brief description on a prepared form. The form also asked them to report their score on the second, more difficult trial.

More than 40 percent of the students who had been praised for their intelligence lied about their score (to improve it, of course). They did this even though they were reporting their performance to an anonymous peer whom they would never meet. Very few of the students in the other groups exaggerated their performance. This suggests that when we praise students for their intelligence, failure becomes more personal and therefore more of a disgrace. As a result, students become less able to face and therefore deal with their setbacks.

The Messages We Send

Finally, we found that following their experiences with the different kinds of praise, the students believed different things about their intelligence. Students who had received praise for being intelligent told us they

ing the label than about learning. Instead of empowering students, praise is likely to render students passive and dependent on something they believe they can't control. And it can hook them into a system in which setbacks signify incompetence and effort is recognized as a sign of weakness rather than a key to success.

This is not to say that we shouldn't praise students. We can praise as much as we please when they learn or do well, but we should wax enthusiastic about their strategies, not about how their performance reveals an attribute they are likely to view as innate and beyond their control. We can rave about their effort, their concentration, the effectiveness of their study strategies, the interesting ideas they came up with, the way they followed through. We can ask them questions that show an intelligent appreciation of their work and what they put into it. We can enthusiastically discuss with them what they learned. This, of course, requires more from us than simply telling them that they are smart, but it is much more appreciative of their work, much more constructive, and it does not carry with it the dangers I've been describing.

What about the times a student really impresses us by doing something quickly, easily—and perfectly? Isn't it appropriate to show our admiration for the child's ability? My honest opinion is that we should not. We should not be giving students the impression that we place a high value on their doing perfect work on tasks that are easy for them. A better approach would be to apologize for wasting their time with something that was too easy, and move them to something that is more challenging. When students make progress in or master that more challenging work, that's when our admiration—for their efforts—should come through.

A Challenging Academic Transition

The studies I have been talking about were carried out in a research setting. Two other studies⁵ tracked students with these different viewpoints in a real-life situation, as they were making the transition to junior high school and during their first two years of junior high. This is a point at which academic work generally becomes more demanding than it was in elementary school, and many students stumble. The studies compared the attitudes and achievement of students who believed that intelligence is a fixed quantity with students who believed that they could develop their intellectual potential. We were especially interested in any changes in the degree of success students experienced in junior high school and how they dealt with these changes. For the sake of simplicity, I will combine the results from the two studies, for they showed basically the same thing.

First, the students who believed that intelligence is fixed did indeed feel that poor performance meant they were dumb. Furthermore, they reported, in significantly greater numbers than their peers, that if they did badly on a test, they would seriously consider cheating the next time. This was true even for students who were highly skilled and who had a past record of high achievement.

Perhaps even worse, these students believed that

having to make an effort meant they were dumb—hardly an attitude to foster good work habits. In fact, these students reported that even though school achievement was very important to them, one of their prime goals in school was to exert as little effort as possible.

In contrast to the hopelessly counterproductive attitude of the first group, the second group of students, those who believed that intellectual potential can be developed, felt that poor performance was often due to a lack of effort, and it called for more studying. They saw effort as worthwhile and important—something necessary even for geniuses if they are to realize their potential.

So once again, for those who are focused on their fixed intelligence and its adequacy, setbacks and even effort bring a loss of face and self-esteem. But challenges, setbacks, and effort are not threatening to the self-esteem of those who are concerned with developing their potential; they represent opportunities to learn. In fact, many of these students told us that they felt smartest when things were difficult; they gained self-esteem when they applied themselves to meeting challenges.

What about the academic achievement of the two groups making the transition to junior high school? In both studies, we saw that students who believed that intelligence was fixed and was manifest in their performance did more poorly than they had in elementary school. Even many who had been high achievers did much less well. Included among them were many students who entered junior high with high intellectual self-esteem. On the other hand, the students who believed that intellectual potential could be developed showed, as a group, clear gains in their class standing, and many blossomed intellectually. The demands of their new environment, instead of causing them to wilt because they doubted themselves, encouraged them to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

These patterns seem to continue with students entering college. Research with students at highly selective universities found that, although they may enter a situation with equal self-esteem, optimism, and past achievement, students respond to the challenge of college differently: Students in one group by measuring themselves and losing confidence; the others by figuring out what it takes and doing it.⁶

Believing and Achieving

Some of the research my colleagues and I have carried out suggests that it is relatively easy to modify the views of young children in regard to intelligence and effort in a research setting. But is it possible to influence student attitudes in a real-life setting? And do students become set in their beliefs as they grow older? Some exciting new research shows that even college students' views about intelligence and effort can be modified—and that these changes will affect their level of academic achievement.⁷ In their study, Aronson and Fried taught minority students at a prestigious university to view their intelligence as a potentiality that could be developed through hard work. For example, they created and showed a film that explained the

neural changes that took place in the brain every time students confronted difficulty by exerting effort. The students who were instructed about the relationship between intelligence and effort went on to earn significantly higher grades than their peers who were not. This study, like our intelligence praise studies, shows that (1) students' ideas about their intelligence can be influenced by the messages they receive, and (2) when these ideas change, changes in performance can follow.

But simply getting back to basics and enforcing rigorous standards—which some students will meet and some will not—won't eliminate the pitfalls I have been describing. This approach may convey, even more forcefully, the idea that intelligence is a gift only certain students possess. And it will not, in itself, teach students to value learning and focus on the *process* of achievement or how to deal with obstacles. These students may, more than ever, fear failure because it takes the measure of their intelligence.

A Different Framework

Our research suggests another approach. Instead of trying to convince our students that they are smart or simply enforcing rigorous standards in the hopes that doing so will create high motivation and achievement, teachers should take the following steps: first, get students to focus on their potential to learn; second, teach them to value challenge and learning over looking smart; and third, teach them to concentrate on effort and learning processes in the face of obstacles.

This can be done while holding students to rigorous standards. Within the framework I have outlined, tasks are challenging and effort is highly valued, required, and rewarded. Moreover, we can (and must) give students frank evaluations of their work and their level of skill, but we must make clear that these are evaluations of their current level of performance and skill, not an assessment of their intelligence or their innate ability. In this framework, we do not arrange easy work or constant successes, thinking that we are doing students a favor. We do not lie to students who are doing poorly so they will feel smart: That would rob them of the information they need to work harder and improve. Nor do we just give students hard work that many can't do, thus making them into casualties of the system.

I am not encouraging high-effort situations in which students stay up studying until all hours every night, fearing they will displease their parents or disgrace themselves if they don't get the top test scores. Pushing students to do that is not about valuing learning or about orienting students toward developing their potential. It is about pressuring students to prove their worth through their test scores.

It is also not sufficient to give students piles of homework and say we are teaching them about the importance of effort. We are not talking about quantity here but about teaching students to seek challenging tasks and to engage in an active learning process.

However, we as educators must then be prepared to do our share. We must help students acquire the skills they need for learning, and we must be available as

constant resources for learning. It is not enough to keep harping on and praising effort, for this may soon wear thin. And it will not be effective if students don't know *how* to apply their effort appropriately. It is necessary that we as educators understand and teach students how to engage in processes that foster learning, things like task analysis and study skills.⁸

When we focus students on their potential to learn and give them the message that effort is the key to learning, we give them responsibility for and control over their achievement—and over their self-esteem. We acknowledge that learning is not something that someone gives students; nor can they expect to feel good about themselves because teachers tell them they are smart. Both learning and self-esteem are things that students achieve as they tackle challenges and work to master new material.

Students who value learning and effort know how to make and sustain a commitment to valued goals. Unlike some of their peers, they are not afraid to work hard; they know that meaningful tasks involve setbacks; and they know how to bounce back from failure. These are lessons that cannot help but serve them well in life as well as in school.

These are lessons I have learned from my research on students' motivation and achievement, and they are things I wish I had known as a student. There is no reason that every student can't know them now. □

Endnotes

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ABILITY AND EXPERTISE

It's Time To Replace the Current Model of Intelligence

BY ROBERT J. STERNBERG

BILLY HAS an IQ of 121 on a standardized individual intelligence test, and Jimmy has an IQ of 94 on the same test. What do these scores, and the difference between them, mean? The conventional answer to this question is that they represent a kind of intellectual predestination: The two children possess inborn gifts that are relatively fixed and will, to a large extent, predict their future achievement. So no one will be surprised if Billy goes on to do well in high school and gets into a good college—or if Jimmy barely gets through school and ends up with a minimum-wage job—because that's what this familiar and widely accepted model of human intelligence would lead us to expect.

But a scientific model is just a way of fitting together pieces of information and things we have observed into a pattern that makes sense. It does not represent the certain or only way of arranging the pieces, and models can be and often are modified or even discarded when we make new discoveries or look at what we know in new ways. This happened, for example, in the early seventeenth century, when the Ptolemaic model of the solar system, in which all the heavenly bodies were said to revolve around the earth, was replaced by the Copernican, sun-centered, model of the solar system.

Many psychologists now question the simple identification of IQ with ability, which the old model of human intelligence posits. They believe that abilities are too broad and too complex to be measured by the kind of IQ test that Billy and Jimmy took. They also believe that environment and genetics play a part and, furthermore, that abilities are not a fixed quantity: They can be modified by education and experience. I'd like to propose a further, and important, building block for this new model of human intelligence—namely that the difference in Billy's and Jimmy's IQ scores simply means that the two children are at a different stage in developing the expertise measured by

the IQ test. Furthermore, I suggest that people who study abilities and those who study expertise are really talking about the same thing. What we are measuring when we administer a Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) or an Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) or an SAT are the same. They are not different in kind but only in the point at which we are measuring them.

In the Eye of the Beholder

When we give an achievement test, we accept the idea that we are testing a form of expertise, but this is equally true when we administer an IQ test. What differs is the level of expertise we measure and, probably more important, the way we perceive what we are measuring. The familiar IQ/ability model creates a certain expectation: that one kind of accomplishment (IQ test scores) will predict—and, in fact, lead to—another kind of accomplishment (grades or scores on achievement tests). And of course we also use different words to describe the two kinds of accomplishment.

But this way of looking at the two kinds of test scores is a familiar convenience rather than a psychological reality. Solving problems on a verbal-analogies test or a test of mathematical problem solving, which are supposed to test a child's abilities, calls for expertise just the way so-called achievement tests do: You can't do well on these so-called tests of ability without knowing the vocabulary or having some familiarity with problem-solving techniques. The chief difference between ability and achievement tests is not what they measure but the point at which they measure it. IQ and other tests of ability are, typically, administered early in a child's school career, whereas various indications about school performance, such as grades or achievement test scores, are collected later. However, all of the various kinds of assessments are of the same kind, psychologically. They all test—to some extent—what you know and how well you can use it. What distinguishes ability tests from the other kinds of assessments is how the ability tests are used (usually, predictively), rather than what they measure. There is no qualitative distinction.

But if the distinction between what these tests measure does not exist, how do we come to make it? The

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answer is a complicated story, but the principal reason is historical accident. Briefly, the two kinds of testing were developed separately and used on different groups of people. IQ/ability testing, which originated in Alfred Binet's testing of young children, focused on exceptionally low levels of performance and came to be viewed primarily as predictive. Early studies of expertise were done with adults. They focused on exceptionally high levels of performance and came to be viewed as measures of achievement.

The Traditional Model

According to the traditional model of fixed individual differences, the capabilities that a child inherits interact with the child's environment to produce, at an early age, a relatively fixed potential for achievement. Children fulfill this potential to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, if a child who scores well on ability tests does well in school, we say he is living up to his potential. If, as sometimes happens, his achievement does not match his test scores, we call him an *underachiever*—or if the kid confounds expectations by working hard and doing well, he gets the label of *overachiever*. Ironically, ability test scores are considered a better indicator of what a child can achieve (or should achieve) than what the child actually does. A test of verbal analogies, in this view, might actually tell us more about a person's verbal abilities than the person's comprehension of the reading he or she does in everyday life; or a test of mathematical problem-solving skills might be viewed as more informative than the mathematical problem solving the person does on the job.

According to this model, the more intelligent students (that is, the ones with higher IQs) do better in school. As a result, they are likely to attend selective colleges, go on to professional schools, and eventually get well-paying jobs and enjoy other forms of success. The less intelligent do worse in school and may drop out. At best, they probably have to be satisfied with low-status credentials that reflect hard work rather than ability, and their role in the labor market is to fill the jobs that the more intelligent people don't want to do.

This is the view Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray present in *The Bell Curve* (1994), and as people who have read the book will remember, it assigns African Americans as a group to the status of an underclass, based on the average "potential" of group members displayed in IQ and other ability tests. Herrnstein and Murray's use of the traditional model has occasioned a great deal of controversy. However, the view of IQ as fixed and determinant is, unfortunately, consistent with many current educational practices and common views about intellectual competence.

Developing Expertise

The idea that abilities are a form of developing expertise offers a more flexible and optimistic view of human capabilities, and one that is more in line with what we are discovering about human intelligence. Children become experts in the skills needed for success on ability tests in much the same ways that they

become experts in doing anything else—through a combination of genetic endowment and experience (Ericsson, 1996). To do well on a test, a child needs to acquire, store, and learn how to use at least two kinds of knowledge: explicit knowledge of a domain and implicit or tacit knowledge of a field. Knowledge of a domain is subject-matter knowledge: In American history, for example, it would be the facts, trends, and major ideas about the political, economic, and social development of our country. Implicit knowledge is the kind of knowledge one needs to be successful in a field but which is not part of the subject matter and often is not even talked about. For example, in American history, the role of the Federalist Papers in the shaping of the U.S. Constitution would be explicit knowledge; how to use the library or Internet to research an essay about the Federalist Papers and how to take and organize notes and carry the paper through successive drafts to completion would be implicit knowledge.

Tests measure both explicit and implicit knowledge: knowledge of the subject matter and knowledge about how to take a test. This is as true of ability tests as it is of achievement tests. A verbal-analogies test, for example, measures explicit knowledge of vocabulary and a student's ability to reason with this knowledge, but the test also measures implicit knowledge of how to take a test. Thus, the student has to work within certain time limits and choose the best answer from a list of answers no one of which is exactly right.

To translate the gaining of expertise on test-taking into procedural terms, students need

- direct instruction in how to solve test-like problems—usually this takes place in school;
- practice in solving such problems, again usually in academic contexts;
- an opportunity to watch others, such as teachers or other students, solve test-like problems;
- practice thinking about such problems, sometimes mentally simulating what to do when confronting them;
- rewards for successful solutions (good grades, praise from teachers, other kinds of recognition), thereby reinforcing such behavior.

The difference between Billy's score of 121 and Jimmy's 94 also reflects a number of personal and cultural factors, and they do not all pertain to what we usually consider expertise. For example, the two boys may possess different degrees of "test-wiseness," that is, understanding the tricks of taking tests (Millman, Bishop, and Ebel, 1965; Bond and Harman, 1994). They may feel differing levels of anxiety and/or alertness on the day they are tested, and this would probably show itself in their scores. Cultural differences between them may lead to different attitudes about the importance of doing well on a test, particularly one that clearly does not "count." Most important of all, the boys may be at different levels of developing expertise in the skills that the test measures.

Individual Differences

But saying that IQ tests and other assessments of ability are testing the same thing as achievement tests and

that the expertise revealed is not fixed should not be taken to mean that everybody has the same intellectual capacity. The difference in expertise that Billy and Jimmy reveal on their IQ tests may indicate an underlying difference in their capacities. However, IQ tests do not directly measure these differences and neither do any of the other ways in which we currently seek to measure ability (see, for example, Vygotsky, 1978). Individual differences in developing expertise result in much the same way as in most kinds of learning: from (a) the rate of learning (which can be caused by the amount of direct instruction received, the amount of problem solving done, the amount of time and effort spent in thinking about problems, and so on); and from (b) the asymptote of learning—that is, the limit set by ability to what a student can ultimately achieve, given unlimited training. This limit, or asymptote, can be caused by differences in numbers of schemas—the networks of information on various subjects stored in our memories—the organization of schemas, efficiency in using schemas, and so on (see Atkinson, Bower, and Crothers, 1965). For example, children can learn how to solve the various kinds of mathematical problems found in tests of mathematical abilities, whether through regular schooling, a special course, or through assimilation of everyday experience. When they learn, they will learn at different rates, and reach different asymptotes. Ultimately the differences represent genetic and environmental factors that are interacting in ways that we cannot now measure.

Various Kinds of Expertise

As I've already noted, the so-called ability tests typically come earlier in a student's school career than the various types of achievement tests, but what IQ tests measure is not psychologically prior. Achievement tests might just as well be used to predict scores on ability tests—and sometimes they are, as for instance, when school officials try to predict a student's college admissions test scores on the basis of the student's grades. When we look at the test of abilities as though they are psychologically prior, we are confusing the order in which students usually take these tests with some kind of psychological ordering. But in fact, our temporal ordering implies no psychological ordering at all. The recent change in the meaning of the acronym *SAT* (from Scholastic Aptitude Test to Scholastic Assessment Test) reflects the recognition that what was called an aptitude test measures more than just "aptitude"—indeed, it hints at the interchangeability of the two kinds of tests. Nevertheless, the *SAT* is still widely used as an ability test, and the *SAT-II*, which more directly measures subject-matter knowledge, as a set of achievement tests.

Tests that claim to measure ability through questions employing vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal analogies, arithmetic problem solving, and the like are all, in part, tests of achievement. Even abstract-reasoning tests measure achievement in dealing with geometric symbols, which is a skill taught in Western schools (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1982). Indeed, if we examine the content of ability tests, it is clear that they measure achievement that the students

taking the test should have accomplished several years back. We could just as well use academic performance to predict ability-test scores. The problem with the traditional model is not that it proposes a correlation between ability tests and other forms of achievement. That undoubtedly exists. It is rather the traditional model's proposing that the capacities measured by the tests *cause* later success—or failure—instead of merely preceding it.

An Illusion of Causality

The notion that success on ability tests predicts success in many other areas gains credibility from the fact that some of the skills or qualities that make people more expert at taking tests are also likely to make them successful in other aspects of life in our culture. Taking a test, say, of verbal or figural analogies, or of mathematical problem solving, typically requires skills such as (a) puzzling out what someone else wants (here, the person who wrote the test), (b) command of English vocabulary, (c) reading comprehension, (d) allocation of limited time, (e) sustained concentration, (f) abstract reasoning, (g) quick thinking, (h) symbol manipulation, and (i) suppression of anxiety and other emotions that can interfere with test performance. These skills are also part of what is required for successful performance in school and in many kinds of job performance. Thus, an expert test-taker is likely also to have skills that will be involved in other kinds of expertise as well, such as expertise in getting high grades in school.

