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A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS

Hope in Dark Times

RESISTING THE THREAT TO DEMOCRACY WITH UNION ACTIVISM

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ILLUSTRATION BY RAFAEL LÓPEZ

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Understanding History to Fight Tyranny

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

IN THIS ERA of political tumult, many of us are asking several important questions: Are our democracy and our system of checks and balances endangered? If so, what can we do about it, individually and collectively? What can history, both national and global, tell us? Two pieces in this issue provide answers we hope readers will find illuminating. "Hope in Dark Times," by Richard D. Kahlenberg, examines the crisis at hand and the role of trade unions and public education in strengthening democratic values and countering authoritarianism. And an excerpt from *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, by Yale University history professor Timothy Snyder, describes times in the last century when fascism reared its ugly head and offers lessons to counter its return.

Kahlenberg details the ways President Donald Trump seeks to undermine various pillars of democracy—through assaults on the independence of the judiciary, the free press, religious freedom, public education, and trade unions.

"Historically, teachers unions have played a special role in strengthening democratic cultures," Kahlenberg writes, "and they are urgently called on to do so again."

Indeed, the AFT actively engages in what Kahlenberg calls "social justice unionism," pressing for a strong and vibrant democracy that stands up to bigotry and discrimination and protects the civil rights of all. This is unionism that fights for great neighborhood public schools; accessible, affordable higher education that prepares students for productive lives and citizenship; good jobs that can support a middle-class life; the right to voice and agency through participation in a union; and affordable healthcare as an ethical and economic imperative.

In *On Tyranny*, Snyder establishes himself as a cogent voice in the emerging literature of the resistance. He takes readers through three distinct times when Europeans confronted authoritarian regimes: at the end of the First World War in 1918, the end of the Second World War in 1945, and the fall of communism in 1989. Such pivotal points in history marked a victory of pluralism and democracy over authoritarianism—but not forever.

All 20 lessons are easier said than done, especially number 8: "Stand out." While it's safer to go along with the crowd, Snyder reminds us of the benefit of not doing so. "Remember Rosa Parks," he writes. By invoking the woman who refused to give up her seat on the bus, Snyder draws on the proud history of the civil rights movement and highlights the difference one person can make. As he writes in lesson 20, "Be as courageous as you can."

If the next generation is to defend democratic institutions, our students must learn from the past. Who better to teach them than America's educators?

"We might be tempted to think that our democratic heritage automatically protects us from such threats," Snyder writes. "This is a misguided reflex."

We need look no further than Trump's firing of James Comey, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While a president is entitled to fire an FBI director, it raises questions now because Comey was leading an inquiry into possible ties between the Russian government and Trump and his associates.

Snyder offers 20 lessons from the 20th century that relate to today's political climate. The first one, "Do not obey in advance," urges citizens not to engage in "anticipatory obedience" or adapt to authoritarian regimes, for such behavior only emboldens such regimes. Snyder explains how acts of conformity on the part of Austrians ultimately showed Nazi officials what was possible: systematic murder on a massive scale.

Lesson 2, "Defend institutions," reminds us that institutions cannot protect themselves. Rather, it is up to us, as individuals, to ensure their survival. "So choose an institution you care about," Snyder writes—"a court, a newspaper, a law, a labor union—and take its side."

These lessons seem especially important for educators to absorb and impart because, as Kahlenberg writes, they are on the frontline. Public education is society's primary means to foster equity, opportunity, and pluralism. And, since most students in American schools and colleges today were born after the elimination of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the end of de jure segregation in the United States, they might have the "sense that history could move in only one direction: toward liberal democracy," Snyder writes. He warns that when Americans have engaged in such thinking, "we lowered our defenses, constrained our imagination, and opened the way for precisely the kinds of regimes we told ourselves could never return."

If the next generation is to defend democratic institutions, our students must learn from the past. Who better to teach them than America's educators? To avoid the mistakes of previous generations "and to make history, young Americans will have to know some," Snyder writes. "This is not the end, but a beginning."

Let's hope he's right.

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MICHAEL CAMPBELL

Supporting LGBTQ Students

Thank you for the package of articles on enabling lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning students to thrive, which appeared in the Winter 2016–2017 issue of *American Educator*, the most meaningful edition to date. The articles on coming out in high school, supporting LGBTQ+ students, and addressing bias in school are exactly the voices we need at this time to keep the flame of progress burning.

I will be requiring my students to read the LGBTQ package in three of my teacher credential courses (Diversity, Foundations in Education, and Human Sexuality for Educators), so thank you for providing that free resource through your website.

Ongoing thanks for all you do, but in particular for this significant set of articles. Bravo!

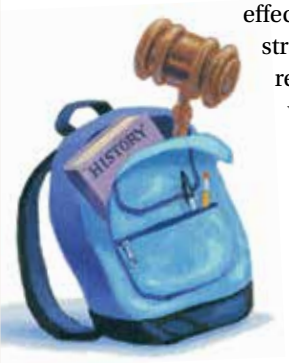
–JOHN BARTELT
University of La Verne
La Verne, CA

Bringing Learning to Life

As a retired high school teacher, I found "A Day in Court" by David Sherrin, which appeared in the Fall 2016 issue, remarkable in two respects. First, I was impressed with his objective of helping students develop the skill of "entering into the mindsets and perspectives of their characters," as Sherrin writes. Through mock trials, students develop the means to understand themselves, the role of culture, and the nature of the historical process.

Second, I commend Sherrin on leading his students in active learning so they become aware of perspectives and the play of emotions. By participating in mock trials, students learn the rules of evidence, the assumptions underlying thought, and the role of values. In attempting to understand others, we must start with our own thoughts and feelings, and adhere to the ancient admonition, "Know thyself."

Such educational objectives and effective teaching strategies are especially relevant now as the world continues to become more ethically engaged—and, at times, challenged.