To the extent that the expertise required for one kind of performance overlaps with the expertise required for another kind of performance, there will be a correlation between performances. However, the expertise that ability tests measure is not the cause of school or job expertise; it is itself an expertise that overlaps with school or job expertise. Differences in test scores, academic performance, and job performance are all effects of different levels of expertise.

The New Model

The notion of *developing* expertise means that people are constantly in the process of developing expertise when they work within a given domain. Individuals can differ in rate and asymptote of development. However, the main constraint in achieving expertise is not some fixed prior level of capacity, of the kind measured by IQ tests. It is the degree to which students are purposefully engaged in working and teachers in helping them. This involves direct instruction, active participation, role modeling, and reward.

The model of developing expertise has five key elements: metacognitive skills, learning skills, thinking skills, knowledge, and motivation. The elements all influence one another, both directly and indirectly. For example, learning leads to knowledge, but knowledge facilitates further learning.

1. *Metacognitive skills.* Metacognitive skills refer to students' understanding and control of their own learning. These skills would include what a student

(Continued on page 50)

FROM APTITUDE TO EFFORT

A New Foundation for Our Schools

BY LAUREN B. RESNICK

TWO CHALLENGES face American education today: We must raise overall achievement levels, and we must make opportunities for achievement more equitable. The importance of both derives from the same basic condition—our changing economy. Never before has the pool of developed skill and capability mattered more in our prospects for general economic health. And never before have skill and knowledge mattered as much in the economic prospects for individuals. There is no longer a welcoming place in low-skill, high-wage jobs for people who have not cultivated talents appropriate to an information economy. The country, indeed each state and region, must press for a higher overall level of such cultivated talents. Otherwise, we can expect a continuation of the pattern of falling personal incomes and declining public services that has characterized the past twenty years.

The only way to achieve this higher level of skill and ability in the population at large is to make sure that all students, not just a privileged and select few, learn skills that our society requires. Equity and excellence, classically viewed as competing goals, must now be treated as a single aspiration.

To do this will require a profound transformation of our most basic assumptions about the conditions that enable people to learn. What we learn is a function both of our talents—our aptitude for particular kinds of learning—and of how hard we try—our effort. But what is the relationship between aptitude and effort?

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Are they independent of each other, and, if so, which is more important? Do strengths in one compensate for weaknesses in the other? Or does one help to create the other?

Facing Up to Our Aptitude-Oriented Education System

Historically, American education has wavered between the first and second of these possibilities, the independent and the compensatory. But it has never seriously considered the third possibility—that effort can create ability. Early in this century, we built an education system around the assumption that aptitude is paramount in learning and that it is largely hereditary. The system was oriented toward selection, distinguishing the naturally able from the less able and providing students with programs thought suitable to their talents. In other periods, most notably during the Great Society reforms, we worked on a compensatory principle, arguing that special effort, by an individual or an institution, could make up for low aptitude. The third possibility—that effort actually creates ability, that people can become smart by working hard at the right kinds of learning tasks—has never been taken seriously in America or indeed in any European society, although it is the guiding assumption of education institutions in societies with a Confucian tradition.

Although the compensatory assumption is more recent in the history of American education, many of our tools and standard practices are inherited from the earlier period in which aptitude reigned supreme. As a result, our schools largely function as if we believed that native ability is the primary determinant in learning, that the “bell curve” of intelligence is a natu-



ral phenomenon that must necessarily be reproduced in all learning, that effort counts for little. Consider the following examples: (1) IQ tests or their surrogates determine who will have access to the enriched programs for the "gifted and talented." This curriculum is denied to students who are judged less capable. (2) Our so-called achievement tests are normed to compare students with one another rather than with a standard of excellence, making it difficult to see the results of learning, and, in the process, actively discouraging effort: Students stay at about the same relative percentile rank, even if they have learned a lot, so why should they try hard? (3) We group students, sometimes within classrooms, and provide de facto different curricula to different groups. As a result, some students never get the chance to study a high-demand, high-expectation curriculum. (4) College entrance is heavily dependent on tests that have little to do with the curriculum studied and that are designed—like IQ tests—to spread students out on a scale rather than to define what one is supposed to work at learning. (5) Remedial instruction is offered in "pullout" classes, so that students who need extra instruction miss some of the regular learning opportunities. (6) We expect teachers to grade on a curve. If every student gets an A or a B, we assume that standards are too low. We seldom consider the possibility that the students may have worked hard and succeeded in learning what was taught.

These are commonplace, everyday, taken-for-granted features of the American educational landscape. They are institutionalized expressions of a belief in the importance of aptitude. These practices are far more powerful than what we might say about effort and aptitude. Their routine, largely unquestioned use continues to create evidence that confirms aptitude-based thinking. Students do not try to break through the barrier of low expectations because they, like their teachers and parents, accept the judgment that aptitude matters most and that they do not have the right kinds of aptitude. Not surprisingly, their performance remains low. Children who have not been taught a demanding, challenging, thinking curriculum do not do well on tests of reasoning or problem solving, confirming our original suspicions that they did not have the talent for that kind of thinking. The system is a self-sustaining one in which hidden assumptions are continually reinforced by the inevitable results of practices that are based on those assumptions.

Organizing for Effort

It is not necessary to continue this way. Aptitude is not the only possible basis for organizing schools. Educational institutions could be built around the alternative assumption that effort actually creates ability. Our education system could be designed primarily to foster effort. What would such a system look like? How might it work? There are five essential features of an effort-oriented education system: (1) clear expectations for achievement, well understood by everyone, (2) fair and credible evaluations of achievement, (3) celebration and payoff for success, (4) as much time as is nec-

essary to meet learning expectations, and (5) expert instruction. Let us consider each of these features and what the implications may be.

1. *Clear expectations.* Achievement standards—publicly announced and meant for everyone—are the essential foundation of an equitable, effort-oriented education system. If students are to work hard, they need to know what they are aiming for. They need not only to try hard, but also to point their efforts in a particular direction. To direct their efforts, students need to know what they are trying to learn, what the criteria of "good" performance are. Artists building a portfolio of work engage in a continuous process of self-evaluation—aided, when they are fortunate, by friendly but critical teachers and peers. If clear standards of achievement existed, elementary and secondary students could work that way, too, building portfolios of work that they continually evaluate, eventually submitting their best work for external "jurying" to see whether it meets the standards they have been working toward.

An equitable standards system must not just make the goals clear but must also set the same expectations for all students. In the absence of publicly defined standards, our inherited assumptions about aptitude lead us to hold out lower expectations for some children than for others. We will go on doing this as long as official standards of achievement do not exist. The best remedy, the equitable solution, is to set clear, public standards that establish very high minimum expectations for everyone, providing a solid foundation for effort by students and teachers alike.

2. *Fair and credible evaluations.* If I am to put out serious effort, I need to know that I will be evaluated fairly, and that those evaluations will be honored and respected. But there is more to fairness than the simple absence of bias in tests and examinations: Fair evaluations are also transparent. Students know their content in advance; they can systematically and effectively study for such an evaluation. In America today, students rarely have the experience of studying hard to pass an examination that they know counts in the world and for which they have been systematically prepared by teachers who themselves understand what is to be examined.

Local tests and exams, usually made up by teachers and administered at the end of teaching units or marking periods, may appear to contradict my claim. Students can study for those, and they are clearly related to the taught curriculum. But, especially for students from poor schools, those tests do not really "count." They are not credible to the world at large. It is understood that an A or a B in an inner-city school does not equal the same grade in an upscale suburban or private school.

A credible evaluation system, one that will evoke sustained effort by students and teachers throughout the system, must evaluate students from all kinds of schools against the same criteria. It must include some externally set exams graded by people other than the students' own teachers, along with an external quality control of grades based on classwork (as in

an audited portfolio grading system, for example). Neither of these is a new idea. Some version of external exams and audited class work is used in virtually every country except ours as the basis for diplomas, university entrance, and employment. Joined with the other elements of an effort-oriented system, this kind of evaluation system constitutes a strategy for optimizing both equity and excellence in our schools.

3. *Celebration and the payoff for success.* Hard work and real achievement deserve celebration. And celebration encourages future effort. An education system that actively tries to promote effort will make sure that its schools organize visible, important events highlighting the work students are doing and pointing clearly to achievements that meet the publicly established standards of quality. There are many options for organizing celebrations. School-community nights can become occasions for displaying work, organizing exhibitions, and putting on performances. Local newspapers and radio and television stations can be recruited to publish exemplary student work or otherwise mark achievements. Community organizations can be asked to participate. It is critical that these celebrations include people who matter to the students, and that what is celebrated is work that meets or is clearly en route to meeting the established standards.

For older students, celebration alone may no longer be enough to sustain effort. Adolescents are increasingly concerned with finding their way into adult roles. They will want to see connections between what they are accomplishing in school and the kinds of opportunities that will become available to them when they leave school. This is why many today advocate some kind of high school credential that is based on specific achievements and that is honored for entrance into both college and work. Celebration coupled with payoff will keep the effort flowing; achievement will rise accordingly.

4. *Time and results—inverting the relationship.* Schools today provide roughly equal instructional time to all students: a certain number of hours per day, days per year, and years of schooling. As much instruction and learning as can be fitted into that time is offered. Then, at the end of the prescribed period of study, some kind of evaluation takes place. The spread of results confirms the assumptions about aptitude of American schooling.

What if, instead of holding time fixed and allowing results to vary, we did the opposite: set an absolute standard of expectation and allowed time (and the other resources that go with it) to vary? That arrangement would recognize that some students need more time and support than others but would not change expectations according to an initial starting point. Everyone would be held to the same high minimum. Effort could really pay because all students would know that they would have the learning opportunities they need to meet the standards.

Allowing time to vary does not have to mean having young people remain indefinitely in school, repeating the same programs at which they failed the year before. We already know that this kind of additional time

produces very little. Instead, schools and associated institutions would need to offer extra learning opportunities early on. For example, pullout instruction could be replaced with enriched, standards-oriented after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Churches, settlement houses, Scouts, 4-H clubs, and other youth service organizations could be asked to join with the schools in providing such programs. A results-oriented system of this kind would bring to all American children the benefits that some now receive in programs organized by their parents and paid for privately.

5. *The right to expert instruction.* I have been arguing that we ought to create the right to as much instruction as each child needs. That is what the time-results inversion is about. But an equitable system requires more than that. It requires expert instruction for all children. We are far from providing that. With notable exceptions, the best teachers, and, therefore, the best instruction, gravitate to the schools that teach children with the fewest educational problems. Children who start out with the greatest need for expert instruction are the ones least likely to get it.

That will not do. An effort-oriented system that sets high expectations for all will create a demand—indeed, a right—to expert instruction. To fulfill that demand, it will be necessary to create enhanced instructional expertise up and down the teaching force, so that there is enough expert instruction to go around. This means that new forms of professional development, for teachers now in the force as well as for those preparing to enter the field, are an essential ingredient of the standards and effort revolution.

From Effort to Ability

My proposal is, in some respects, a radical one. The effort-oriented education that I am calling for—a system in which everyone in the schools knows what they are working toward, in which they can see clearly how they are doing, and in which effort is recognized in ways that people value—is based on assumptions about the nature of human ability that are very different from those that predominate today. But in other respects, my proposal is a practical and feasible one. It calls for a return in institutional practice to values that most Americans subscribe to: effort, fair play, the chance to keep trying. Most of the elements of the proposal—standards, exams, celebrations of achievement, extended time for those who want to meet a higher standard, expert instruction, and professional development—already exist somewhere in our educational practice. These elements need to be brought together in a few major demonstrations that show the possibilities of effort-oriented practices. Just as aptitude-oriented practices have created evidence that confirms our assumptions about aptitude, so a few effort-oriented demonstrations can begin to create evidence of the power of effort to create ability. As evidence accumulates, beliefs will begin to change, and we can, perhaps, look forward to education in America that is equitable in the deepest sense of the word because it creates ability everywhere. □

CALIFORNIA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

Promises vs. Performance

BY AMY STUART WELLS

IN THE winter of 1996, a research associate and I drove north from Los Angeles, through the vast and fertile San Joaquin Valley, to Sacramento. We were embarking on a new study of charter school reform in California. The second state in the country to pass charter school legislation, California had more students enrolled in charters than any other state. The California charter school legislation had gone into effect in early 1993. We proposed to evaluate some of the most prominent claims and assumptions about charter school reform in light of the day-to-day experiences of educators, parents, and students in charter schools and nearby public schools.

On the trip to Sacramento, we interviewed eighteen state policy makers, including state legislators, legislative aides, and state department of education officials, about what they assumed charter school reform could accomplish. During the next two-and-a-half years, nine research associates¹ and I traveled thousands of California miles conducting case studies of seventeen charter schools in ten school districts across the state. We sampled for diversity at both the district and school levels in order to capture the range of experiences within this reform movement. Data collection consisted of more than 450 semi-structured interviews with district officials, charter school founders, leaders, teachers, parents, governance council members, and community supporters, as well as educators at nearby public schools. We also observed district and charter school meetings and classes, and we collected hundreds of district and charter school documents.

As a result, we came to a clearer understanding of the complicated—and often contradictory—nature of

charter school reform in California. We also became skeptical about a number of the claims that have driven this reform in California and across the nation. Thus, while we saw many vibrant institutions with happy educators, students, and parents, the charter schools we studied were not, for the most part, the highly autonomous, accountable, and efficient schools of choice promised by supporters. And we saw little sign that these schools would drive productive competition and innovation throughout the educational system—another important claim of the people who had campaigned for charter school reform.

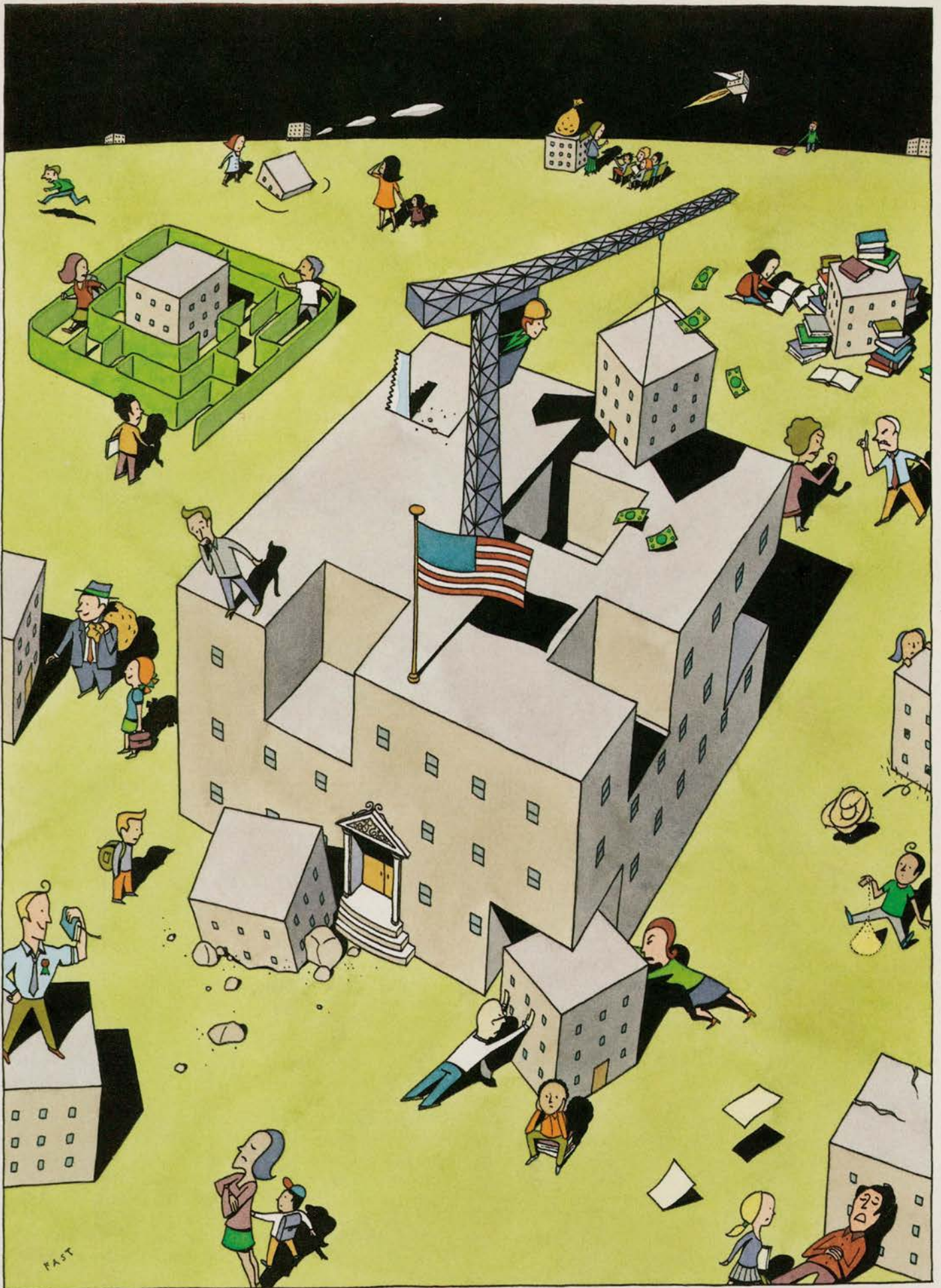
The final report from our study *Beyond the Rhetoric of Charter School Reform* describes in detail the six major claims put forth by charter school proponents about what this reform will accomplish. The report also presents the fifteen major findings from our study, each of which speaks to one of the six claims or assumptions. In this article, I highlight four of these assumptions and some of the findings from our study that relate to them.

Accountability: To Whom and for What?

The accountability promised by charter school advocates is typically put in terms of student achievement. The claim is that these schools will do a better job of improving students' academic performance than public schools because they will be more accountable. If a charter school doesn't live up to commonly agreed-on standards or outcomes, it can be shut down—it's that simple. (Kolderie, 1992; Finn, Manno, Bierlein, and Vanourek, 1997; Hassel, 1996; Millot, 1996).

Yet, we learned from our study that "accountability," in the sense of agreed-on and narrowly defined student outcomes that charter schools would be responsible for meeting, was not consistent with the way most

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Key Aspects of the California Charter Law

- Charters are granted through local school districts for a period of five years; denied applicants can appeal to their county board of education and the state board of education.
- Both existing schools and new start-up schools can apply to become charter schools. The former are known as "conversion schools."
- Private schools are not allowed to convert into publicly funded charter schools.
- The cap on the number of charters has been raised to 250 schools for the 1998-99 school year and 100 new schools per year after that.
- Charter schools are allowed to have admissions criteria. Charter schools are supposed to reflect the racial make-up of their school district.
- Under the original law, charter school teachers were not required to be certified; after the 1998 amendments, charter school teachers who teach core classes must be credentialed.

charter school founders thought about their goals—and was, for many reasons, not even practicable. One of the central goals of charter school founders is to escape an educational system that they perceive as overly prescriptive (see Rothstein, 1998). When we asked charter school founders and operators about how they wanted to use the autonomy promised by the reform, their responses varied greatly. However, they generally fit into one of three large themes: Some wanted to establish a school with a specific curricular focus; some wanted to create a safer school environment; and some wanted more flexibility in how they used public funds. None of these responses relates to accountability in terms of agreed-on standards for student achievement to which schools will be held, and in some cases, they contradict the concept of accountability as it is often described in the policy world.

Clearly, the value of these alternatives could not be accurately measured by state assessments or by any other common measure of student achievement; in fact, there is no one standard to which all these schools can be held accountable because they are using different means to accomplish different ends. But even if accountability were to be defined by stu-

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dent achievement, it would be difficult to establish, in part because the California state assessment system has changed three times since the charter school law passed but also because no baseline data on students entering charter schools were collected. Furthermore, some school boards find themselves under intense pressure to renew charters for schools that have garnered a lot of political support from their local communities or state charter advocates, regardless of the student outcomes the schools have shown.

Another problem regarding accountability is the confusion about *to whom* these schools are accountable. The local school board, as the chartering agency, and ultimately, the taxpayers are the obvious answers; but some proponents of charter reform talk about "market" accountability, which means that charter schools' primary responsibility is to the needs and demands of parents who can simply "vote with their feet" and leave the schools.

The issue of accountability can be further muddled by the chartering document itself, which serves as a formal agreement between the charter school and the granting agency. In theory, this agreement spells out the goals, purposes, and desired student outcomes of the charter. In reality, however, these outcomes are frequently ill-defined. Thus, local school boards in California are often put in the difficult position of holding charter schools accountable for elusive goals at a time when state and district assessment systems have been in flux and, therefore, cannot offer any objective measure of student achievement. As a result, school board members have tended to feel more comfortable holding charter schools fiscally responsible than academically accountable. Indeed, three out of the four charter schools that had been closed in the ten districts we studied were shut down for fiscal reasons.

Thus, although the claim that charter schools will be more accountable than public schools seems relatively straightforward, a look below the surface reveals that there has been no consensus about what these schools will be accountable for or to whom.

Autonomy: How Many Degrees of Separation?

We also examined the claim that charter schools, because they are independent from what is often called "the public school bureaucracy," will empower educators to better serve students. In fact, the range of autonomy varies tremendously from one district to the next and, even within a single district, from one charter school to the next. Some charter schools have no more autonomy than nearby site-based management schools; others are separately funded and operate almost as their own school districts. In between these two extremes are large numbers of schools where the degree of autonomy varies according to what aspect of their operations one looks at. The reality is that, although some charter schools want to be autonomous and independent, when trouble, questions, or controversy erupts, the charter schools often fall back on the district's bureaucracy for help.

Despite this variation in the degree of autonomy that charter schools enjoy, we found teachers' satisfac-

tion with their jobs to be very high for the most part. They especially enjoy the often small, intimate environments of charter schools. Still, some are becoming aware that teaching in small schools, as most charters are, can have costs. For example, one teacher, who spoke enthusiastically about working in a small school in which staff have "a lot to say," also noted a downside: "It's overwhelming sometimes because there is so much that we all need to do above and beyond our teaching."

Most charter school teachers are proud of their esprit de corps and their commitment to these new schools, which they often say distinguish them from counterparts in more traditional settings. Interestingly, this difference has not, thus far, extended to teaching techniques. The vast majority said they have not changed the way they teach. Thus, while charter school teachers enjoy greater autonomy than most public school teachers, the freedom to do what they want in the classroom has apparently not changed the instructional core.

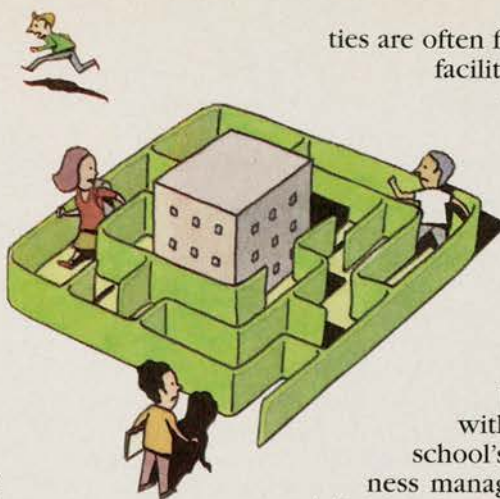
Efficiency:

It Will Only Take You So Far

Another central claim put forth by charter school advocates is that these schools, forced to do more with less money, will be more efficient in their use of funds than traditional public schools. And, in fact, California charter schools (like those in most states) do receive less public funding than regular public schools because they are not eligible for capital funding. Thus, many are obliged to pay for their facilities out of the per-pupil operating funds (see Finn, Manno, and Bierlein, 1996; and Kolderie, 1992). Furthermore, because charter school money in California is funneled through the districts, charter schools across, and even within, school districts receive different amounts of public funding, depending on their ability to negotiate with district administrators.

We also found that efficiency will only take you so far. Most charter schools, because they receive less public funding than regular public schools, tend to rely heavily on funds from private sources to survive. In some schools we studied, as much as 40 percent of their operating revenue came from private funds. And this reliance on private fundraising puts charter schools in poor communities, where wealthy donors are in short supply, at a distinct disadvantage (Scott and Jellison, 1998).

In wealthier (and predominantly white) areas, charter schools are able to garner more community resources to enrich their programs. The fact that these schools probably also have parents who are well connected makes doing this especially easy. Charter schools in poor and predominantly minority communi-



ties are often forced to pull in corporate support and facilities from outside the community. And this need to scrounge for money and resources can mean more responsibility and a heavier workload for an already strapped staff. It also means that charter schools in poor communities are likely to be less stable financially and lack basic resources.

For example, when a governance board member at a charter school with plenty of resources told us about the school's abundance of computers and a business manager at another school reflected on its \$400,000 budget surplus, we thought about other charter schools we had seen that were housed in facilities with no running water, heat, or adequate classrooms for the students.

Finally, the success of well-financed schools in getting resources for their students could have important policy implications. It could fuel the flames for spending less public money on education and ultimately encourage the privatization of public education.

Choices: But Who Makes Them?

Proponents of charter school reform also claim that these publicly funded schools provide greater educational choice to disadvantaged groups who have traditionally had the fewest choices in education (Hill, 1996; Finn et al., 1997; and Nathan and Power, 1996). We learned, however, that while charter school reform provides some families with increased educational choices, in many cases the charter schools themselves have considerable control over who will become a part of their school communities. These schools, more than the parents, are choosing.

The process by which charter schools maintain control over their enrollment begins with word-of-mouth recruitment efforts and the networks through which the schools are publicized and information is disseminated. Charter schools have the flexibility to recruit from specific targeted communities based on geography, racial/ethnic composition, language proficiency, or "at-risk" characteristics. In fact, we found that few charter schools sent out districtwide brochures describing their program, the way magnets and other schools of choice routinely do.

Admissions requirements and processes are another way in which charters are able to shape their student body, as traditional public schools seldom can. The California law allows charter schools to establish admissions criteria "if applicable," and most of the charters in our study have done so. These criteria include specifying which students have priority (for example, siblings, children of staff, etc.) and which students (and parents) are a good "fit" with the school community (see Lopez et al., 1998).

Furthermore, about three-quarters of the charter schools in California require parents to sign a contract

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Learning from California

BY F. HOWARD NELSON

ALTHOUGH MANY people have reservations about the charter school movement—in particular, about how the laws were written and are being carried out in their state—they are unlikely to turn back the clock to the days when this popular reform was just an idea. However, there are things that can be done to make charter schools more accountable and to promote innovation and diversity. Here are a few suggestions for fixing some of the biggest problems in charter school law and practice.

Accountability

1. *Make state-level agencies play an important role in academic accountability.* The UCLA study found that charter schools are seldom held accountable for academic outcomes, in part because of the reluctance of local school boards to monitor charter schools. (See previous article.) Such reluctance is not surprising. Local school boards that authorize charters routinely feel that charter schools have been forced on them because of local political pressures. This makes it difficult for boards to deal objectively with educational accountability issues in these schools. State monitoring agencies are much more likely to be objective because they are free from local political influence. They also have a lot more experience in judging a charter school's success than any local board is likely to have.

2. *Adequately fund and staff state charter school agencies.* Educational accountability could improve dramatically if state charter

school agencies were given the staff and resources, as well as the responsibility, to monitor charter schools. In addition to state testing results, this review could include curriculum, educational programs, and the compliance of schools with their own charter. Massachusetts, one of the best-staffed states relative to the number of charter schools, has closed charter schools for educational reasons without the benefit of a fully implemented state testing program. The Massachusetts state office even hires groups to do professional school inspections of charter schools.

3. *Slow down the growth of charter schools.* Growth often outstrips a state's ability to fund and staff adequate academic monitoring, and the problems are likely to begin before a charter is even authorized. Without the time and resources, states cannot weed out proposals that are shaky or poorly designed. They are also likely to let slip by the slick packages that "cookie cutter" charter school companies put together for well-meaning community groups that don't feel they have the time or expertise to go it alone. Chartering agencies, including school districts authorizing charter schools, need to gain some experience with a few charter schools before authorizing such schools in great numbers. President Clinton's goal of 3,000 by the year 2002—about 100 schools in each of the states with a charter school law—sacrifices educational accountability for the sake of growth.

4. *Make applicants compete for charters.* Competition is a basic principle of the charter school movement. Yet, many state charter school laws allow practically any person, organization, or company to get a charter. While the marketplace may drive weak charter schools out of business because of low enrollment or fiscal problems, students in those schools suffer. Also, operators of failed charter schools often bilk the public trea-

sure along the way. Competition for a limited number of charter school slots would clearly result in stronger, more sustainable charter schools.

Funding

1. *Make the public funding for charter schools fair and adequate.* Charter school opponents frequently seek to fund charter schools at a lower level than traditional public schools. This strategy creates some undesirable fallout for students and teachers. For one thing, it seriously undermines the status of teachers in public as well as charter schools. Underfunding charter schools leads to low-paid, inexperienced teachers; and it fosters exemptions from teacher certification requirements, teacher retirement plans, and collective bargaining. Even more important, many charter schools make up for low public funding through philanthropic donations, which may come with ideological strings. Dependence on private donations also has equity implications, a point that the UCLA report makes when it stresses the disproportionate share of private funding enjoyed by charter schools with students from middle-income families. Finally, inadequate public financing for start-up and facilities is partly responsible for the explosion of well-capitalized business-run charter schools in some states.

2. *Insist that charter schools be funded for what they do.* Certain groups of students—at-risk, low-income, low-achieving, bilingual, special education and high school students—cost more to educate than others cost. Charters should receive the same per-pupil funding for these students as a district school would. Minnesota, Florida, the District of Columbia, and some other states provide significantly more funding for difficult-to-educate children. Some states like Massachusetts, however, base charter school funding on school district averages that include special education programs for at-risk children

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whether or not the charter schools have high-cost students.

3. *Require full disclosure of private gift giving.* In most states, the nonprofit sponsor of the charter school can receive gifts on its own and hide the privately raised resources from the financial accounting for public funds. This can lead to the situation described in the UCLA report, in which some schools (those with wealthy donors) are much better financed than schools that need to get along mostly on state funding. At least, states should follow Massachusetts' lead and make the comparative fiscal position of charter schools clear by requiring full disclosure of private gift giving.

4. *Publicly fund state technical assistance centers.* In addition to agencies that grant and/or monitor charter schools, most states have technical assistance centers funded by a combination of federal, state, and philanthropic funds. (Some are already operating, with private funding, in states that do not yet have charter school laws.) These centers help applicants write charter school proposals and assist with start-up and routine operations. If the technical assistance centers do not get adequate public funding, philanthropic funders with a specific ideological perspective are oftentimes only too willing to step in. Technical assistance functions should be kept separate from monitoring functions.

Choice and Student Characteristics

1. *Recognize that charter schools should not necessarily reflect the demographic characteristics of the host school district.* The UCLA researchers found that many charter schools exercise considerable control over the types of students they serve and that charter schools seldom reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of their host school district. Given the rhetoric about charter schools as an instrument of equity, this is an important point.

However, it is also important not to demean either the many charter schools that serve at-risk youth or those that embody the powerful commitment of minority communities to education and self-determination. Furthermore, as charter schools mature, the enforcement of special education laws and fair admissions is improving.

Innovation and Empowerment

1. *Insist that charter schools promote innovation.* Charter schools are supposed to give people a chance to try out innovative practices that would not be possible in traditional public schools, and that promise is at the heart of the charter school movement. Without it, the movement is just privatization by a different name. UCLA researchers point out that the vast majority of charter school teachers still use conventional instructional techniques, the ones commonly found in regular public schools. The real danger, however, is that innovation will no longer be a principal objective of charter schools. In many states, charter schools do not have to promise innovation—providing a choice or alternative is enough. Other states put a premium on programs that work—which can be found in public schools, too—rather than placing emphasis on innovation.

2. *Require innovation and autonomy in business-run schools.* The innovation problem is particularly acute with business-run charter schools. Sometimes described as "chain," "cookie cutter," or "franchise" schools, these for-profit schools oftentimes enroll more than 1,000 students, with class sizes no different from public schools. Instructional programs—the same ones commonly found in traditional public schools—are standardized across all schools run by the business. Neither parents, community groups, nor teachers are empowered; nor is there room for innovation. Business could play

an innovative role by freeing educators from some aspects of running a school—like financial paperwork and the paperwork required to comply with government programs—so that they can concentrate on children. Several small businesses already provide such services to dozens of charter schools. Of course these firms also need to be monitored and supervised to protect charter schools.

3. *Empower charter school teachers.* Like innovation, teacher autonomy and empowerment are focal points of the charter school concept that have been lost. The original charter school idea envisioned groups of teachers—freed from administrative interference—starting charter schools to experiment with new ideas. Several states encouraged professionalism by requiring certification and membership in teacher retirement systems. Because teachers could easily move between the two types of schools, it was easy to imagine innovations spreading as well. And even today, Minnesota requires that teachers be on charter school governing boards, and career educators are a big part of the charter school movement in that state. However, a very different profile of charter school teachers is emerging in most places. In return for smaller classes and collegial working conditions, young, inexperienced charter school teachers sacrifice pay and benefits. But these young teachers often sink under the enormous demands on their time, and they are likely to find charter school administrators too dictatorial. As a result, teacher turnover is very high in charter schools. At this point, the chasm between traditional public school teachers and charter school teachers may be too wide to bridge. Nevertheless, the public school teachers need to support charter school laws that give teachers a powerful voice in how their schools are run, as well as the economic benefits and security necessary to allow career teachers to work in both sectors. □

(Continued from page 21)

(SRI, 1997). The scope of these contracts varies, although about 40 percent specify that parents must be involved at the school in various capacities for a certain number of hours per month or per year. Some charter schools also require students to sign contracts regarding appropriate behavior.

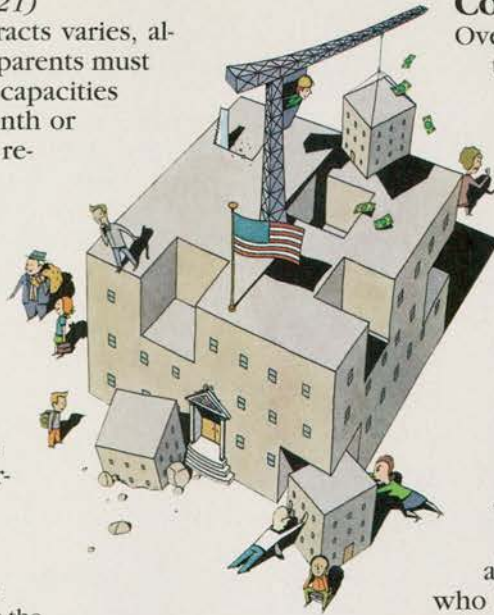
Charter school founders, educators, and parents at these schools frequently mention these contracts and the control they provide in terms of who attends and who is asked to leave as one of the main benefits of charter reform. Here is how one parent at a charter school in our study described the benefit of parent contracts:

Every single parent is accountable, along with their child. We sign contracts, and because the parent knows the child is accountable, and the child knows the parent is accountable, you have a lot better team work. And you just have a much better cooperative atmosphere in your school.

Obviously, the contracts, like the criterion of "fit," are more likely to discourage certain groups than others—single parents, parents working long hours or at more than one job, and those whose jobs do not permit them to take time off from work—in other words, a disproportionate number of poor, minority parents.

Who has choice of charter schools is also shaped by the transportation provisions (very few school districts provide transportation to charter schools, and generally only for students at converted public schools). And finally, there is the issue of the disciplinary requirements for students enrolled in charter schools and the expulsion practices employed. In most charter schools we studied, these tended to be more stringent than in regular public schools; indeed, in many of the schools, students could be asked to leave for disciplinary or academic reasons.

The mechanisms that charter schools use to shape their school communities strongly affect who enrolls and who doesn't. Thus, even when the charter school operators are seeking a racially diverse student body, the racial segregation of the local community coupled with the lack of transportation for students from other communities make it almost impossible to achieve this goal. California charter school legislation states that charter schools should reflect the racial make-up of their school districts. However, there seems to be little monitoring of this aspect of the law: In ten of the seventeen charter schools we studied, at least one racial or ethnic group was over- or under-represented by 15 percent or more in relation to its district's racial make-up. In nine of these schools, the percentages were off by more than 15 percent for two or more racial or ethnic groups. This finding should raise yet another set of accountability concerns with regard to charter schools. But perhaps more important than the racial/ethnic balance of the charter schools is the issue of whether they are able to attract the most involved parents to their schools and the effect this could have on the nearby public schools.



Conclusion

Over the last two-and-one-half years, those of us carrying out the UCLA Charter School Study learned that people who work in and send their children to charter schools tend to be highly committed to these schools. And we saw charter schools that have accomplished a great deal, despite limited public funding. Yet, for all the impressive achievements of individual schools, when we stepped back to consider the larger public implications of charter school reform in California, we became concerned.