–ERNEST WIDENHOUSE
Bryson City, NC

Reflections on Literature

Thank you for publishing the article "Teach Me How to Work and Keep Me Kind" by Joseph F. Riener, which appeared in the Fall 2016 issue.

I appreciate his meditation on literature and will try to adapt and adopt his ideas as I work in teacher preparation. The ideas of reading deeply, escorting young people out of childhood, guiding students through literature, and making connections are just a few of the salient points illustrated in this piece.

I cannot remember the last time an article resonated so strongly. I will read and savor it with my students.

–DELORES S. HARVEY
Coppin State University
Baltimore, MD

Praise for Reconnecting McDowell

After reading the article by Jennifer Dubin titled "Mountains to Climb" in the Summer 2016 issue, I'm so moved and inspired by the changes that have been made in McDowell County, West Virginia. I kept wanting to read more. Kudos to Gayle Manchin, Randi Weingarten and the AFT, the Reconnecting McDowell initiative, First Book, Shentel Communications, and the ongoing list of partners mentioned in the article who have made incredible improvements in McDowell County for the students and their families.

The stories about Renaissance Village, the concept of community schools, Sarah Muncy buying the correct size shoes for a student, the Broader Horizons reunion at the Greenbrier, along with stories about individuals like Rebecca Hicks, Christian Nealen, Rayven, and Micah, were so moving; they kind of made me want to move to Welch and figure out a way to help these folks, too. And, who knows—after retiring—I may just do that!

–JANE GONDEK
Elgin, IL

Reading a Science Writer

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed "Narrative Nonfiction" by Joy Hakim, which appeared in the Spring 2016 issue. I was unfamiliar with Hakim's work, but reading about her ideas was very interesting. Yesterday I was at a book store and was thrilled to find one of her books there! It looks great.

–MAREN McLAREN
Dolores Gonzales Elementary School
Albuquerque, NM

VISIT SHOWS PROMISE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Van Wert, Ohio, earned high marks for its public schools when AFT President Randi Weingarten and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, shown below, toured the district this spring with major media outlets. News coverage of the April 20 visit focused not on partisan rancor but on robust, well-supported public school approaches from prekindergarten through high school. It was a chance for one small Midwest school district in a Republican-leaning community to showcase the great work going on inside its public schools—proof positive that "support for public schools transcends politics," Weingarten told reporters at a wrap-up press conference. Learn more at **http://go.aft.org/AE217news1**.

KIRSTEN BARNHART

A CRUEL, CATASTROPHIC BUDGET

President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos have proposed a $10.6 billion cut in federal education funding in the next fiscal year, after factoring in more than $1 billion for vouchers and other school choice options. The White House budget, announced in late May, would eliminate more than 20 programs, including after-school programs that serve 1.6 million children, and $2.1 billion for teacher training and class size reduction. It would cut more than $700 million from Perkins loans for higher education and $168 million for career and technical education. Much of this funding would be shifted to school choice. Trump and DeVos are seeking $400 million to expand charter schools and vouchers for private and religious schools. Another $1 billion would be diverted into new grants that pressure public schools to adopt school choice policies through federal incentives that are modeled after the now-defunct Race to the Top program. The White House also would move $250 million into new grants for voucher research and expansion.

AFT President Randi Weingarten called the plan "cruel, catastrophic," and at odds with the investments made by Congress just a few weeks before the budget's release. In early May, Congress approved a spending bill for the current fiscal year that invests in "public education, healthcare, and programs that help working families and particularly their children," Weingarten said. "It stands in stark contrast to Trump and DeVos's efforts to defund public education by reaching consensus across party lines to invest in public schools, [and] Congress should follow this blueprint to invest in public schools in the 2018 budget as well." For more on Trump's proposed education cuts, visit **www.theatln.tc/2rdcI4w**.

CUTS TO MEDICAID AND EDUCATION SERVICES

The American Health Care Act won a narrow, party-line victory in the U.S. House of Representatives on May 4, and there are growing concerns that this bill would hit the classroom hard should it become law. The House-passed bill, for example, would cut Medicaid by 25 percent over 10 years and impose a "per-capita cap" on funding for certain groups of people, such as children and the elderly. That is a major concern for schools, since Medicaid helps schools offset costs for special education services and equipment, and for some preventive care for other Medicaid-eligible students. A coalition of education and advocacy groups warns that these cuts would force states to "ration health care for children," the *New York Times* reports. Read more at **www.nyti.ms/2qH08WX**.

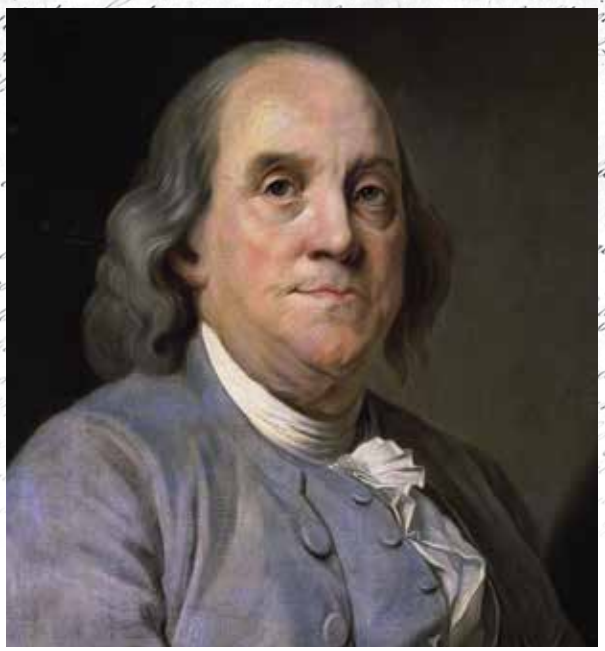
MORE THAN A PLAYGROUND FIGHT

The U.S. Supreme Court in April heard arguments in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, which could become a major church-state decision by the court. It centers on a 2012 application by a Missouri church for a state grant to help fix the church's preschool playground. Missouri originally declined the application based on a state constitutional provision prohibiting direct or indirect public funding to religious organizations. "This is the first case the court has heard in a decade and a half about providing resources to churches," observes *The Atlantic* magazine, and it could "shape future fights over school-voucher programs." For details, visit SCOTUSblog at **www.bit.ly/2mzKlH7**.