For example, although "accountability" was a rallying cry of those who lobbied for charter school reform, we found little evidence that charter schools are more accountable for student outcomes than the public school down the street—or that the reform is likely to lead in that direction. While charter schools were often more autonomous than regular public schools, their degree of autonomy varied widely. Moreover, regardless of the degree of autonomy charter schools achieved, people who taught there reported little change in what goes on in the classroom.

One could say that charter schools made more efficient use of the public money they received, but it would be more accurate to say that the extreme scarcity of public funds meant that charter schools were obliged to supplement them from private sources. We saw how difficult it was for charter schools in low-income communities to acquire these additional resources. As a result, charter schools in well-off neighborhoods were more likely to have adequate resources than schools in poor neighborhoods. The illusion of efficiency that this creates could lead to diminished political support for public funding of education as a whole.

And despite claims that charter schools would increase choice for families who have generally had the least, we found that most schools were able to choose which children would attend.

Finally, we found a troubling lack of concern about whether the charter schools mirror the racial make-up of their districts, as the law requires. Most charter schools were not in compliance. And even when the charter school operators sought a racially diverse student body, the racial segregation of the local community, together with the fact that student transportation was not available in most cases, made it almost impossible to achieve this goal. Meanwhile there was almost no monitoring of this aspect of the law.

So far, California's charter school reform is not living up to many of the major claims made by its supporters. Instead of improving the lot of children and communities currently served by the most troubled

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EDGEWOOD UNDER SIEGE

Vouchers Come to a Texas School District

BY JEFF MANDELL

THIS IS A terrible slap in the face for our teachers and our community." Karen Rodriguez, for sixteen years a teacher in the Edgewood Independent School District (E.I.S.D.), San Antonio, Texas, and currently president of the Edgewood Classroom Teachers' Association, was describing the Horizon Scholarship program. The privately funded Horizon program provides tuition vouchers to selected low-income students in San Antonio's Edgewood district.

Horizon is the largest voucher effort to date of the Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation of America (C.E.O.), which boasts smaller voucher programs in forty American cities. As C.E.O. sees it, providing "parental choice" vouchers to students from low-income families, like most of those in Edgewood, is a first step in U.S. education reform. But Rodriguez, like many of her Edgewood colleagues and parents of Edgewood students, has a very different perspective.

Edgewood is one of the poorest school districts in the state. In principle, C.E.O.'s tuition voucher is available to any E.I.S.D. student eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches; more than 13,000 of E.I.S.D.'s 14,000 students qualify. There is, however, a catch. Scholarships are awarded only to students who (1) meet the financial criteria, (2) live within district boundaries, and (3) are already admitted to a private school. Often, the effect of the third stipulation is to exclude potential students from scholarship eligibility.

In practice, private schools do not have the legal obligation, the willingness, or often even the capacity to accept certain students public schools must educate as a matter of both law and tradition. Students with special learning needs—due to dyslexia, emotional problems, attention-deficit disorder, physical disabilities, bilingual requirements—are not generally welcomed at many San Antonio private schools. Some

schools lack the staff and equipment to care for special needs students; others simply do not accept students who require extra attention or who are not already performing at or above grade level. In other words, many students who would most benefit from specialized attention are automatically excluded from the Horizon program—and will remain the responsibility of the public schools.

Ana Pinedo, for example, had scoured San Antonio for a private school that would accept her daughter, who is confined to a wheelchair and suffers additional medical problems. Pinedo's daughter must attend a school staffed by a registered nurse. "I called all over San Antonio," Pinedo explained, "and no one would take my daughter because they don't have the special needs programs." Pinedo herself had gone to private schools as a girl and had negative perceptions of E.I.S.D. But finding no alternative, she enrolled her daughter at Coronado-Escobar Elementary and says she has been pleasantly surprised: "I support this district 100 percent. I see a lot of good, positive things going on here. I went to private school, but I really wish my parents had sent me here. I'm concerned about Edgewood losing money, but somehow Edgewood will find a way. We know they will not back down from helping our kids, no matter what."

C.E.O. San Antonio Program Director Teresa Treat dismisses concerns over special needs programs, noting that fourteen special needs students were accepted into private schools and are receiving vouchers this year. (A total of 837 students are using vouchers.) According to Treat, no parents have notified C.E.O. that they were unable to find a school for their special needs child. But in fact, of the special needs students Treat cited, several receive therapy each afternoon for speech problems—at E.I.S.D. schools. The district receives no tax money for the therapy it provides to students who attend private schools. By continuing to help those students, E.I.S.D. is in effect forced to subsidize C.E.O.'s private program—and divert funds from

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its own remaining students.

More dramatically, the district stands to lose more than \$4.5 million in dedicated state funding for next year because of students lost to the Horizon program. (Another \$2 million will be lost because two major housing projects in the district recently closed, forcing many tenants to relocate.) Voucher proponents respond that therefore Edgewood has that many fewer students to educate, but the district insists the situation is not that simple: Edgewood must operate the same number of schools, run the same number of buses, maintain a central office staff, perpetuate the special needs programs students require, and also provide services for some students who spend most of each day at private school.

Moreover, because the allocation of school funds is based upon the previous year's attendance, even if every student currently accepting a voucher were to return to Edgewood next year, the district still would be funded for 1999-2000 based on the number of students enrolled right now. The expected shortfall is already evidenced as the district has tried to prepare for the loss. Rodriguez admitted to feeling pinched in her supply budget this year. But Hoelscher Elementary principal Virginia Kinney insists that the funding crunch will not lead to fewer educational options for students: "I can't ever see us consolidating programs because those have a direct impact on our students." She added that Edgewood would go without new roofs or reduce staff before cutting back on student-centered expenditures.

The funding loss will come at a crucial moment: immediately after the district finally acquired sufficient money to enhance and expand its educational programs. Edgewood recently opened magnet programs in math and science and fine arts and established advanced placement programs in its high schools. In addition, the district's scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (T.A.A.S.), the statewide standardized test by which the Texas Education Agency (T.E.A.) rates schools as "low-performing," "acceptable," "recognized," or "exemplary," have risen dramatically. In the past five years, Edgewood has gone from having nine of its twenty-six schools declared "low performing" by T.E.A. to having no low-performing schools and three campuses recognized for high student performance. Faced with dramatic state funding cuts, the district will be hard-pressed to sustain that progress.

Whether or not the schools can continue to improve with significantly less state funding is only one of the district's structural problems. Edgewood, west of downtown San Antonio, is a relatively small district; Kelly Air Force Base occupies more than a third of its area. Edgewood's population is more than 95 percent minority, and the annual per capita income is just over \$5,000. Local property tax revenues are so low that more than 89 percent of the district's per-student funding comes from state and federal funds. (In contrast, San Antonio's wealthiest district, Alamo Heights I.S.D., receives less than 3 percent of its funding from state and federal sources, and can still afford to send more than \$1,300 per student to the state for mandated redistribution to poorer districts.) The imminent closure of the air base is not likely to improve the situation.

"If we all get vouchers and send our kids to private schools, what will happen to the kids who are left?"

Even with the base operating, the district is the largest area employer. So the expected cutbacks will inevitably mean lost jobs—mostly in secretarial, custodial, food service, and other non-teacher positions—for students' families. This is what Rodriguez means when she insists, "There are a lot of implications. This isn't just about students going to private schools; it's affecting a wide spectrum of the community." Given that the second largest employer in the district is the H.E.B. grocery chain, the loss of those jobs can only exacerbate the cycle of poverty in Edgewood.

Edgewood's poverty is very much an issue in the "scholarship" program—C.E.O. America's president Fritz Steiger acknowledges that the district's economic conditions were the primary reason for placing the Horizon program here. Yet according to many Edgewood parents, their economic circumstances often



render Horizon scholarships virtually useless. For example, to receive a scholarship, students must be eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch programs—but many private schools do not participate in the federal programs. Working parents also note other hardships: the additional cost of books and/or uniforms; requirements to sell raffle tickets and/or participate in mandatory fundraisers; required parent “volunteer” hours; the necessity of private transport for students to and from schools often far from home. E.I.S.D. also provides supervised places for students before and after school. Asked about these issues, C.E.O.’s Treat responded, “Transportation has not been as big of an issue as we anticipated.”

Dolores Salinas’ greatest concern is more general and reflects her awareness of Edgewood families like that of Ana Pinedo. “If we all get vouchers and send our kids to private schools, then what will happen to the kids who are left?” Treat hardly paused to consider the question: “We hope that all schools, public or private, will improve if they need to. But our concern is not with Edgewood Independent School District. What happens to Edgewood is secondary for us.”

Presumably primary for C.E.O. is what happens to John Rhodes. Rhodes is a tall man with neat gray hair, penetrating blue eyes, and a raspy voice; you could easily mistake him for a golf pro. But Rhodes is a local suburban pastor, and founder of Family Faith Academy, one of two new private schools to open in Edgewood this year. Rhodes is a newcomer to the educational scene, and does not claim to be an expert educator. Rather, he finds himself at the Academy because of the coincidence of a parental request and the Horizon scholarships. When a parent in Rhodes’ congregation complained of not having a Christian school available to her, Rhodes began praying about the possibility of opening such a school, and “vouchers were a sign from the Lord to locate in Edgewood.”

The Family Faith Academy is located in a building

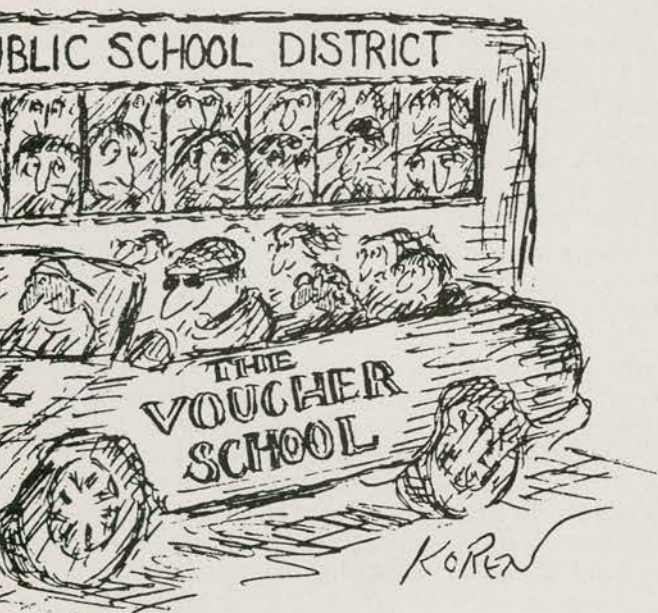
that used to be home to Chino’s Dugout—the last in a series of bars that formerly occupied the premises. Rhodes jokes about how glad the landlord was to see him. Inside, the school is light and airy, the freshly painted walls covered with drawings and Bible verses. The main room features study carrels along the perimeter, providing each student with a place to work, and a large table in the center for group interaction. Off to one side is a smaller room, brightly decorated with phonics wall charts, that serves as the classroom for the youngest students. Those youngest kids—currently there are five—learn to read through phonics and passages from the New Testament. The older kids (second grade and up) work on individualized curricula, setting goals for themselves each day in math, reading, social studies, science, and Bible. Their performance is judged by whether or not they meet those goals.

Rhodes and his two teenage sons (who are “homeschooled”—that is, they receive their education by helping at the Academy) work with the older students, less as teachers than as coaches. “It’s their education and their work,” Rhodes explained. “We’re here to coach them, to tailor the work for them, and to help them remove obstacles, but they have to take responsibility.”

It is exactly this talk of responsibility couched in explicitly Christian ideology that drew Ilene and Albert Gonzalez to enroll their daughter Desiree at Family Faith. Albert spoke repeatedly of “one-on-one education,” but Ilene insisted, “My main concern is that Desiree loves the Lord and loves speaking of the Lord. It’s an added plus that she gets more attention here.” Asked about other private schools in San Antonio, the couple cited familiar concerns: book fees, uniform expenses, transportation problems.

Only a mile or so from Family Faith Academy, in the dilapidated Edgewood Square shopping center, sits another private Christian school that opened this year: the Edgewood School of Leadership. The School of Leadership (which had been “El Shadai New Hope Christian Academy” until it changed ownership in early February) is sandwiched between a beeper shop and a florist.

Jim Billman, the school’s principal, looks much more the businessman than John Rhodes and has much more of an educational background. Billman already operates three schools in Galveston, has strong curricular ideas, and believes firmly in standardized testing. Whereas Rhodes declared Family Faith to be a losing proposition financially, Billman left no doubt that his school is an investment, and one from which he expects to garner a return. At the moment, the school has only five students, but the storefront can hold forty, and Billman anticipates being booked before semester’s end. Like Rhodes, Billman spoke of an individualized approach, pointing to the study carrels that he installed in the storefront. He echoed Rhodes’ savage attack on the whole-language system of reading instruction, affirmed the importance of phonics, and went on at length about the importance of teaching morals. Billman’s schools use the widespread “School of Tomorrow” Christian curriculum, and he shares copies of those materials with Rhodes’ Academy.



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Billman believes his curriculum will “meet the need for more individual attention” and “fill in all the learning gaps kids come in here with.” The school gives all new students diagnostic exams to identify their “gaps,” and the teaching stresses fundamentals. “We spend a lot more time on the basics—we demand mastery.” Billman has high expectations of what he can accomplish: “We transform kids.”

As with students, so with schools. Billman dismisses the argument that private vouchers might harm E.I.S.D. and scoffs at the amount of money Edgewood spends “outside the classroom.” For him, that’s simply wasted money: “Our society decided bigger is better, but that’s just wrong.” Billman says his school will provide leadership not just for students and families, but for the district as well. “Our hope and our prayer is that this voucher program causes a working coalition, where our success will help show Edgewood how to do better. They will hopefully emulate us.” Rhodes had a similarly dismissive, if more ethereal, take on the voucher controversy. Opponents, he said, “can be real mad at Leininger [Dr. James Leininger, major funder of the Horizon program] or whoever the bogeyman here is, but I’m telling you that God knows these kids are here, and He’s not for vouchers or for public schools—He’s for kids. And He’ll keep the parents accountable.”

Accountability is also important to Edgewood parent Frank Baledéz. He sees no reason to flee public schools that he thinks are doing well: “The voucher is new, not proven, has no track record. There’s no documentation that it’s better than public schools yet. Until there’s evidence that vouchers are better than what Edgewood’s offering, I’ll wait.” Baledéz spoke while cutting out laminated illustrations for bulletin boards at Hoelscher Elementary. Across the district, Edgewood parents volunteer so regularly and in such large numbers that every school has a large and well-utilized parent workroom.

Many of the volunteers are even fiercer in their defense of Edgewood schools. Mary Ann Arocha, who graduated from E.I.S.D., recently returned to the area just so her children could attend district schools. Anna Badillo is tired of people underestimating Edgewood: “We’ve got great teachers here. People think the kids won’t learn just because it’s a poor district, but the teachers and schools here are as good as anywhere else.”

C.E.O.’s statistics suggest that most Horizon parents agree, at least about competing public schools: Of the 837 students who initially accepted vouchers, only six used those vouchers to attend non-religious schools. Early on, C.E.O. claimed its program would promote choice within the public schools, but thus far only two students have used vouchers to attend other area public schools. In San Antonio, the largest group of Horizon students is now attending Catholic schools (443), while the rest moved to schools sponsored by other denominations. In other words, most of the families seeking vouchers did so to support religious education for their children. And while the Horizon program means up to \$4,000 per student, the same student represents a \$5,800 loss to the Edgewood district—and to the students who choose to remain in public schools.

Many of the parents who volunteer in Edgewood schools traveled to Austin in early February to share their perspectives on vouchers with the Texas State Legislature. More than a hundred parents from E.I.S.D. participated in the lobbying effort, telling their stories to lawmakers, who are considering a “pilot” voucher program (which would include the state’s major urban districts). Ana Pinedo described her visit as emotional. She explained to legislators that private schools did not have the facilities for her disabled daughter. Dolores Salinas told her representatives, “C.E.O. discriminates. They picked only certain students to invite. They are insulting our community.” That charge refers to C.E.O.’s apparent practice of targeting only favored students to move out of Edgewood, in effect leaving the public schools to deal with more difficult cases.

C.E.O.’s Treat denied that the Foundation solicited any particular group of students, although she allowed that certain schools might have sent targeted mailings containing Horizon applications and that those schools might have received selected-student lists from C.E.O. For its part C.E.O. almost went out of its way not to alert the community at large about its program. Although the Foundation held a kickoff press conference and published an application in the *San Antonio Express-News* (which is among the program’s official sponsors), there were no town meetings, no block walks, no phone banks, and no informational tables outside supermarkets. According to Treat, no further publicity was necessary. Yet C.E.O. has not accepted enough applicants even to fill the 1,000 private school seats the Foundation determined were available in San Antonio.

Neither the underwhelming parental response nor the withdrawal of 5 percent of the participants in the first semester has dampened C.E.O.’s enthusiasm. C.E.O.’s own report on the program’s first few months strains to explain some of the unimpressive numbers: “The most compelling aspects of the Horizon program are not covered in this report of figures, statistics, and events.” Instead, C.E.O. cites “the true facts of the childrens’ [sic] success” as Horizon’s standard for evaluation. Those facts will presumably become clear over time. In the meantime, C.E.O. continues to tout the program. The Foundation has asked researchers from the University of Virginia to conduct an “independent evaluation”—but the resulting proposal outlines a project to measure not student achievement, but parental satisfaction. Measuring student achievement would be problematic—Horizon does not require private schools to adhere to any curriculum, to administer any standardized tests, or to meet any other common educational standards.

For the present, the challenge presented by the Horizon program has brought the Edgewood community closer together. While some worry about how E.I.S.D. will cope with a slashed budget next year, many remain confident that the district will continue to improve. Kinney, the principal who led Hoelscher Elementary to become a school recognized for its performance by the Texas Education Agency, speaks with a soft certainty: “I suspect we’ll see those [Horizon] kids back. For a lot of parents it’s a ‘grass is greener’ thing. Once they actually get their feet wet, they’ll come back.” □

VOUCHERS AND THE ACCOUNTABILITY DILEMMA

An AFT Policy Brief

In recent years, tax-funded private school vouchers, especially for low-income families, have gained momentum as a potential solution to our nation's educational challenges.

To date, a vast amount of research and literature has been devoted to the effects of vouchers both on recipients and students who remain in public schools.¹ In contrast, relatively scant attention has been paid to another important matter: if and how private and religious schools that accept vouchers would be held accountable for the use of public funds.