MOBILIZATION TO BUILD SCHOOLS, NOT WALLS

"Build schools, not walls" was the message delivered by AFT activists at a series of May 1 rallies, marches, and meetings held in hundreds of cities around the nation. Participants joined with immigrant communities, students, parents, and engaged citizens to support public education and to fight for a fairer and more just immigration system. Demonstrations, like the one in Boston shown below, underscored the need to keep schools as safe spaces, free from immigration raids, bigotry, and hate. Protesters also demanded that funds meant for a border wall be used instead to strengthen public schools. It was the latest in a series of national mobilizations coordinated by the AFT, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, and the National Education Association. Read more at **http://go.aft.org/AE217news2**.

COURTESY OF BOSTON TEACHERS UNION



Supporting Civics Education

AS BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DEPARTED Independence Hall in Philadelphia at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a woman stopped him and asked, "Well, doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"

Franklin famously replied, "A republic, if you can keep it." Nearly 230 years after the convention, and 27 amendments later, the Constitution remains the law—if we can keep it.

But maintaining a republic, as Franklin suggested, requires an educated citizenry. And educated citizens depend on classroom teachers who impress upon young people the importance of participating in civic life and rejecting complacency. For educators of all grade levels looking to impart such lessons as well as to supplement their materials on early American history, several new resources on the Constitution have been added to **ShareMyLesson.com**, thanks to the Constitutional Sources Project (ConSource) and iCivics.

Describing the convention and what our Founding Fathers debated during it, these materials take students back in time. Resources cover topics such as whether judges should enact laws, which officials should shape foreign policy, and what responsibilities ought to be vested within the executive branch. Although these resources are based on history, the issues they raise are still relevant today.

Given the recent presidential election and our current political climate, many educators likely feel it is more important than ever for students to learn about the challenges our founders faced. Along with understanding historical context, students must also grasp the importance of civil discourse, civic engagement, and civic participation—all of which keep the heart of American constitutional self-government beating.

To bolster resources on civics, Share My Lesson has partnered with organizations that not only support the teaching of content knowledge but also provide lessons on the need for students to participate in civic life. In 2014, Share My Lesson joined the Civics Renewal Network (**www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org**), which is made up of 30 organizations, such as the Center for Civic Education, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and the National Constitution Center, committed to raising awareness of the need for civics education and providing high-quality materials to teachers.

These resources range from online games in which middle school students serve as president and work with Congress, to simulations that ask students to debate questions about representative government and the balance of power as delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

Civics education is more than students simply knowing how a bill becomes a law. It involves powerful learning about history, citizenship, and current events. And it requires students to think critically, collaborate with their peers, and engage in hands-on projects that strengthen both their learning and their commitment to good citizenship.

–THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM

Recommended Resources

See Share My Lesson's civics collection at **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml1**, which includes resources from:

- ConSource: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml2**
- iCivics: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml3**
- National Constitution Center: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml4**
- SML's social justice collection: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml5**
- SML's Constitution Day collection: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml6**
- Professional development webinars: **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml7**
- SML's "Today's News, Tomorrow's Lesson": **http://go.aft.org/AE217sml8**

Looking for particular resources? E-mail **help@sharemylesson.com**.

Hope in Dark Times

Resisting the Threat to Democracy with Union Activism

The photos here and on the following pages show protests that have occurred since the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency. Many labor union members have participated in these events, including the Women's March on Washington in January and the March for Science in April, as well as protests at various airports against Trump's proposed Muslim ban.

By Richard D. Kahlenberg

Democracy is in crisis across the globe. For years, polling in the United States and Europe has suggested an alarming rise in the number of young people who believe democracy is a bad way to run a society.[1] Democracy is in retreat in Russia, Hungary, India, Venezuela, and the Philippines. And in November, the unthinkable happened, as nearly half of American voters elected a president who has consistently disregarded democratic constitutional norms such as freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and the independence of the judiciary—norms that until now had been broadly accepted by members of both major political parties. That president, Donald J. Trump, is now seeking to weaken other pillars of our democracy, including public education and free trade unions.

Historically, teachers unions have played a special role in strengthening democratic cultures, and they are urgently called on to do so again. What is needed now more than ever is a "social justice unionism" that goes beyond the narrow self-interest of members in bargaining for better wages and benefits to also engage in critical fights for public schooling, trade unionism, and civil rights at home and abroad. This movement needs to not only fiercely resist bad ideas but also offer a new, vibrant, inclusive vision that can be a model for people who champion democratic values across the globe.

Richard D. Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, is the author of Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy *(2007), a coauthor of* Why Labor Organizing Should Be a Civil Right *(2012), and a coauthor of* A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education *(2014). This article draws upon three Century Foundation reports—"Putting Democracy Back into Public Education," "America Needs Public School Choice, Not Private School Vouchers," and "How Defunding Public Sector Unions Will Diminish Our Democracy"—as well as "Labor at a Crossroads: Can Broadened Civil Rights Law Offer Workers a True Right to Organize?,"* The American Prospect, *and "How to Protect Diversity during Trump's Presidency,"* New Republic.

The Crisis in American Democracy

While opposing parties have often chided presidential candidates for watering down constitutional norms, Trump's candidacy was different. Fellow Republicans repeatedly had to distance themselves from their own standard-bearer for flouting essential democratic values. Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, said that, in Trump, "we have reached the culmination of the founders' fears: Democracy is producing a genuine threat to the American form of self-government."[2] Peter Wehner, another veteran Republican official, wrote of Trump's candidacy: "The founders, knowing history and human nature, took great care to devise a system that would prevent demagogues and those with authoritarian tendencies from rising up in America. That system has been extraordinarily successful. We have never before faced the prospect of a political strongman becoming president. Until now."[3] (To understand how tyranny in European history can inform our country's current political climate, see page 17.)

Consider how, once elected, Trump has continued to challenge democratic values with alarming frequency:

- ***Freedom of religion.*** The First Amendment provides for the free exercise of religion, yet during the campaign, Trump proposed a religious test on immigration, calling for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." Once in office, Trump asked former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani to craft a version of his Muslim ban, which itself has been challenged in the courts.
- ***Freedom of the press and undermining facts.*** The free press is essential for holding government officials accountable, which is why the U.S. Supreme Court, more than a half century ago, suggested special protection from libel suits brought by public figures.[4] During the campaign, however, Trump promised to "open up" the nation's libel laws.[5] Once elected, Trump described members of the press as "enemies of the people," a phrase used by Joseph Stalin and other dictators. He also sought to discredit the press by claiming that they engage in "fake news," a technique used by autocrats in other countries.
- ***An independent judiciary.*** During the campaign and the early months of his presidency, Trump repeatedly attacked the federal judiciary, which in the founders' vision represented a coequal and independent branch of government. He famously criticized a federal judge presiding over a lawsuit against Trump University, suggesting an Indiana-born jurist of Mexican heritage, Gonzalo Curiel, was incapable of being neutral in the suit because of Trump's position on illegal immigration. When Trump's travel ban on individuals from a number of Muslim-majority countries was successfully challenged in court, Trump demeaned the author of the ruling as a "so-called judge," which Trump's own Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, disavowed.
- ***Scapegoating minorities and women.*** More generally, Trump has used the classic tactic of demagogues seeking to enhance their own power by whipping up animosity against society's minorities. He has focused mostly on Muslims and immigrants from Mexico, whom he broad-brushed as "rapists." He chose as vice president Indiana's governor, Mike Pence, who came to national fame for rolling back the rights of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) communities. The founders warned against a "tyranny of the majority" that overrode the rights of minorities. While some of the founders were particularly concerned about left-wing populism that targeted property owners, Trump's right-wing populism was even more insidious, fixating on elite liberals who allegedly "coddled minorities."[6] Trump has also objectified women throughout his life and held them in such low regard that he bragged of his ability to commit sexual assault with impunity.
- ***Seeking to undermine respect for election results.*** In the third presidential debate with Hillary Clinton, Trump astounded observers by refusing to say he would respect the results of the election, a hallmark of American democracy for centuries. After the election, he made a baseless claim about Clinton's victory in the popular vote, charging without evidence that millions of undocumented individuals had voted illegally.

Historically, teachers unions have played a special role in strengthening democratic cultures, and they are urgently called on to do so again.

- ***A preference for authoritarians.*** During the campaign, Trump showered admiration on Vladimir Putin, at one point saying the Russian dictator was "a leader far more than our leader." Russian chess champion Garry Kasparov responded, "Vladimir Putin is a strong leader in the same way that arsenic is a strong drink."[7] Trump also expressed admiration for Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong Un of North Korea, and the Chinese leaders behind the Tiananmen Square massacre.[8] "There is no precedent for what Trump is saying," noted former Mitt Romney adviser Max Boot. "George McGovern was not running around saying 'what a wonderful guy Ho Chi Minh is!'"[9] In a stunning postelection interview with Bill O'Reilly, Trump answered a question about Putin's murders by asking, "What, you think our country's so innocent?" Republican Senator John McCain denounced the president for "flirting with authoritarianism and romanticizing it as our moral equivalent."[10]

Trump has exhibited a number of other traits typical of authoritarians: expressing impatience with the rule of law (advocating torture and the murder of families of suspected terrorists); celebrating the violence of the mob (suggesting protestors be "carried out in a stretcher"); endorsing the possibility of imprisoning his political opponent ("lock her up"); and generally suggesting that, like a Central American strongman, he was uniquely situated to rescue the nation ("I alone can fix it").

Attacks on public education and trade unions need to be viewed as just as troubling as attacks on the independence of the judiciary, the free press, and religious freedom.

These developments came on top of long-standing threats to our democracy from state voter suppression efforts that target low-income and minority communities and from the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision to amplify the already outsized voice of wealthy corporations. Trump's presidency is likely to accelerate both disturbing trends.

In this context, President Trump's agenda to privatize public schools and attack labor unions—although staples of conservatism for a generation—takes on a more menacing character. Indeed, attacks on public education and trade unions, pillars of our democracy, need to be viewed as just as troubling as attacks on the independence of the judiciary, the free press, and religious freedom.

The Privatization of Public Education

In the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump campaigned on a program to employ $20 billion in federal funds for block grants to promote school choice, including private school vouchers.[11] Trump's education secretary, Betsy DeVos, has been an ardent champion of private school vouchers.[12] She "has spent decades—and many millions—lobbying to destabilize and defund public schools," notes Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers.[13] The administration's first budget proposal included $1.4 billion in new funds as a down payment on an ultimate plan for $20 billion in annual spending.[14] Other press reports suggest the administration is considering a proposal to devote up to $20 billion to create the nation's first federal tax credit program to support students attending private schools.[15]

Although a less transparent threat to public school funding than a direct voucher, the tax proposal, notes Sasha Pudelski of AASA, the School Superintendents Association, is "a backdoor voucher." She observes, "The end result is the same—federal tax dollars going to private schools."[16] Either form of privatization—a direct private school voucher or a private school tax credit—would weaken a central feature of American democracy.

Since the founding of public education in the United States, public schools have been charged not only with giving future workers skills for the private marketplace, but also with preparing students to be citizens in a democracy. The founders of our country were deeply concerned with finding ways to ensure that their new democracy, which provided ultimate sovereignty to the collective views of average citizens through voting, not fall prey to demagogues. The problem of the demagogue, the founders believed, was endemic to democracy.[17]

One answer to the threat of demagogues and rule by the "mob" in a democracy, the founders suggested, was America's elaborate constitutional system of checks and balances that distributes power among different branches of government. But education provided a second fundamental bulwark against demagogues. Thomas Jefferson argued that general education was necessary to "enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom."[18] The founders wanted voters to be intelligent in order to discern serious leaders of high character from con men who do not have the nation's interests at heart.