Any discussion of this question must take into account three key facts that raise a series of conflicts and public policy dilemmas:

- Private and religious schools currently have almost complete autonomy with regard to whom they teach, what they teach, how they teach, how they measure student achievement (if at all), how they handle their finances, and what information they disclose to parents and the public.
- Several recent polls show that the public would expect private and religious schools that receive public dollars to be regulated and held accountable for the use of these dollars, just as public schools are.
- Private and religious schools highly value their autonomy. A recent U.S. Department of Education report, conducted at the request of Congress, indicates that private and religious schools are unlikely to participate in a voucher program that would require them to meet accountability standards in key policy areas such as admissions, student testing, curriculum, and religious training.²

This policy brief documents and explores these three facts and considers the implications of various approaches to the voucher "accountability dilemma." For example, a regulated voucher system might satisfy citizens' demands for accountability, but it would erode the cherished autonomy and independence of private and religious schools (or at least discourage most private schools from participating). By contrast, an unregulated voucher system might preserve private and religious school autonomy, but it would not meet taxpayers' rightful, documented demand to know and have a say in how their dollars are spent.

This policy brief was prepared by Dan Murphy, an associate in the office of the AFT president.

JUST HOW PRIVATE ARE PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

Any debate over the merits of vouchers and the various ways that a voucher plan might be designed must take account of how private schools currently operate. In this respect, the contrasts between public and private schools are quite striking. Whereas public schools are democratically controlled and must follow publicly determined rules regarding student admissions, curriculum, testing, and disclosure of finances and other pertinent information, private schools are more or less free to operate as they wish and are subject to little or no public oversight. Specifically, private schools have almost complete autonomy with regard to the following:

Admissions

Private schools normally screen applicants on a number of grounds, including, but not limited, to: prior academic achievement, standardized test scores, prior disciplinary record, written application; interviews with applicants and their parents; and parents' willingness to volunteer at the school (often required). In addition, many religious schools give admission preference to students of the same religious background.³

Serving Special Education Students

Private schools are not required to offer special education services, and, according to National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) 1997 statistical profile of private schools, most private schools (75 percent) do not.⁴ In contrast, nearly all public schools offer such services. Of the small number of special education students who do attend private schools, a disproportionate share go to private schools specifically designed to serve these students. At such schools, tuition tends to be very high—an average of \$15,000.⁵ The remaining private school students with special needs (probably students with milder physical/learning disabilities than those who attend special schools) are scattered throughout the small number of regular private and religious schools that offer some special education services. For example, NCES data show that 26 percent of Catholic schools offer some special education services and that, in those schools, an average of 4 percent of students receive such services.⁶

Teacher Qualifications

Only a handful of states require private school teachers to be licensed by the state.⁷ In practice, according to NCES, 71 percent of all private school teachers are licensed, compared to 97.4 percent of public school teachers.⁸ Moreover, almost 7 percent of private school teachers do not have a bachelor's degree, compared to fewer than 1 percent of public school teachers.⁹ According to NCES, Conservative Christian schools and unaffiliated religious schools are the two types of private schools most likely to employ teachers who lack objective qualifications, with almost one-half of teachers at these schools lacking a state teaching certificate and more than 15 percent lacking a bachelor's degree.¹⁰ (These two types of schools have also been among the fastest-growing schools in the private school sector over the last two decades.¹¹) Finally, many religious schools often give hiring preferences to teachers who share the school's religious belief system.

Curriculum

Within the basic subject areas—e.g., English, math, history, science—private schools are generally free to teach whatever they want. No state requires private schools to meet the same state curriculum standards as public schools.¹² In religious schools, religious instruction permeates every aspect of the school curriculum. According to NCES's 1997 statistical profile of private schools, religious school principals rate "religious development" as their most important educational goal, higher even than "excellence" and "literacy." For example, 59 percent of Conservative Christian and 55 percent of Catholic school principals say religious development is their top goal, followed by literacy (15.4 percent and 10.9 percent respectively) and excellence (13.1 percent and 13.7 percent respectively).¹³

Testing

Private schools can measure student performance however they choose to (if at all). No state requires private school students to take the same tests as public school students.¹⁴ Moreover, private schools are not required to report test score results (let alone break down scores by socioeconomic status, race, etc.), making it impossible to assess school-level performance or compare student achievement across individual schools—public or private.

Information Disclosure

Private schools generally do not have to release information on student outcomes (e.g., test scores, attendance rates, number of suspensions/expulsions, etc.), school governance, and finances to the public. Private school board meetings and records are closed to the public.

WHAT KIND OF ACCOUNTABILITY WOULD THE PUBLIC EXPECT UNDER A VOUCHER PROGRAM?

Pprivate schools generally enjoy wide discretion over whom they teach; what they teach; how they measure student achievement; the information they disclose to parents and the public; and, in the case of religious schools, the degree of religious training to which students are exposed. Within reasonable bounds, most would agree that private and religious schools, as long as they remain privately financed, have a right to such freedoms; after all, that's what makes them *private* schools.

The key question is: If private schools choose to accept public dollars under a voucher system, should they still be allowed to operate without any public scrutiny?

Several recent polls strongly suggest that the public, at least, has already made up its mind on this question: If private schools accept public dollars, they must abide by certain regulations and be held accountable for the use of these dollars, just as public schools are.

30th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (September 1998)

This poll,¹⁵ administered to a nationally representative sample of more than 1,000 adults, found mixed support for the concept of "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense" (44 percent in favor; 50 percent opposed). However, when it came to the issue of ensuring accountability under a voucher plan, the public was overwhelmingly in agreement:

- Seventy-five percent agreed that "private or church-related schools that accept government tuition payments should be accountable to the state in the way public schools are accountable."
- Twenty percent did not agree with this statement. Five percent said they did not know.

Peter D. Hart Research Associates Poll (February 1998)

This poll,¹⁶ commissioned by the AFT and administered to a nationally representative sample of more than 800 respondents, closely tracks with the Phi Delta Kappa results. While support for the concept of "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense" was mixed (38 percent in favor; 54 percent opposed), support for accountability was overwhelming:

- More than 80 percent strongly or somewhat favored "requiring private schools to meet basic standards in areas such as curriculum and teacher qualifications to be eligible to receive tax-funded vouchers or tax credits."
- Fourteen percent strongly or somewhat opposed such requirements. Five percent were not sure.

The poll also took the accountability question a step further, inviting respondents to comment on specific standards that voucher schools might be required to meet. For each standard listed, respondents were asked whether they thought it was essential, very important, just somewhat important, or not too important to include in a voucher plan. The results are as follows:

Voucher Schools Would Have to	Percent Saying Such a Requirement is		
	<i>Essential or Very Important</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Very Important</i>
Not discriminate in admissions on the basis of race	94	60	34
Meet state health and safety conditions	92	59	33
Meet state curriculum standards	88	57	31
Employ only certified teachers	86	54	32
Disclose their budget	84	53	31
Not discriminate in admissions on the basis of religion	83	51	32
Agree to use same tests as public schools	81	47	34
Abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act	79	47	32

Public Policy Forum Report (February 1998)

This study,¹⁷ conducted by the nonpartisan Public Policy Forum, examined the issue of voucher school accountability in Cleveland and Milwaukee, the only two cities in the nation with tax-funded voucher programs.

In part, the study sought to find a consensus on the information and procedures that would be necessary to ensure accountability in voucher schools. Toward that end, researchers administered a survey to a representative sample of taxpayers in Ohio and Wisconsin. The results track with the national results described above: Private schools that accept public dollars must be held accountable for the use of those dollars. The table below summarizes some of the most important survey results.

Voucher Schools Should Be Required to	Percent Agreeing
Hold public meetings	86
Report how money is budgeted and spent	78
Report students' scores on standardized tests	75
Hire only state-certified teachers	73
Use a random admissions process (as opposed to selective admissions)	61*

*70% of low-income respondents agreed with this requirement.

Source: Van Dunk et al. (1998), Tables 7 and 11, and p. 24.

The findings of these three surveys demonstrate that what the public expects in terms of voucher accountability is dramatically at odds with how private and religious schools are currently allowed to operate (free of almost all regulations). Thus, in order to satisfy taxpayers' demands for accountability, private schools that accept public dollars would have to change the way they do business—and, in effect, become something other than private and independent or pervasively religious. Are private and religious schools willing to make such compromises in return for direct public funding?

WOULD PRIVATE SCHOOLS BE WILLING TO MEET ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS UNDER A VOUCHER SYSTEM?

A recent U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) report¹⁸ indicates that private and religious schools would not be willing to participate in a voucher plan that requires them to meet the kind of accountability standards that the public desires. The study, conducted at the request of Congress, explored the extent to which private schools would be able and willing to help alleviate overcrowding in 22 large, urban public school districts by accepting some students from overcrowded schools in exchange for tuition reimbursement.

To estimate the amount of excess capacity in private schools and their willingness to participate in such a transfer (voucher) program, the study relied on two main sources of data: (1) a survey of a sample of 1,000 private schools located in overcrowded public school districts (50 percent responded); and (2) a more in-depth survey of 28 organizations representing private schools (68 percent responded).

The report found that a moderate amount of extra space does exist in *some* private schools, especially small (religious and nonreligious) elementary schools. It also found that most private schools with excess space would be willing to participate in a transfer program, as long as they could "maintain [their] current admissions, curriculum, assessment, and other policies without change." All told, the report estimates that, as long as no conditions were placed on them, private schools would be able and willing to accommodate almost 150,000 public school students, or about 3.5 percent of public school enrollment in the 22 school districts studied.

However, the report goes on to note that private school "interest in participating would decline considerably if the transfer program included rules or conditions that affected their autonomy over admissions and other policies." Specifically, the report explored four accountability standards that private schools might be required to uphold under a voucher program:

1. **Accept voucher students through random assignment.** This means not screening applicants based on prior achievement, parent interviews, etc., and using mechanisms such as a lottery.
2. **Accept and serve students with special needs.** The survey defined this as "students with learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, or low achievement."
3. **Participate in state assessments.** Require private schools to use the same tests that the state requires for public schools, to allow for comparisons between sectors.
4. **Permit exemptions from religious instruction or activities** (at the request of the voucher students' parents).

These are just the accountability standards that were explored in the U.S. DOE report. Poll results suggest the public believes that private and religious schools receiving public funds also should: hire only certified teachers; meet state curriculum standards; disclose how money is budgeted and spent, as well as other school and student records; and hold public meetings.

Limited to only four accountability areas, results of the U.S. DOE survey nevertheless dramatically underscore private schools' concerns over the loss of autonomy that might accompany a publicly funded voucher plan. The results also strongly suggest that *most private schools would rather not participate in a voucher plan if it meant sacrificing total discretion over key policy areas such as admissions, testing, and instruction.*

What follows are: (1) the results of the private school survey; and (2) a representative sampling of responses from the more in-depth survey of private school organizations.

In the survey, private schools were asked the question:

Under each condition, how willing do you think your school would be to participate in a program to accept students from overcrowded public schools in exchange for tuition reimbursement?

Private School Survey Results

Condition	Percent Responding		
	<i>Definitely or Probably Willing</i>	<i>Definitely or Probably Unwilling</i>	<i>Possibly Willing</i>
Maintain current policies	77	8	15
Random assignment	36	46	18
Accept special needs students	15	68	16
Use state tests	33	42	24
Permit religious exemptions	25	66	8

Source: U.S. DOE, Planning and Evaluation Service (1998), page 49, Exhibit 32.

Note: When interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind that private schools were asked to respond to each condition *separately*. Depending on the design of any voucher plan, it is possible that at least two or more of the above conditions could apply—and possibly others that are not listed. If private schools were presented with a combination of conditions—e.g., accept special needs students *and* permit religious exemptions—interest in participating would likely decline even further.

Private School Organization Survey: Representative Responses

Random Admission of Students?

- **Association of Christian Teachers and Schools:** “Not willing...want to test and evaluate every student.”
- **National Independent Private Schools Association:** “Accepting public school transfers by lottery is difficult. Often these students don’t fit into our schools because of student discipline codes.”
- **Council of Islamic Schools in North America:** “No. Screening of students and families would be necessary.”
- **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America:** “Lottery is a risky idea. You are afraid of whom you are dealing with.”
- **U.S. Catholic Conference:** “Unable to answer accurately. May depend on local admissions policies.”
- **United Methodist Church:** “This is the most equitable plan if tuition comes from public funds.”

Accept Special Needs Students?

- **Association of Waldorf Schools of North America:** “Not willing.”
- **Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship:** “*NOT* interested!!”
- **Association of Christian Schools International:** “If the schools were appropriately staffed and have programs that would properly serve special needs students.”
- **National Independent Private Schools Association:** “Difficult.”
- **U.S. Catholic Conference:** “Depend[s] on the degree of ‘special needs’ and the funding provided—the answer could vary significantly.”

Permit Religious Exemptions?

- **U.S. Catholic Conference:** “Probably unwilling—strikes at the very heart of what a Catholic school is all about.”
- **Association of Christian Schools International:** “This would be unacceptable.”
- **Christian Schools International:** “NO...every class is permeated with a Christian religious viewpoint.”
- **Association of Christian Teachers and Schools:** “Absolutely not willing. Non-negotiable.”
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church of America:** “This would be difficult as the religious nature of schools is not restricted to particular time structures.”
- **United Methodist Church:** “Yes. United Methodist Church-related schools generally have students from all faiths.”

Other Concerns

- **National Association of Independent Schools:** “Restriction on *any* aspect of running a school, including curriculum, admission, discipline, teacher certification, and budget.”
- **General Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church:** “We would want to control our hiring process so that we would discriminate in hiring practices based on religious affiliation.”
- **U.S. Catholic Conference:** “Degree of financial support—tuition and fees *do not* give actual per-pupil costs. If actual per-pupil cost is not covered, who picks up the difference?” “...degree of government supervision of the program and staffing, etc.”
- **Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:** “1. Maintaining our mission and our spiritual nature which permeates our total school program. 2. Having supportive families—not just escapees from public schools. 3. Being able to serve well those students who choose to attend Lutheran schools.”
- **Association of Christian Teachers and Schools:** “Government control.”

THE ACCOUNTABILITY DILEMMA

Giving public dollars to private and religious schools presents a profound public policy dilemma: regulate private schools to respond to the public’s demand for accountability and thereby sacrifice private school autonomy *or* preserve private school autonomy and thereby deny citizens’ right and desire to know and have a say in how their tax dollars are spent. What follows is a brief overview of the trade-offs inherent to each approach.

Regulating Publicly Funded Private Schools

By regulating voucher schools, policymakers might satisfy citizens’ rightful demands for accountability. However, such an approach would probably yield the following undesirable consequences:

■ ***Unprecedented Breach in the Church-State Barrier***

Separation of church and state is one of the most cherished features of our democracy, and it has served our diverse society well. An accountable voucher system would compel government interference in the operation of religious schools to an extent unrivaled in the history of our republic. This would have far-reaching effects. Of the nation’s 26,093 private schools, close to 80 percent are religiously affiliated.¹⁹

■ ***Erosion of Private School Autonomy***

To the extent that independent schools participated in a regulated voucher program, they would have to compromise their autonomy over key policy areas. This would blur the line between public and private, erode parental choice, and deprive the nation of the unique contributions that private and religious schools make to American education.

■ *Higher Costs to Taxpayers*

Sound procedures and regulations might satisfy taxpayers' demands for accountability and reduce the likelihood of new schools entering the "market" exclusively to take advantage of the availability of public funds. However, the cost of such regulation is very high. Professor Henry M. Levin, a distinguished voucher expert, estimates that, on top of the costs of the vouchers themselves, it would cost at least *\$48 billion annually* to put in place a national voucher system with adequate administrative procedures and mechanisms, including those for record keeping and monitoring, information dissemination, transportation, and a means of adjudicating disputes.²⁰ Rather than shrinking bureaucracy, an accountable voucher plan would dramatically expand it.

Not Regulating Publicly Funded Private Schools

An unregulated voucher system might preserve private and religious school autonomy. However, such an approach would probably yield the following undesirable consequences:

■ *No Public Accountability*

The evidence shows that the public expects private schools accepting tax dollars to behave largely like public schools in admissions, curriculum, testing, information disclosure, and other areas. An unregulated voucher system would not fulfill these demands. Some argue that vouchers come with a built-in accountability mechanism, since voucher schools must ultimately satisfy their customers—parents. But this argument fails to recognize that parents alone do not fund education. The vast majority of taxpayers (75 percent) do not have school-aged children and, therefore, unlike parents, cannot "vote with their feet."

■ *Market Fraud and Failure*

An unregulated voucher system would inevitably encourage the emergence of brand-new schools, specifically designed to take advantage of voucher dollars. Past experience with an "education free market" suggests that, without any public oversight, many of these schools are likely to be shady or shaky:

- *Postsecondary, for-profit trade school fraud.* Over the last two decades, widespread fraud among postsecondary, for-profit trade schools has plagued the federal government's higher education student-aid programs, costing taxpayers millions of dollars a year and prompting calls for tougher congressional oversight. According to a 1994 *New York Times* special report: "In the most dramatic cases, directors of for-profit trade schools and colleges have looted the budgets of these loosely regulated federal student-aid programs to buy themselves Mercedes-Benzes, travel the world, subsidize a drug habit, invest in religious causes, or pay themselves million-dollar salaries."²¹
- *The Milwaukee voucher program.* In Milwaukee, where voucher school regulations are minimal, four voucher schools out of 18 closed their doors during the first six years of the program, a failure rate close to 25 percent.²² Three of these schools closed mid-year amidst charges of fraud and mismanagement, leaving voucher students to scramble for available seats in other schools.
- *The Cleveland voucher program.* In Cleveland, a recently released state evaluation found that voucher students in the program's two brand-new private schools—schools specifically designed to take advantage of voucher dollars—fared significantly worse than their public school peers in reading, math, language skills, science, and social studies.²³
- *High rate of small business failures.* According to the Small Business Administration, 53 percent of all small businesses dissolve within the first four years of operation.²⁴ Assuming start-up entrepreneurial schools experience a comparable failure rate under a voucher program, the effects on children and their families would be devastating.

■ *A Breach in the Church-State Barrier*

In the case of religious schools—which account for almost 80 percent of all private schools—an unregulated voucher system would compel taxpayers to subsidize religious teachings with which they may disagree.