Beyond that, public education in the United States was also meant to instill a love of liberal democracy: a respect for the separation of powers, for a free press and free religious exercise, and for the rights of political minorities. The founder of American public schooling, 19th-century Massachusetts educator Horace Mann, saw public education as fundamental to democracy. "A republican form of government, without intelligence in the people, must be, on a vast scale, what a mad-house, without superintendent or keepers, would be on a small one."[19]

The centrality of public education to American democracy was not just the quaint belief of 18th- and 19th-century leaders. In 1938, when dangerous demagogues were erecting totalitarian regimes in many parts of the world, President Franklin D. Roosevelt noted: "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."[20]

And in a 1952 Supreme Court case, Justice Felix Frankfurter, noting the central role of public schools in our system of self-governance, said teachers should be regarded "as the priests of our democracy."[21] All nations, the late historian Paul Gagnon noted, provide an excellent education to "those who are expected to run the country," and the quality of that education "cannot be far from what everyone in a democracy needs to know."[22]

A system of private school vouchers and tax credits jeopardizes this whole vision on several levels: private school voucher programs have in some cases reduced academic achievement (which could produce less-discerning voters); they are not democratically con-

trolled (and therefore don't model democracy for students); private schools receiving vouchers aren't open to all students in the way that public schools are and could further segregate students (undercutting the democratic message that we are all equal); and, worst of all, they are not even designed to promote democratic values.

Private school vouchers are sold as a way for parents to handpick schools that reinforce the values taught at home, but a democracy requires critical thinkers who are exposed to new ideas and think creatively about competing points of view. As an empirical matter, moreover, vouchers have failed to raise academic achievement, and student performance sometimes slides backward. In a nation where large proportions of students already have trouble distinguishing "fake news" from the real thing, we can hardly afford to reduce academic skills.[23]

Martin Carnoy of Stanford University recently published a report summarizing the evidence of voucher programs from Milwaukee, Cleveland, New York City, Washington, D.C., Florida, Chile, and India and concluded that "research does not show that vouchers significantly improve student achievement."[24] The most recent studies are the most damning. As Kevin Carey of New America notes, the newest research on voucher programs in Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio shows negative results for students.[25] Tulane University's Douglas Harris points out that in Louisiana, for example, "students who participated in the voucher program had declines in achievement test scores of 8 to 16 percentile points."[26]

Private schools also fail to model for students the democratic decision making that public schools do. Conservatives in recent years have tried to redefine "public" education as any form of education, including private schools, that receives taxpayer funds.[27] But unlike public schools, private schools are not democratically controlled and so do not model for students the give and take of democracy.[28] As journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones notes, for the ancient Athenians and Romans, "'Public' stood not just for how something was financed—with the tax dollars of citizens—but for a communal ownership of institutions and for a society that privileged the common good over individual advancement."[29]

Another part of being public is providing democratic access. Public schools take all comers and cannot discriminate based on a student's religion or other factors. By contrast, in North Carolina, as Century Foundation policy associate Kimberly Quick has documented, publicly funded vouchers have been used to support schools that openly discriminate based on religion and sexual orientation.[30]

For example, Fayetteville Christian School received more than $285,000 in taxpayer funding in 2015–2016 even though the school declares in its student handbook that it "will not admit families that belong to or express faith in non-Christian religions such as, but not limited to: Mormons (LDS Church), Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims (Islam), non-Messianic Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, etc." The school also says it "will not admit families that engage in illegal drug use, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality (LGBT) or other behaviors that Scripture defines as deviate and perverted."[31] Using public funds to educate students in religiously segregated institutions, as political theorist Amy Gutmann has noted, may undercut one of the central lessons of democracy: that in America, students of very different backgrounds can learn in a common space how to navigate and negotiate difference, as we do in the democratic process.[32]

Vouchers are sold as a way for parents to handpick schools that reinforce values taught at home, but a democracy requires critical thinkers who are exposed to new ideas.

The Assault on Labor Unions

Trump's attacks on labor unions are also deeply troubling for democracy. Although Trump promoted himself as the candidate of the forgotten American worker, and he won white union households without college-degree holders by a 12-point margin, he has embraced a consistently anti-labor agenda.[33] As my Century Foundation colleague Moshe Marvit notes, Trump's early labor record suggests that "he may be worse than any president in recent memory."[34]

Trump has filled his Cabinet with billionaires "who have spent their careers attacking workers and government," Marvit notes. Trump's initial nominee to head the Labor Department, Andrew Puzder, told a reporter he liked replacing employees with robots because: "They're always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there's never a slip-and-fall, or an age, sex or race discrimination case."[35] Trump has appointed an individual to the U.S. Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, who has generally sided with corporations against workers and

Unions continue to have a positive effect on ameliorating extreme inequalities of wealth.

may well provide the deciding vote to strip public sector unions of their ability to collect dues from "free riders"—employees who benefit from collective bargaining but do not wish to pay for it. Doing so would deal a crippling blow to public sector unions, a vibrant sector of America's declining labor movement.[36] Public sector unions dodged a bullet when the Supreme Court, after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, deadlocked on *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* in 2016. But conservatives are hoping a new case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, will provide a second bite at the apple with Gorsuch on board.

The assault on organized labor is deeply troubling in part because labor unions, along with the civil rights movement, can be "architects of democracy," in the words of Martin Luther King Jr.[37] Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the thriving civic associations that keep American democracy vitalized, and for the past century, unions have been a critical part of that framework. Recognizing the important role of unions in liberal democracies, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides in Article 23 that "Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests."

In 1980, President Ronald Reagan championed the role of Polish unions in challenging dictatorial rule by the Communist Party. Reagan declared in a Labor Day speech that year, "Where free unions and collective bargaining are forbidden, freedom is lost." The late AFT President Albert Shanker saw a pattern in authoritarian regimes. "There is no freedom or democracy without trade unions," he noted. "The first thing a dictator does is to get rid of the trade unions."[38] Indeed, when the United States attempts to plant the seeds of democracy in other countries, free trade unions are critical elements of what we advocate.

For one thing, democracies need a strong middle class, and unions help create shared prosperity. In America after the Great Depression, strong unions helped build the middle class, and they continue to have a positive effect on ameliorating extreme inequalities of wealth. Research finds, for example, that unions compress wage differences between management and labor. According to one study, "controlling for variation in human resource practices, unionized establishments have on average a 23.2 percentage point lower manager-to-worker pay ratio relative to non-union workplaces."[39] By the same token, as the Center for American Progress's David Madland has vividly illustrated, the decline in union density in the United States between 1969 and 2009 has been accompanied by a strikingly similar decline in the share of income going to the middle class (the middle three-fifths of the income distribution).

Civic organizations that are run democratically can also be an important mechanism for acculturating citizens to the inner workings of democracy. Unions are among the most important of these organizations, bringing together rank-and-file workers from a variety of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds, and serving as what Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam calls "schools for democracy." Union members learn skills that are essential to a well-functioning democracy: how to run meetings, debate one another, and organize for political action.[40] Labor unions can also help create a culture of participation among workers. Being involved in workplace decisions and the give-and-take of collective bargaining, voting on union contracts, and voting for union leadership have all been called important drivers of "democratic acculturation."[41]

In addition, union members routinely engage in civic activities, such as staffing phone banks and canvassing voters door to door. This involvement can boost civic participation among union members and nonmembers alike. One study found that for every 1-percentage-point increase in a state's union density, voter turnout increased between 0.2 and 2.5 percentage points. In a presidential election, a 10-percentage-point increase in union density could translate into 3 million more voters.[42] Likewise, research shows that unions played an important role in countering "an authoritarian streak" among working-class voters. Sociologist and political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset found that organized labor made workers more inclined to embrace democratic norms by inculcating "civic virtues in its members."[43]

Social Justice Unionism and the AFT

Given the extraordinary threats facing our democracy, unions must not limit themselves to their traditional bread-and-butter work of negotiating better wages and benefits for members. The times demand a social justice unionism that resists the Trump agenda on an array of fronts: privatization of schools, union bashing, and cutbacks on civil rights at home and human rights abroad. But in this difficult era, social justice unionism also needs to promote a forward-looking agenda that includes making public

schools more democratic, fighting to expand union organizing rights at the state and local levels, and adopting an approach on civil rights and diversity that is more inclusive.

The resistance to Trump's anti-democratic agenda has already begun, and the AFT has been a central player—joining the 2017 Women's March the day after the inauguration, where the crowd was so big that people couldn't move, and supporting the large numbers who flocked to airports in response to Trump's travel ban. We have seen judges stand up to Trump's unconstitutional restriction on travel, and the press stand up to the administration's attempt to intimidate them. We've seen Muslims raise money to rebuild Jewish cemeteries that were vandalized, and Jews, such as AFT President Randi Weingarten, committing to register as Muslims if Trump moves forward on his pernicious proposal for a registry. But these early promising developments must be sustained over the long haul.

The AFT has a special history upon which it can draw at this moment of democratic crisis. There are other labor unions that represent workers, and there are other organizations that represent teachers. But only the AFT stands directly at the intersection of public education and the trade union movement, both of which are so essential to the survival of democracy.

Throughout its 100-year history, the AFT has epitomized social justice unionism. That was true when early AFT members created the union's motto: "Democracy in education; education for democracy." It was true in the 1950s, when the AFT was the only education organization that filed an amicus brief to overturn segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*. And it is true today, under Weingarten's fight for "solution-driven unionism" that emphasizes the importance of teachers connecting with the communities they serve.[44]

Through a third of the AFT's history—the 33 years from 1964–1997—Al Shanker lived and breathed social justice unionism as president of the AFT and United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York City. As I explain in my 2007 biography, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Unions, Schools, Race, and Democracy*,[45] Shanker believed that teachers unions could be at the forefront of promoting a more democratic society in three distinct ways: by not only fighting for better wages and benefits for members, but also getting involved in politics and leading coalitions of educators to defend public education; by representing teachers, but also being part of the larger trade union movement that represents sheet metal workers, farm workers, and nurses; and by participating in larger progressive movements for civil rights at home and human rights abroad.*

Today, social justice unionism could update and expand on this proud history in three key areas. Simultaneously playing defense and offense, unions should be (1) fighting privatization and making sure public schools are more democratic; (2) defending unions from federal attack and championing state and local efforts to strengthen organized labor; and (3) supporting civil rights at home and human rights internationally, and extending notions of diversity to be more inclusive of disadvantaged people of all races.

Only the AFT stands directly at the intersection of public education and the trade union movement, both of which are so essential to the survival of democracy.

1. Strengthening Public Schools to Promote Democracy

Although public schools do a much better job of promoting democratic values than do private schools under a system of vouchers, social justice unionism should do more than just fight against privatization. In "Putting Democracy Back into Public Education," former schools superintendent Clifford Janey and I outline a four-part strategy for making public schools more democratic: improving our civics curriculum, promoting school integration,† supporting community schools,‡ and enhancing teacher voice.

The first of these approaches addresses the "explicit curriculum" students are taught, while the last three influence the "implicit curriculum" of what students observe about their school environments. Do students have access to economically and racially integrated schools where they are treated equally, or are they segregated into separate and unequal schools or tracks

*For more on Shanker, see "Albert Shanker's Tough Liberalism" in the Summer 2008 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2008/kahlenberg.
†For more on school integration, see "From All Walks of Life" in the Winter 2012–2013 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter 2012-2013/kahlenberg.
‡For more on community schools, see "Where It All Comes Together" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/blank_villarreal.