CONCLUSION

According to several polls, a majority of the public is opposed to vouchers. Moreover, an even greater majority, including most voucher supporters, insists that under any voucher or private school tax credit plan, private and religious schools that receive public dollars must be regulated. This means that vouchers and private school tax credits do not harm only public school children by draining resources from their schools and failing to improve achievement. In the end, vouchers and private school tax credits may prove equally harmful to private school children and their families, by undermining private and religious school autonomy, breaching the church-state wall, and blurring the line between public and private schools. Ironically, far from increasing "choice" for parents, as advocates contend, vouchers and private school tax credits would diminish both choice and the unique role of private and religious schools in American education. □

ENDNOTES

- ¹For a thoughtful summary of this research, see Henry M. Levin, "Educational Vouchers: Effectiveness, Choice, and Costs." (Stanford University: September 1997).
- ²U.S. Department of Education. Planning and Evaluation Service (PES). *Barriers, Benefits, and Costs of Using Private Schools to Alleviate Overcrowding in Public Schools*, by Lana Muraskin. Stephanie Stulich, Project Officer. (Washington, DC: 1998).
- ³See PES (1998), p. 44, Exhibit 30; and pp. 73-74 in U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993-94*, by Donald McLaughlin. Stephen Broughman, Project Officer. (Washington, DC: July 1997).
- ⁴NCES (1997), p. 66.
- ⁵NCES (1997), p. 61.
- ⁶NCES (1997), p. 66.
- ⁷U.S. Department of Education. Office of Nonpublic Education (ONE). *The Regulation of Private Schools in America: A State-by-State Analysis*, by L. Patricia Williams. (Washington, DC: 1995).
- ⁸NCES (1997), p. 84.
- ⁹NCES (1997), p. 85.
- ¹⁰NCES (1997), pp. 84-85.
- ¹¹NCES (1997), p. 59.
- ¹²Office of Nonpublic Education (1995).
- ¹³NCES (1997), p. 101.
- ¹⁴Office of Nonpublic Education (1995).
- ¹⁵Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup, "The 30th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* (September 1998).
- ¹⁶Peter D. Hart Research Associates, "Public Attitudes on School Choice and Vouchers" (February 1998). Commissioned by AFT.
- ¹⁷Emily Van Dunk et al., *Choice School Accountability: A Consensus of Views in Ohio and Wisconsin* (Milwaukee: The Public Policy Forum, February 1998).
- ¹⁸See endnote #2 for full citation.
- ¹⁹NCES (1997), p. 57.
- ²⁰Levin (1997).
- ²¹See Michael Winerip, "Billions for Education Lost in Fraud, Waste and Abuse," *New York Times*, February 2, 1994; and U.S. Senate Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, October 27-28, 1993, *Abuses in Federal Student Grant Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994).
- ²²The schools are: Juanita Virgil Academy in January 1991, Exito Education Center and Milwaukee Preparatory School in February 1996, and Waldorf Academy in August 1996.
- ²³Kim Metcalf et al., *Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship Program: Second-Year Report* (Indiana University: November 1998). Commissioned by the Ohio Department of Education.
- ²⁴See SBA web site (www.sba.gov).

IN THE SHADOW OF AUSCHWITZ

Teaching the Holocaust in Poland

BY BURTON BOLLAG

POLISH SCHOOL children are now taught an uncensored version of history. Gone are the taboos and blatant distortions imposed by the former Communist authorities. Yet, until now, there has been one subject about which students have been kept in the dark: their former Jewish neighbors.

Sixty years ago Poland had the largest Jewish population in the world. On the eve of World War II, 3.5 million people—one out of every ten Poles—were Jewish. They played a central role in Poland's cultural and economic life, while maintaining a flourishing culture of their own. Today only a few thousand Jews remain. Not only did the people disappear, as smoke up Nazi chimneys, knowledge of their existence evaporated, too. Public school history books contain only a few passing references to the Jews, and the official school curriculum gives the Holocaust a mere mention during a lesson on World War II.

And yet the past keeps casting troubling shadows. Young Poles can't help but see the synagogues that dot the country: strange empty buildings with alien symbols, representing an unknown culture. In recent years, several Catholic priests have been—belatedly—censured by their superiors for anti-Semitic preachings. Graffiti scribbled on the sides of Polish buildings call on local soccer teams to beat “the Jews,” as rival teams are disparagingly referred to. When children get angry, they as likely as not call one another “dirty Jew.” Until now, although individual teachers may have intervened, the schools have done little to discourage this kind of mindless anti-Semitism in a country virtually devoid of Jews.

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This denial of an important part of Poland's history suited the former Communist authorities. The Soviet bloc was allied with the Arab states against the Jewish state, Israel; and the cause of the Soviet Jews had been taken up by the rival superpower, the United States. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war was followed by a wave of officially backed anti-Semitism in Poland. It culminated in the purging from their jobs of many of the Jews who were left in Poland and prompted many of them to emigrate to the West. Often, linguistic gymnastics were employed to avoid mention of the Jews. Museums and schools spoke about the “three million Poles and members of other ethnic groups” killed in the Nazi extermination camps in Poland. As with other controversial issues, the Communist authorities did not tolerate open debate.

When Communism collapsed with Poland's first free elections in 1989, the restrictions on free expression also ended. But the new history books, hastily produced to replace the Communist texts, remained largely silent on the Jews. Since then pressure has been building—from both inside and outside Poland—and the education system is finally beginning to confront the country's Jewish past.

In 1995, Poland signed an agreement with Israel. Warsaw pledged to teach more about its Jewish history. Israel in turn promised to tone down its accusations of Polish anti-Semitism. New textbooks have yet to be produced. But one clear sign of change is the separate lesson on the Holocaust supposed to be added to the public school curriculum next fall. “I think the Polish authorities take the issue very seriously now,” says Jan Gross, a professor of political science at New York University.

Gross, a Jew who emigrated from Poland in 1969, is angry that Poland has not yet confronted its behavior during and after the Holocaust. He points out that few

ILLUSTRATED BY NEMAD JAKSEVIC; PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF USHMM PHOTO ARCHIVES; NATIONAL ARCHIVES; DAVID G. BRIGGS; FRANCIS ROBERT ARZT; JANKA ROSENZEIG; MAHN UND GEDENKSTÄTTE RAVENSBRUCK; GERDA LEVY LOWENSTEIN; MAIN COMMISSION FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF NAZI WAR CRIMES IN POLAND; NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN CRACOW

- 1942-1943 -
Kriegszeit



16



STADT KRAKAU

Kennkarte Nr. 01003

für den Inhaber, die Juden, die Zyda - Arydecker

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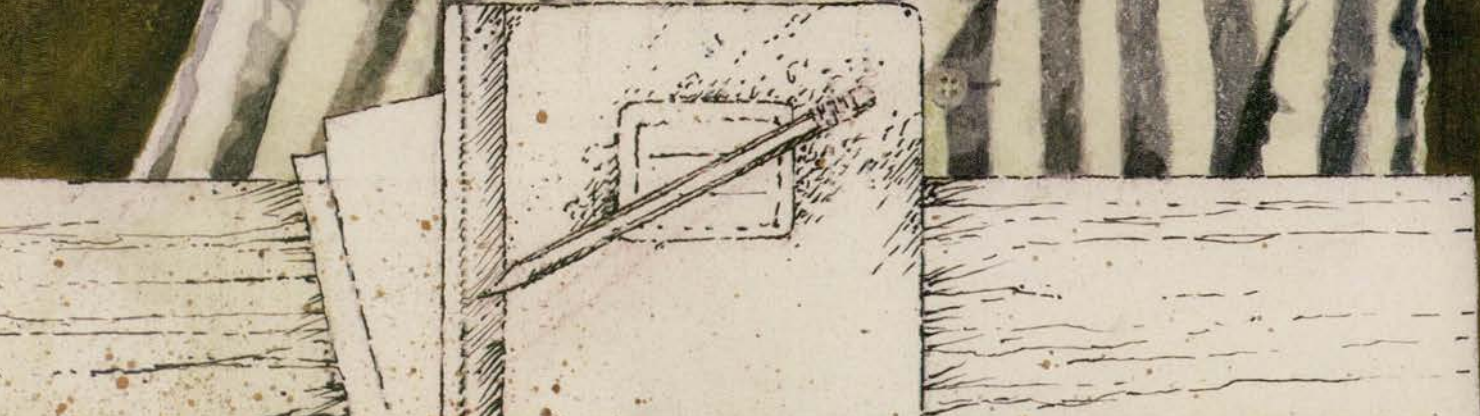
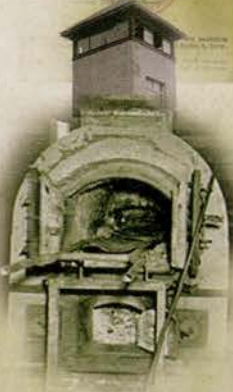
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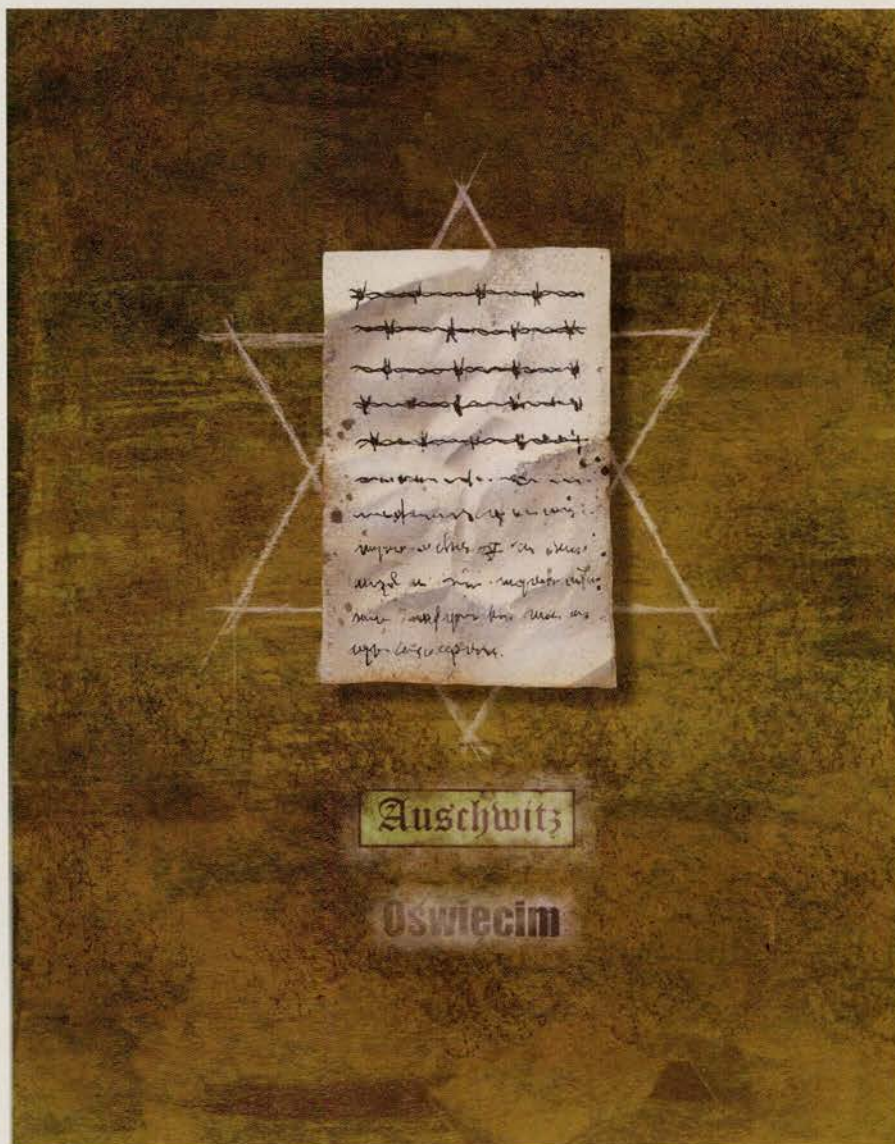
Poles know about the massacre of Holocaust survivors in the town of Kielce in 1946, which helped persuade many of the remaining 250,000 Jews in Poland to leave. "Ignorance of the Holocaust shows up again and again in an inability to deal with current conflicts," says the professor. He cites the ongoing controversy at Auschwitz, where Catholic radicals have angered Jewish groups—and embarrassed Polish authorities—by erecting several hundred large wooden crosses just outside the camp. Official attitudes have clearly changed since the collapse of Communism, says Gross. But "there is a dramatic need for teaching materials: books, slides, etc. There is so much to do."

Jan Gross traveled to his native country last September to lecture on the issue in Cracow, Poland's beautiful medieval capital. The venue was the third annual Teachers' Conference on Teaching the Holocaust. The conference was sponsored by Cracow's Center for Jewish Culture and the Spiro Institute of London, which popularizes Jewish culture and sends concentration camp survivors to speak at British public schools. Ninety public school teachers from across Poland attended the three-day conference, along with a handful of scholars and researchers. The participants are part of a growing—but still very small—movement of Polish scholars and educators who are exploring and teaching the rich, 800-year history of the Jews on Polish soil.

"We are not doing this to please Jews in America or anybody else" says Joachim Russek, president of the Judaica Foundation, which runs the Center for Jewish Culture. "It is in Poland's vital interest to build up a democratic society that is free of xenophobia." Like most Poles, Russek, who trained as a specialist in international law, is a Roman Catholic. So are almost all of the conference participants.

A Day Trip to Auschwitz

Some of the people attending the conference make a day trip to Auschwitz. The camp, formerly the largest Nazi extermination center, and now a museum, is located about an hour's drive south of Cracow. The teachers enter through the camp's main gate, under metal letters that still spell out the German words that mocked those who entered but never left: *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work will set you free). They tour exhibits documenting the machinery of mass murder and see mounds of suitcases, shoes, eyeglasses, hair, prostheses left behind by victims.



Groups of Polish school children file by quietly. Do they understand? Asked what happened here, 14-year-old Angelika from Przemyśl in eastern Poland shows that she knows part of the story: "Jews, Poles, and Gypsies were killed here. The Germans deceived them, told them they were going to work."

The teachers take a five-minute bus ride to Birkenau, a subcamp on the other side of the huge complex. Here the ruined remains of one of Auschwitz' four large gas chambers and crematoria have been left as they were when the Nazis dynamited them in a last-minute effort to hide their crimes. The group's guide, historian Miroslaw Obstarczyk, picks up what looks like a pebble; it is an unburned bit of human bone. The teachers are walking on the ashes of the 1.5 million men, women, and children—90 percent of them European Jews—who were murdered here.

The Poles living in the area knew when a transport had deposited its human cargo, says Obstarczyk. There was soon more smoke coming out of the tall chimneys above the crematoria. "People in the area say you could taste it in the air. It was sweetish and sticky."

A major problem for many visitors is that they lack information to place what happened here in some his-

torical context, according to Obstarczyk. When told about the execution of a prisoner who had been kept alive as a slave laborer, one American visitor asked, "Where were his lawyers?" Obstarczyk says that Polish and Jewish young people are well prepared in comparison with some other visitors: "The worst are Scandinavian and American young people. They have no context to comprehend what happened here."

The Polish teachers' conference is held in a former Jewish study house in Kazimierz, Cracow's old Jewish quarter. Once home to a thriving Jewish community of 65,000, Cracow now has 100 Jews. Lectures and panel discussions deal with aspects of Jewish history in Poland and with various approaches to teaching the subject. Participants are eager to share their experiences. One teacher says that Jewish history represents a dead past for his students. More international student exchanges are needed, he says, so that young Poles can meet living young Jews from other countries. Another teacher says that teaching students about the Holocaust is a way to sensitize them to broader human rights principles: "Today in Poland it's not OK to dislike the Jews, but it is OK to dislike the Roma," he says, using the preferred term for Gypsies.

A middle-aged teacher with a barrel chest and a white sweater stands up and relates proudly how his class carried out a six-month project in which students helped restore the Jewish cemetery in their town and used it as a tool to explore local Jewish history.

Teaching the Unimaginable

There are several workshops offering participants the chance to get a more intimate understanding of new teaching ideas, even if the tight schedule allows them little time for active participation. Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, a social psychologist from Jagiellonian University here, co-leads a workshop entitled "Teaching Tolerance—Reducing Prejudice."

"Start a lesson on the Holocaust in an unconventional way," urges Ambrosewicz-Jacobs. "Believe me, students will remember it." She tells participants about the famous exercise done by an Iowa school teacher, Jane Elliot, in the late 1960s, after the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Elliot's goal was to teach the meaning of prejudice. One day her blue-eyed students were given privileges denied to the brown-eyed ones. The next day the roles were reversed.

Such participatory methods are alien to Poland's conservative teaching tradition, as the teachers remind Ambrosewicz-Jacobs. She counters by urging them to "trust your intuition."

Foreign specialists in Holocaust education tell the Polish teachers at the Cracow conference about changing pedagogical approaches in their own countries. In the first years after World War II, many European countries invented and taught myths about how theirs had been a nation of resistance fighters. There was little interest in hearing from people who had survived the concentration camps. In any case, people who had endured such unimaginable experiences were often too traumatized to speak publicly. By the 1970s, attitudes began changing.

"Survivors have started getting recognition, not only

as victims, but as people with stories to tell," says Leven Rouw of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, who spoke to teachers attending the conference. Holland was a country with one of the highest proportions of its Jewish citizens killed. Seventy-five percent of the 140,000 Dutch Jews were murdered by the Nazis. "A mistake made by many well-intentioned teachers is to focus on the horrors alone," he says. "Psychological studies have shown that people don't like victims. It's necessary to humanize those who were victimized, to focus on the experiences of one or several people."

Also at the conference in Cracow, is the House of the Wannsee Conference, a German organization dedicated to promoting Holocaust education. The group is based in the villa on Wannsee Lake in Berlin where, on Jan. 20, 1942, Nazi officials drew up plans for the total destruction of European Jewry. The group's Annegret Ehmann tells the Polish teachers that Holocaust education in Germany "is becoming increasingly student-oriented." At a growing number of German schools, students are led to care for abandoned Jewish cemeteries or to investigate the life of a Jewish student expelled from their school. "This gives students more motivation and involvement," she says.

Despite the enthusiasm evident at the conference, a certain tension is never far from the surface when Poles discuss the Holocaust. "There is a stereotype about Polish co-responsibility for the Holocaust," Jozef Brynkus, an instructor at a Cracow teacher training college, tells the meeting in a defensive tone of voice. "It's horrible, and it's due to American ignorance."

Facing History?