Civics classes must not only emphasize an understanding of history and government but also be a venue for learning the skills of citizenship.

within schools? Are the voices of parents and community members heard as a part of decision making, or do state takeovers and billionaire philanthropists who bankroll reform efforts call the shots? Are teachers involved in determining how schools are run, or do autocratic principals boss them around? These are all critical questions, because no matter what the explicit curriculum says about democracy, as union leader Adam Urbanski has noted, "You cannot teach what you do not model."

Strengthening History and Civics

To begin with, schools must do a much better job of directly enhancing students' appreciation for liberal democratic values through the curriculum. Exposure to existing civics classes is not enough. Ninety-seven percent of 12th-grade students already report taking a civics or government class in high school.[46] State policies on civics have not been found to be associated with greater informed political participation by young adults.[47]

But quality of instruction does matter. Research finds that "done right, school-based civic education can have a significant impact on civic knowledge," notes William Galston of the Brookings Institution's Governance Studies Program, and that such knowledge, in turn, "enhances support for democratic principles and virtues, promotes political participation, helps citizens better understand the impact of public policy on their concerns, gives citizens the framework they need to absorb and understand new civic information, and reduces generalized mistrust and fear of public life."[48]

In 2003, the Albert Shanker Institute outlined a strategy for civics education that remains compelling today. The blueprint was endorsed by a wide variety of civil rights advocates, business and labor leaders, and public officials from various ideological backgrounds, who were all committed to supporting democratic values. Signatories included progressives such as Bill Clinton, Henry Cisneros, Wade Henderson, John Lewis, and Richard Riley, but also conservatives such as Frederick Hess, Harvey Mansfield, and Norman Podhoretz.[49]

The group eschewed relativism by declaring their conviction "that democracy is the worthiest form of human governance ever conceived." They went on to suggest that because we are not born democrats, "we cannot take its survival or its spread—or its perfection in practice—for granted. We must transmit to each generation the political vision of liberty and equality that unites us as Americans, and a deep loyalty to the political institutions put together to fulfill that vision."

The group outlined a strategy that called for a robust history/social studies curriculum, starting in the elementary years and continuing through every year of schooling; a full and honest teaching of the American story; an unvarnished account of what life has been and is like in nondemocratic societies; and a cultivation of the virtues essential to a healthy democracy.

Critically, civics classes must not only emphasize an understanding of history and government but also be a venue for learning the skills of citizenship, sometimes referred to as action civics. A 2014 report of the Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement provides important guidelines on practices that can make for effective civics learning.[50] The groups suggest incorporating discussions of current issues—such as global warming, gun control, racial profiling, and immigration—into the classroom to make civics feel relevant to the lives of young people. According to the report, service projects and extracurricular activities, such as speech and debate clubs and school newspapers, should be encouraged. Most importantly, students should be given the opportunity to participate in school governance. In New York, for example, students took on a project to reverse budget cuts to programs they deemed important—and won.

School Integration

Social justice unionism should also renew the fight for school integration by class and race, rather than accepting segregation as given, as much of the education reform movement does. As the *New York Times*'s Hannah-Jones has noted, segregation undercuts the public nature of public schools, and undercuts the claim that public schools are "open to all comers."[51] By contrast, efforts to promote socioeconomic and racial integration of schools strengthen the health of our democracy because integrated schools: underline the democratic message that, in America, we are all political equals; promote tolerance and acceptance and make demagogic appeals that scapegoat minorities less likely to be effective; and raise educational attainment, which, in turn, is directly correlated with democratic participation rates.

One key principle undergirding American democracy is that we all have not only an equal vote in elections but also an equal right to feel a part of the nation's democratic heritage. Because Americans are bound not by blood but by a set of democratic ideals, everyone—no matter what race or national origin or religion or length of time in this country—can lay equal claim to the ideas of Jefferson and Madison and Washington, as Ta-Nehisi Coates and others have noted.[52] When American schoolchildren are educated in what are effectively apartheid schools—divided by race and class—the democratic message of equal political rights and heritage is severely undermined.

Likewise, demagogues can better inflame passions against those they deem as "others"—Muslims, Mexican immigrants, or African Americans, for example—when there are large audiences who do not personally know many members of these groups, partly because they were raised in communities and schools that were almost exclusively white and Christian. The profound lesson of the gay rights movement, for example, is that only when gay Americans openly came out as neighbors, coworkers, and classmates did efforts to demonize homosexuals lose their potency. So too, a large body of research finds that integrated schools can reduce prejudice and racism that stem from ignorance and lack of personal contact.[53] As Justice Thurgood Marshall noted in a 1974 case, "Unless our children begin to learn together, then there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together."[54]

Providing an excellent, integrated education also promotes democracy by improving educational attainment, which increases political participation. Controlling for family socioeconomic status and academic achievement, a 2013 longitudinal study found that students attending socioeconomically integrated schools are as much as 70 percent more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in a four-year college than those attending high-poverty schools.[55] Political philosopher Danielle Allen has suggested that denying an adequate education to low-income and minority students, as we routinely do, is another form of "voter suppression," given the strong correlation between educational attainment and voter participation. In 2012, Census data show that 72 percent of adults with a bachelor's degree or more voted, compared with less than 32 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.[56]

Although school integration may seem a lost cause in the era of Trump, most plans are locally driven. In fact, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) school board unanimously adopted a school diversity plan for its magnet schools the day after Trump's election. Today, 100 school districts and charter schools consciously consider socioeconomic status as a factor in student assignment, up from two in 1996.[57] In 2001, for example, Cambridge, Massachusetts, adopted a plan to produce economic diversity through public school choice. The schools have also proven remarkably integrated by race. Graduation rates in Cambridge for low-income, African American, and Latino students are as much as 20 percentage points higher than in nearby Boston.