It was during the ultimately successful Solidarity-led opposition to Communist rule during the 1980s that interest in Jewish studies awoke in Poland. Scholars say two events played a key role. In 1985, Polish state television broadcast part of the highly acclaimed documentary film "Shoah" by French journalist Claude Lanzmann. It consists of gripping interviews with survivors, witnesses, and those who participated in the murder of the Jews. In 1987 a Catholic journal published an article by literature professor Jan Błoński entitled "The Poor Poles look at the Ghetto." Both works showed that although the Poles were not the perpetrators of the Holocaust, they displayed a variety of responses to the tragedy: Some hid Jews at great personal risk, others turned them over to the Nazis, and many were callously indifferent.

"It was a shock," says Piotr Trojański, a history researcher at Cracow Pedagogical University, who helped organize the conference. "Before that, the popular image was that Poles had mostly helped the Jews."

Today, several leading Polish universities have established Jewish studies departments; Warsaw and Jagiellonian universities have each opened an institute. Most universities are said to have at least one researcher working on some aspect of Jewish history. Yet the role of the Catholic Church's anti-Semitic teachings—not repudiated by the Vatican until well after the war—is still a highly sensitive issue. Scholars say it is the only

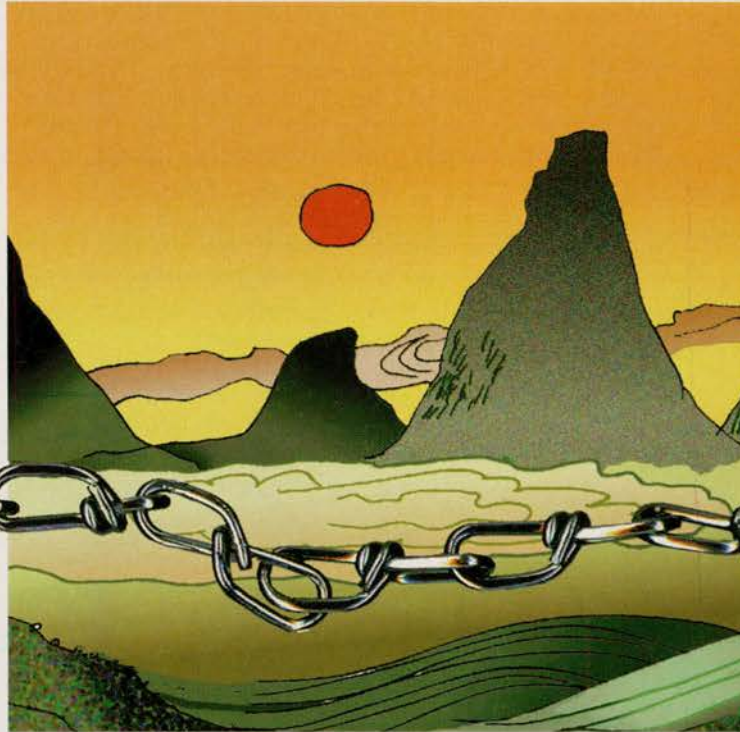
(Continued on page 49)

TEN YEARS AFTER TIANANMEN

Some Unsung Heroes of the Struggle

We never know anything about most of the people who work and suffer to build democracy in other countries—for us, they are anonymous. As a result, the phrase “human rights” becomes almost an abstraction; the words sound impressive, but they are bloodless and impersonal. The brief stories that follow are an effort to give a face to a few of our colleagues in China who have struggled to build a free society. All of them participated in the pro-democracy movement, which we will commemorate on June 4, and all have paid a heavy price for doing so.

In some respects, they were ordinary people whose lives and aspirations were not so different from our



own or those of colleagues we see every day. They wanted to do the kinds of things we expect to be able to do: run for public office, organize other workers, express their opinions freely and publish their work, and, yes, enjoy life with their families and friends. Yet, what is ordinary and taken for granted in a democratic society requires extraordinary heroism in a country where human rights have yet to be won. So the stories here tell of courage and persistence in the face of obstacles that we can hardly imagine. We honor these people by becoming aware of what they have suffered. But there will be no happy endings for them—or for the many others like them—until all the people of China enjoy the rights we take for granted.

Zhao Changqing

In January 1998, Zhao Changqing, 28, a teacher of politics at a middle school attached to Factory 813 in Shanxi Province, got in trouble with the authorities for engaging in two quintessentially democratic activities: He conducted a public opinion survey of workers about

Because the Chinese government exerts tight control on information about dissidents and others in China, finding current information is often difficult and frustrating. We are indebted to Human Rights in China, a New York-based organization run by Chinese exiles, for gathering and disseminating much of what we report here. To find out more, visit their web site (www.brichina.org).

the reasons for long-term losses in the factory. Then, he used the results as a platform when he sought election as representative to the local people's congress.

The factory workers' response to the poll was enthusiastic. In an open letter in which he discussed survey results and announced his candidacy, Zhao says he got back one hundred thirty-nine questionnaires of the one hundred ninety he distributed, and one hundred thirteen of these were usable. The workers also seemed open about expressing their dissatisfactions. A majority (eighty) gave “bad management” as a reason for the factory's long-term losses; and eighty-two identified “using public funds for banqueting” as a serious form of corruption (forty-seven mentioned “using public funds to hire prostitutes”). Zhao points out in the open letter that Mao Zedong himself did public opinion research, and he quotes Mao's support of the principle in the essay “On Investigation Work,” where Mao said, “Without research, there is no right to speak out.”

But Mao Zedong notwithstanding, the results of Zhao's survey and his call for change were apparently too much for authorities. In a second letter, foreseeing that he might be excluded from the elec-



ILLUSTRATED BY BRU ASSOCIATES

tion, Zhao urged factory workers to “treasure their democratic rights” and write in his name on the ballot. We don’t know whether any were brave enough to follow his advice, but we do know that he was not allowed to run; and immediately following the election on Jan. 14, Zhao was detained for one month. When he was released, he found he had lost his job. Then, two months later, he was detained again. The formal charge against Zhao was “endangering public order.”

In the first open letter to the workers at Factory 813, Zhao credits “the excellent education I received” as the source of the ideals and values that led him to undertake his campaign and that continued to guide him:

At university graduation I wrote in the albums of many classmates the slogan, “Serve the people, struggle in the interests of the people,” as words of parting. I believe that from now on in the course of my life, I will be able to act upon the precious principles I received during my years as a student in order to fight for the people’s welfare, to fight to the end!

Zhao’s family spent months trying to find out whether he had gone to trial for the activities sur-

rounding the January election. In August, they were told he had been sentenced to prison, but they were unable to find out for how long. As far as we know, Zhao Changqing remains in prison.

Liu Nianchun

Liu Nianchun, 49, a teacher and student of Chinese literature, is also a veteran democracy and labor activist. He has been imprisoned many times for his political activities, beginning with the Democracy Wall Movement, a grassroots protest movement of the late 1970s. At that time, Liu was expelled from Beijing Normal College shortly before graduation, and then he spent three years in prison for “coun-

terrevolutionary propaganda and incitement,” i.e., being critical of the government. He continued his activism during the 1989 pro-democracy movement, and in 1994, he spent more than seven months in detention for attempting to establish the League for the Protection of the Rights of the Working People.

In May 1995, after helping to initiate a pro-democracy petition and signing another petition calling for a “spirit of tolerance in China’s political life,” he was seized and held incommunicado. Eventually, he was sentenced to three years of “re-education” in a labor camp, a sentence that was extended by 216 days because he “refused to reform.”

When Liu went on a hunger strike to protest the arbitrary extension of his sentence in 1995, he was subjected to electric torture and beatings, and he became extremely ill. Despite his increasingly poor condition, he was denied medical treatment.

Although Liu’s wife, Chu Hailan, and his mother, Wu Huifen, campaigned persistently and courageously for his release, their efforts resulted only in their being harassed and interrogated and lied to about Liu’s whereabouts. At one point, Liu was detained for months before Chu Hailan was told where he was. During that time, she went from public office to public office demanding to know his whereabouts—and fearing he had disappeared for good. When Liu was sentenced to the labor camp and officials finally allowed Chu to visit

him there, she found, when she arrived, that he had been transferred to a camp that was a five-day train ride away.

Last year, Chinese officials released Liu on a medical parole and exiled him to the United States with Chu Hailan and their daughter. When he arrived, he spoke before a New York press conference sponsored by the organizations Human Rights in China and Human Rights Watch. Liu talked about his own experiences and about the sudden change in his life:

Standing before you today, I feel very strange, as if in a dream. Only two days ago, I was in a re-education-through-labor camp in China. I was extremely sick, and it was very difficult to get a medical examination and even more difficult to obtain treatment. My living conditions were despicable. The police also enlisted convicts to keep close watch over me.

Liu urged those listening not to take his release into exile as a sign that the human rights situation is improving in China: "The very fact that I am here, forced to leave China in order to receive medical treatment, is a serious violation of human rights in itself."

And he was careful to put his own release in the perspective of the billions of Chinese citizens who are still denied human rights:

We must urge the Chinese government to match deeds with words and desist in openly trampling on human rights. China has a population of almost 1.3 billion people. If China were to establish a framework of human rights and democracy, there would be significant improvement and protection of human worth for the entire world.

Mo Lihua

Mo Lihua was an instructor in the education program at Shaoyang Normal College in Hunan Province when the pro-democracy movement swept through China. In a memoir, Mo writes that she had never paid much attention to politics, and there was apparently nothing out of the ordinary in the life she lived with her husband, who was also a teacher, and her young son. But the events of 1989 and their sequel were to transform her into a defiant advocate for justice, a political prisoner, and eventually, an exile.

Mo recalls that on May 20, 1989, she was planning to go shopping for summer clothes when she met some students she knew. She found they were on their way to Beijing to join the protests in Tiananmen Square and were planning to set themselves on fire to "sacrifice [their] lives and blood for the democracy movement." Mo wrote that she "grew choked up just listening to them. What innocent, lovable young students they were! With tears in my eyes I urged them not to sacrifice themselves but to enjoy their youth." She pressed some money on them, and with two hours to go before the train was scheduled to leave for the capital city, Mo returned home and told her husband of her conversation: "We both felt very uneasy about just standing by and watching as these two young people went to risk their lives in Beijing. On the spur of the moment, I decided that the only solution was to go with them to Beijing."

Mo Lihua returned home to Shaoyang before the June 4 crackdown occurred. The evening of the crackdown, she spoke publicly of her grief for those who

had died in Beijing, and the next day, at a large memorial ceremony held by the city's students, she led the people in a chant, "Save our students!"

"This," she says, "is how I grew to be a thorn in the side of the Communist Party authorities that they just could not ignore."

Mo was arrested and held for six months in rat-infested detention centers where female inmates shared a common bed and used a hole in the floor as a toilet. Then she was put on trial.

Although officials tried to pressure Mo into confessing that she harbored "counterrevolutionary aims," she refused, maintaining that she was innocent of any crime. She was permitted to have a lawyer at her trial but was forced to accept one approved by the government. She describes the first interview with her lawyer, in which he describes the ground rules under which he will operate, with bitter wit:

The first time Chen Qiumin came to see me in the detention center, he declared: "I am a Chinese Communist Party member, and I will take care of matters according to party directives. Now, the higher levels have instructed me that I cannot present an innocent plea for you. I cannot defy orders from above. Taking on a case like this one is risky for a lawyer."

Mo Lihua's trial was held in a public auditorium in order, she says, to give the people and university students of Shaoyang a real-life "legal lesson." The state used perjured testimony and then found her guilty. However, Mo was allowed to speak and believes that she was able to vindicate herself. During the trial, Mo writes:

I completely acknowledged all of my activities because under no stipulation of Chinese law did any of them constitute a crime. My analysis was so justified and correct, several members of the audience listening to the case even expressed their support to me, and the public prosecutor was constantly the subject of the audience's jeers. He himself realized that he was in the wrong and didn't dare to speak too harshly.

Mo was sentenced to three years in prison and a one-year deprivation of political rights. While she was incarcerated, Mo taught in the prison school and worked in the prison's garment factory. When she returned home, she found she had lost her job; her husband had been demoted and come under increasing pressure at his job; and her 11-year-old son had been humiliated in school. "I still remember," she says, "seeing how my son had sat crying throughout my trial. He had been a lively, talkative boy, but while I was in prison he had become quiet and reserved. The brutality of the Chinese government's political movements had even cast a dark shadow over the heart of my little boy."

A few months later, in October 1992, Mo granted an interview to a French reporter and subsequently learned she would be arrested. She left China for Hong Kong. The following year she was granted political asylum by the Swedish government, and she and her family moved to Sweden where they continue to live.

Hu Jian

Hu Jian was a young faculty member at Taiyuan Industrial University when the pro-democracy demonstrations began in 1989. The most famous of those

were in Beijing, but students, intellectuals, and workers demonstrated in cities across China. Hu decided to join his students. A fellow teacher, now in exile in Sweden, remembers Hu marching at the front of the earliest demonstration in Taiyuan on May 5, 1989. When arrests began, not long after the June 4 crackdown, Hu's name was on the city's most wanted list.

Hu Jian hid in the Shanxi countryside for two months. But he appeared in Beijing in August, hoping to present a petition to the National People's Congress. When the soldier he approached recognized his name, Hu was arrested. That night he was beaten and tortured, and the torture, which included the use of electric cattle prods, continued throughout his months of detention. By the time of his trial in June 1990, Hu appeared weak and disoriented. His mother appealed the guilty decision, questioning how he could have defended himself in such a weakened state.

Hu was sentenced to ten years, plus three years deprivation of political rights, on the charge of involvement in the "illegal organization" of a "self government association" established by students at Taiyuan Industrial University during the "chaos" of May 1989.

Hu went on several hunger strikes to protest the torture inflicted on him in prison and was declared "mentally ill" in January 1994. His mother, who became more and more concerned about his deteriorating condition, spent a year and a half appealing to authorities to release her son for medical treatment. In the fall of 1995, he died at the age of 43. His mother was told that he died of "natural causes" but was not permitted to see his body. All her requests to see the official death certificate or results of any autopsy have been ignored.

Hu Jian wrote the following poem while he was in prison.

Wind

You, so carefree and unrestrained,
As I cannot be,
My dreams shattered.

You blow through the forest,
Scores of trees bow down before you.
The mountains send you soaring,
The stars surround you,
But you don't care.
Paint the sky pitch-black,
Soak the earth drenching-wet.
When the roar of thunder passes,
You appear gentle and soft.

I envy you, so carefree and unrestrained,
Though I cannot be,
My dreams shattered.
Only when I have burned to ashes,
Blow me a gust of wind.

—Translated by Kris Torgeson

Xiao Xuehui

Xiao Xuehui was an associate professor in the philosophy department at Southwestern Nationalities University at Chengdu in Sichuan Province until 1989. Although she did not see herself as a political person but rather as a "complete bookworm," she participated in the pro-democracy movement and was subsequently charged with "counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement."

Xiao had already run up against officialdom in the late 1970s when, as a student, she edited an unofficial campus literary journal, *April Fifth*, which was banned as part of the crackdown on the Democracy Wall Movement. As a professor, she had written several works on philosophy and sociology. Two of them were very controversial because they articulated views that were at odds with official Communist Party doctrine about human nature and morality.

Perhaps for that reason, Xiao Xuehui was treated very harshly by the authorities following her arrest, first being detained for a year and a half at the Xindu Detention Center where she was reportedly beaten regularly, worsening already serious health problems.

When Xiao was released from prison in 1991, she attempted to continue her academic career, but her efforts were thwarted at every turn. Following her release, she had to serve a two-year sentence of deprivation of her political rights, and she was stripped of her academic credentials and banned from teaching as part of that sentence. A series of lawsuits, filed to regain her credentials, have gone nowhere. In a January 1994 lawsuit, Xiao stated, "If necessary, I will go on filing suits indefinitely until the matter is concluded in a fair and reasonable fashion."

Since being released, Xiao has lived under close surveillance, with police stationed outside her apartment. Her parents have been persuaded to denounce her, and many of her friends, fearing contamination, avoid her. Those who still stay in touch have been frequently harassed and interrogated.

Though she is not permitted to teach, Xiao continues to write on issues such as ethics, humanism, human rights, and freedom of the press. But most journals refuse to publish her work because she is a former political prisoner. Recently, she told a friend that she had managed to get an article accepted. And because she had seen an advertisement for the magazine mentioning her article and a preprinted table of contents in which her article appeared, she was sure it would be published. When the magazine appeared, however, her article was not there.

Last summer, Xiao submitted a paper to the World Congress of Philosophy, which was to be held in Boston, and she was invited to attend and read her paper. But when she sent in an application for a passport, it was denied. She could get no explanation for this denial, and after knocking on many bureaucratic doors, she finally wrote a letter to China's premier. Eventually the date for the conference came and went; nobody ever explained why Xiao had not been allowed to attend the conference, nor did anyone acknowledge that there had even been such a refusal.

Although the Communist regime has been unable to silence Xiao Xuehui, it continues to make sure that words like these, which she wrote in 1993, will reach as few ears as possible:

The most serious threat to humanity today is the prolonged disregard for human rights by systems of autocracy, which have stifled the consciousness and dampened the spirits of so many people. In order to protect humanity, we must first safeguard human rights, for only then can we really begin to speak about solving the many other problems facing human existence. □



Drawn by:
Saw Tin Aung Win,
 Mae La FSP (Further Studies
 Program) School



Drawn by:
Saw Klo Say, Mae La High School No.2

Poem:
 When you hear the sound of my horn,
 March forward without hesitation.
 O Karen people, be awake and march forward
 As the dawn breaks!

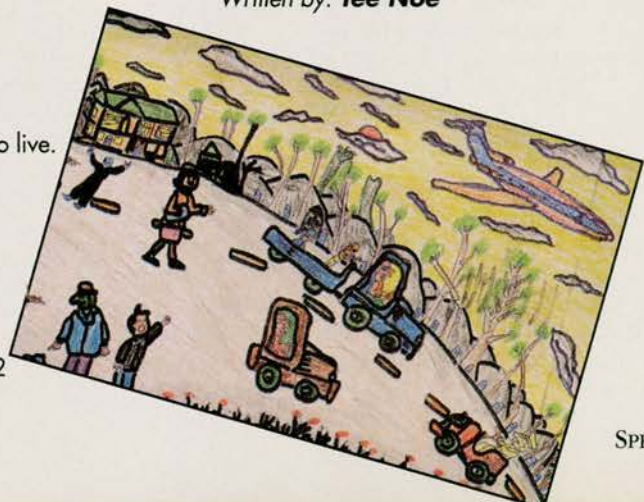
Written by: **Tee Noe**



Drawn by: **Saw Alpha,** Mae La High School No.1

Poem:
 If greed, love for power, and anger can come to an end,
 This flourishing and wonderful world will be an ideal place to live.
 But now it is

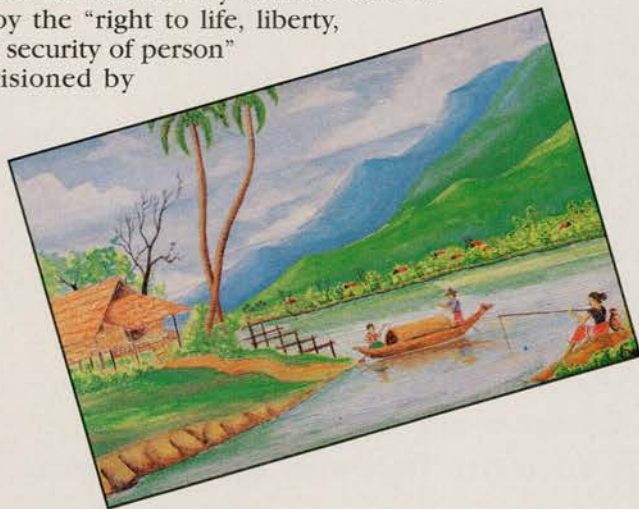
Written by: **Kyauk Yaing**



Drawn by: **Saw Eh Ler,**
 Mae La Primary School No. 12

POSTCARDS FROM A REFUGEE CAMP

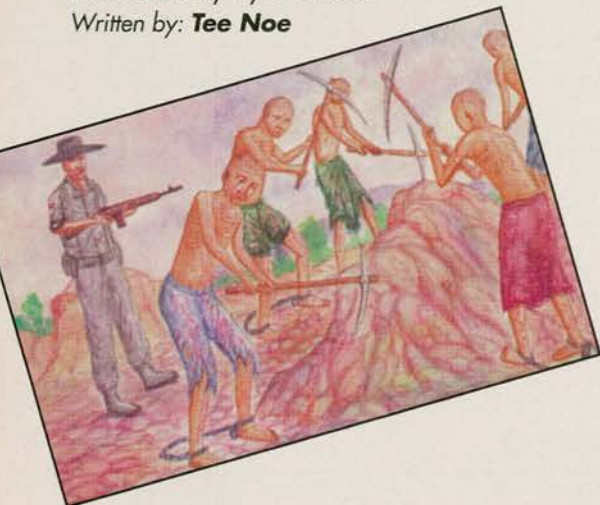
The drawings on these pages were made by students in the Mae La refugee camp, near the Thai-Burma border, and they were winners in a contest held at the camp in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some of the drawings make very clear what the children, who are members of the ethnic Karen minority, have suffered at the hands of the Burmese military junta. Others communicate the children's hopes and aspirations and imagine a world in which they will be able to enjoy the "right to life, liberty, and security of person" envisioned by



Drawn by: **Saw Andy**, Mae La Primary School No. 1

Poem:
Beautiful blue mountain surrounding
The clear, chilly water of Salween
Which set my mind at ease, these are all the inheritance,
Given to me by my ancestors.

Written by: **Tee Noe**



Drawn by: **Saw Tin Aung Win**, Mae La FSP (Further Studies Program) School

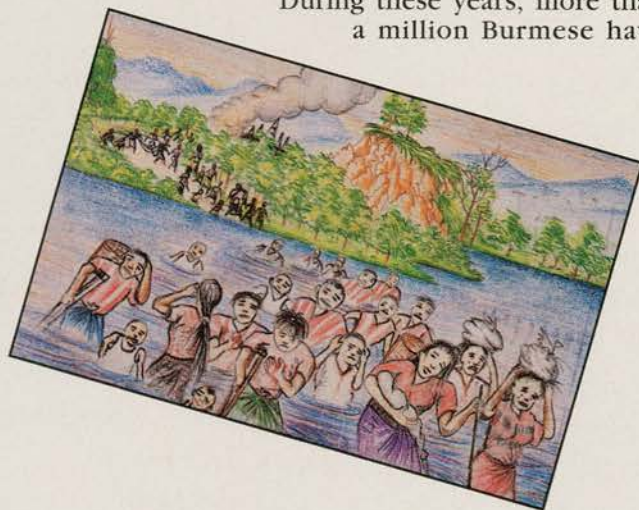
Poem:
To hold eternal power, the SPDC employs forced labor.
The people are in great trouble because of the brutality of the SPDC military junta.

Written by: **Kyauk Yaing**

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Right now, the peaceful world these children dream of seems far away. Since 1962, Burma has been ruled by a military dictatorship, which routinely violates trade union and human rights. In 1990, when Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy overwhelmingly won democratic elections in Burma, they were prevented by the military from assuming leadership of the government. And Aung San Suu Kyi, who subsequently won the Nobel Peace Prize, has been held under virtual house arrest.

During these years, more than a million Burmese have



Drawn by: **Taw Nay Htoo**, Wankha High School

Poem:
The military junta of Burma says,
"Soldiers are saving and protecting people's lives;
They are serving the people."
There is a big mistake.
Are speech and practice going in opposite directions?
Or, perhaps what I see and know are wrong because my vision is different
from yours, junta.
Anyway, one should be wrong, you or me.
With love for the people,
The wrong doer should change what he does.

Written by: **Kyauk Yaing**

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fled across the border into Thailand to escape atrocities committed by the Burmese military and their allies. Some 200,000, mainly members of the Karen and Karenni ethnic minorities, now live in self-governing refugee camps located in Thailand, just over the Burmese border. The refugees face constant dangers and hardship. The children continue to go to school and teachers continue to teach them; but there are frequent military attacks on rice fields, schools, and villages. Last year, one of the camps was destroyed, and a child was killed. On February 19, 1999, several people were injured when Burmese troops shelled the area.

The AFT has a special relationship with the young teachers' union in these camps, the Education Workers' Union, Paan District. In May 1998, AFT Vice President Tom Hobart and Staffer Steve Fleischman visited the refugee camps, bringing computers and money to Karen and Karenni education workers. The teachers proposed using the money for animal husbandry and garden projects; and we have since gotten a letter describing how they and their students have planted vegetable gardens, dug and stocked fish ponds, and started raising ducks, pigs, and chickens.

But we have a chance to do more. The prize-winning drawings reproduced on the previous pages have already been turned into postcards, with the help of the Federation of Trade Unions—Burma and AFT. Each postcard carried information about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in three languages, Burmese, Karen and Karenni; and cards were mailed into Burma and to communities of Burmese exiles around the world.

Now, *American Educator* plans to reissue the postcards for our readers and their friends. The full-color cards will be available in shrink-wrapped packets of eight cards (including the seven shown in this article, plus one additional card). The back of each card will give information about the student who created the picture and the article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that is depicted. The money from the sale of the cards will go directly to help schools and teachers in the camps.

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*Free to AFT members; \$5 to non-members.

HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 41)

major topic on which Holocaust research and discussion among Poles have yet to begin in earnest.

While universities are increasingly taking the issue seriously, a change in the public school curriculum is only planned for the next academic year. Until now, the teachers who went to the trouble of coming up with more on their own were rare. At his high school in Warsaw, teacher Robert Szuchta gives his students old photos and maps and sends them out to locate places that were once part of the Jewish ghetto, demolished by the Nazis. He shows them part of the film, "Shoah" in which old Poles, standing in front of a church, display their prejudices toward the murdered Jews. Then he gets his students to talk about what

they have seen.

"They try to justify the behavior of the Poles by attacking the others: The Jews were passive, the French deported Jews, and so on," he says. "The important thing is to get them to think about it, to relate the Holocaust to situations today, like Bosnia and Kosovo."

A few blocks away from the conference, Wioletta Olesiuk, a schoolteacher from Białystok, visits Cracow's old Jewish cemetery. Walking among tombstones with Hebrew inscriptions dating to the sixteenth century, she says she wants her students to know who the Jews were. Olesiuk's interest in the history of her former Jewish neighbors began when she started noticing unusual, once ornate buildings in certain neighborhoods of Białystok, left in ruins. "I began asking myself, why don't they renovate these buildings?" Finally she understood. The buildings had belonged to the city's now vanished Jewish community. Then, two years after the end of Communism, she attended a Polish production of the musical, "Fiddler on the Roof." At the same time, she befriended a fellow teacher from Israel.

After a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, D.C., she returned to Białystok bursting with questions about the former Jewish community in her city. Local libraries and scholars provided few answers. "They were often uncomfortable with the questions," she says.

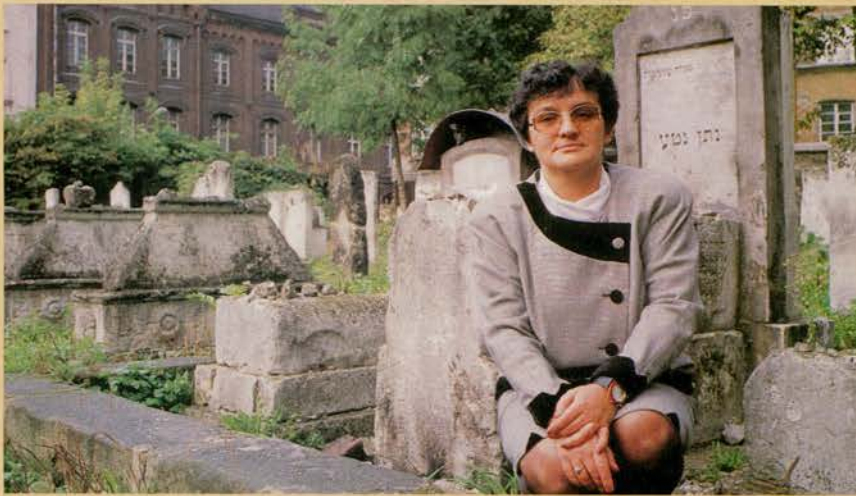
"Ten years ago I taught the Holocaust like other teachers," she says, "ten minutes during one 45-minute lesson." Now Wioletta Olesiuk takes her students, who range in age from ten to fifteen, to visit a renovated synagogue in a nearby town, to Białystok's former Jewish ghetto, and to the local history museum, where they see photographs documenting the Holocaust. Then she talks with her students about what they saw.

"They are very emotional and relieved to talk," she says. "They say, 'I have my room, my bed. I like my life. The children in the ghetto didn't have that.'"

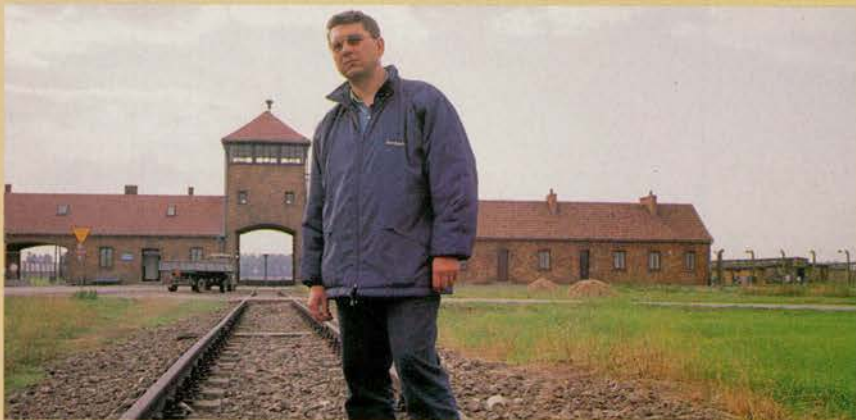
"I can say I get them to look at things differently," she says, with a hint of pride. But the same is not true of the prospective history teachers she instructs at Białystok University. "Most are not interested," she says. "They never learned about the Holocaust in public school."

For Robert Szuchta, Wioletta Olesiuk, and a few others, modifications of the public school curriculum cannot come soon enough. Their hope is that the changes will be sufficient to help the next generation of young Poles see things differently. □

Two Who Teach the Holocaust

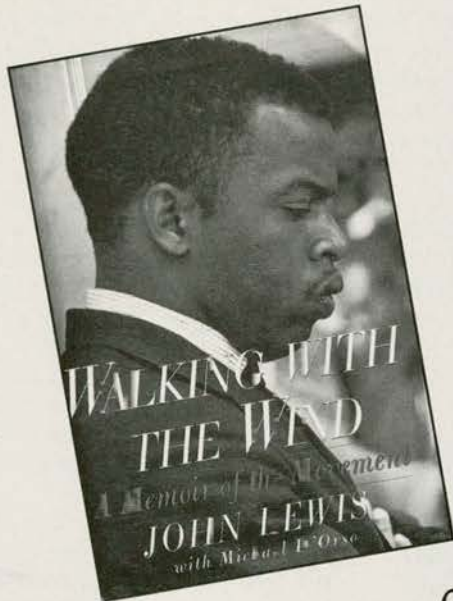


(Above) Wioletta Olesiuk, a lecturer in pedagogy at Białystok University, who also teaches history in public school, exploring a historic Jewish cemetery in Cracow. Unlike many Polish teachers, Olesiuk has devoted herself to finding out about the destruction of Polish Jewry—and passing the knowledge on to her students. (Below) Robert Szuchta, a history teacher in a Warsaw high school, standing on the tracks over which millions of Jews passed on their way to the Birkenau extermination camp. Szuchta believes that it is essential for his students to put aside their comfortable rationalizations and understand the Polish role in the Holocaust.



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ABILITY AND EXPERTISE

(Continued from page 13)

knows about writing papers or solving arithmetic word problems, both in regard to the steps that are involved and how these steps can be executed effectively (Sternberg 1985, 1986, 1988; Sternberg and Swerling, 1996).

2. *Learning skills.* Learning skills are sometimes divided into explicit learning, which occurs when we make an effort to learn, and implicit learning, which occurs when we simply pick up information without any particular effort. Examples of learning skills are distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information; putting together the relevant information; and relating new information to information already stored in memory (Sternberg, 1985, 1986).

3. *Thinking skills.* There are three main sets of thinking skills. Critical (analytical) thinking skills include analyzing, critiquing, judging, evaluating, comparing and contrasting, and assessing. Creative thinking skills include creating, discovering, inventing, imagining, supposing, and hypothesizing. Practical thinking skills include applying, using, and practicing (Sternberg, 1985, 1986, 1994, 1997). They are the first step in translating thought into real-world action.

4. *Knowledge.* There are two main kinds of knowledge that are relevant in academic learning. Declarative knowledge is of facts, concepts, principles, laws, and the like. It is "knowing that." Procedural knowledge is of procedures and strategies. It is "knowing how." Of particular importance is procedural tacit knowledge, which involves knowing how the system in which one is operating functions (Sternberg, Wagner, Williams & Horvath, 1995).

5. *Motivation.* There are a number of different kinds of motivation, and in one or another of its forms, motivation is probably indispensable for school success. Without it, the student never even tries to learn (McClelland, 1985; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell, 1976; Bandura, 1977, 1996; Amabile, 1996; Sternberg and Lubart, 1996).

6. *Context.* All of the elements discussed above are characteristics of the learner. However, it is a mistake to assume, as conventional tests usually do, that factors external to the student's mastery of the material play no part in how well the student does on a test. Such contextual factors include whether the student is taking the test in his or her native language, whether the test emphasizes speedy performance, the importance to the student of success on the test, and the student's familiarity with the kinds of material on the test.

Novices—beginning learners—work toward expertise through deliberate practice. But this practice requires an interaction of all five of the key elements in the model. At the center, driving the elements, is motivation. Without it, nothing happens. Motivation drives metacognitive skills, which in turn activate learning and thinking skills, which then provide feedback to

the metacognitive skills, enabling the student's level of expertise to increase (see also Sternberg, 1985). The declarative and procedural knowledge acquired through the extension of the thinking and learning skills also results in these skills being used more effectively in the future.

All of these processes are affected by, and can in turn affect, the context in which they operate. For example, if a learning experience is in English but the learner has only limited English proficiency, his or her learning will be inferior to that of someone with more advanced English language skills. Or if material is presented orally to someone who is a better visual learner, that individual's performance will be reduced.

Eventually, as the five elements influence one another, the student reaches a kind of expertise at which he or she becomes a reflective practitioner who is able to consciously use a certain set of skills. But expertise occurs at many levels. The expert first-year graduate or law student, for example, is still a far cry from the expert professional. People thus cycle through many times, on the way to successively higher levels of expertise.

Implications for the Classroom

The model of abilities as a form of developing expertise has a number of immediate implications for education, in general, and classroom practice, in particular.

First, teachers and all who use ability and achievement tests should stop distinguishing between what the two kinds of tests assess. The measurements are not different in kind but only in the point at which they are being made.

Second, tests measure *achieved* levels of developing expertise. No test—of abilities or anything else—can specify the highest level a student can achieve.

Third, different kinds of assessments—multiple-choice, short answer, performance-based, portfolio—complement one another in assessing multiple aspects of developing expertise. There is no one “right” kind of assessment.

Fourth, instruction should be geared not just toward imparting a knowledge base, but toward developing reflective analytical, creative, and practical thinking with a knowledge base. Students learn better when they think to learn, even when their learning is assessed with straightforward multiple-choice memory assessments (Sternberg, Torff, and Grigorenko, 1998).

The model I've proposed here views students as novices who are capable of becoming experts in a variety of areas. The traditional model, which posits fixed individual differences—and typically bases the kind of instruction a student gets on these differences—holds many students back from attaining the expertise they are capable of. It is true that for various reasons (including, perhaps, genetic as well as environmentally based differences), not all individuals will reach the same ultimate level of expertise. But they should all be given the opportunity to reach new levels of competence well beyond what they, and in some cases, others may think possible. The fact that

Billy and Jimmy have different IQs tells us something about differences in what they now do. It does not tell us anything about what ultimately they will be able to achieve. □

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CHARTERS

(Continued from page 24)

public schools, charter schools may be working best for middle-class families who live in neighborhoods that probably already have decent public schools. Policymakers have a lot of work ahead of them if they propose to bring charter school reform in California in line with its rhetoric. □

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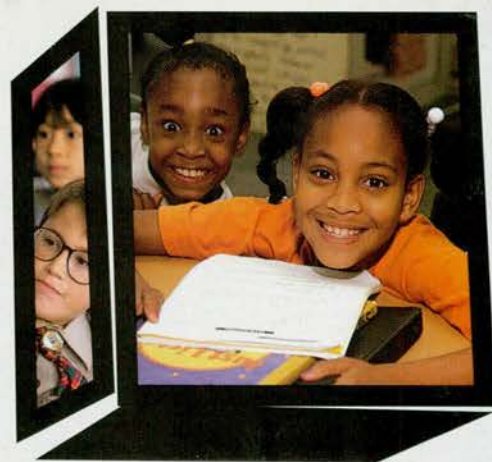
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