Providing an excellent, integrated education also promotes democracy by improving educational attainment, which increases political participation.

Community Schools and Community Input

Where it is not possible to integrate schools, social justice unionism should fight for the wraparound services that can make community schools effective. Doing so will provide students the supports they need to succeed, and it will also promote our democracy. As David Kirp of the University of California, Berkeley, has noted, well-fed and healthy students are more likely to be active participants in our democracy.[58]

Likewise, in both integrated and nonintegrated environments, social justice unionism should fight for greater parental and community input into how schools are run. While some market-oriented education reformers have advocated for state takeovers of struggling school districts, those efforts are rarely effective and they undercut democratic norms, as the Schott Foundation's John Jackson has observed.[59] It is important to ask: Do students see that parents and community members have input on key issues such as where new schools are built, or does a remote state actor or outside consultant make these decisions unilaterally?

In the years before District of Columbia schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee implemented her motto that "collaboration is overrated," for example, district schools took a more democratic approach. In 2004, Clifford Janey created the D.C. Education Compact (DCED), made up of government leaders, community activists, foundation officials, business leaders, teachers, unions, and concerned citizens, to be part of a dialogue for improving

Social justice unionism can make schools more democratic by enhancing teacher voice and modeling workplace democracy.

education and informing the district's strategic plan. The group was given major responsibility for adopting a version of the highly rated Massachusetts standards and accountability system in D.C. Rhee subsequently disbanded the DCED.

Meanwhile, in Saint Paul, Minnesota, teachers have worked with parents to be more inclusive in decision making.* Parents often felt excluded from important decisions made in collective bargaining agreements between teachers and management, and in preparation for 2011 negotiations, the Saint Paul teachers union sought to remedy that concern. The union met with parents to find out what sort of provisions they would like to see in the union-district contract and incorporated community goals into the bargaining process. In the negotiations, teachers sought smaller class sizes, less standardized testing, and the hiring of librarians, nurses, social workers, and counselors to better serve students. Although management initially rebuffed these concerns, calling them a matter of management prerogative, community support of a threatened teachers strike allowed the community and educators to prevail on the key issues at stake.

*For more on the story of Saint Paul, see "All Hands on Deck" and "Connecting with Students and Families through Home Visits" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015.

Modeling Democracy through Teacher Voice and Democratic Control

Finally, social justice unionism can make schools more democratic by enhancing teacher voice and modeling workplace democracy. In our schools, do students see that teachers are part of democratic decision making, or is power concentrated in a single person—the principal? Are democratically elected teacher union leaders key players, or are they publicly denigrated? What do students observe?

Toledo, Ohio, for example, has pioneered peer assistance and review programs for teachers. In Toledo, expert teachers from other schools work with struggling teachers in the same fields, seeking to provide assistance where possible but ultimately recommending termination of employment in certain circumstances.† This system enhances the role of teachers and also provides a credible answer to the charge that unions protect incompetent teachers. In practice, teachers have been even tougher on colleagues than administrators have been in several jurisdictions, from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Montgomery County, Maryland.[60] And in places that have peer review—where teachers, like professors, doctors, and lawyers, have a strong say in how their profession is regulated—students see workplace democracy in action.

In Newark, New Jersey; Henderson, Minnesota; and elsewhere, teachers extend the democratic principle of peer review in the area of dismissals to virtually every realm of school affairs. Teachers make decisions about hiring, curriculum, scheduling, and many other facets of schooling that are left to principals in most schools. At teacher cooperatives such as Minnesota New Country School in Henderson and Avalon School in Saint Paul, for example, teachers are given unparalleled say in running their schools. "Twenty-four brains are undoubtedly more powerful and smarter than one," said one teacher at Avalon. The schools perform well academically, and the emphasis on democracy and collaboration filters through to students.[61]

2. Strengthening Labor Unions

As with public education, social justice unionism needs to fight rear-guard actions against right-wing federal and state efforts to weaken organized labor, and simultaneously promote a forward-looking agenda to advance labor rights in progressive states and localities where such action is possible.

Given federal resistance to labor law reform, journalist Harold Meyerson notes, state and local efforts have grown more popular among progressives over the past several years. In 2010, activist Ai-jen Poo worked in New York to pass a state-level Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights that protects them from harassment and guarantees paid sick days, and in 2013, union leader David Rolf and others helped set off a series of victories for a $15 minimum wage beginning in SeaTac, the working-class suburb of Seattle that is home to the airport.[62] These efforts represent important innovations that should be replicated, but they need to be supplemented by efforts to improve the ability of labor to organize. It is a big step forward to increase the minimum wage to bring the working poor into the working class, for example, but we also need organized labor to move working-class Americans

†For more on peer assistance and review, see "Taking the Lead" in the Fall 2008 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2008/goldstein.

into the middle class. Likewise, winning legislation for domestic workers produces important gains but does not create a financially self-sustaining model akin to that provided by dues-paying union members.

A number of progressives, including David Madland and Andrew Stern, are arguing that in the era of Trump, labor should take its fight for labor law reform to friendly states and localities.[63] One idea is to amend state and local laws that protect individuals from discrimination to include those who are fired for trying to organize a union—thereby discouraging employers from using a tactic that has effectively killed countless unionizing drives.[64] Conservative opponents of labor unions have long understood the way in which "rights" resonate with American voters, which is why they have cloaked state-level anti-worker legislation in the duplicitous language of "right to work." The great advances in liberal legislation over the past half century have repeatedly invoked individual rights: women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights. As each of these movements has demonstrated, the rhetoric of individual rights can be harnessed to promote the collective good of groups.

State-level efforts to promote civil rights for labor face an important impediment: courts have held that the Wagner Act preempts state and local labor legislation for employees covered by the National Labor Relations Act. But more than 25 million employees are not covered by the act, and they could benefit from making labor organizing a civil right. These noncovered employees include 19.2 million state and local employees, 2.8 million civilian federal workers, 2.7 million agricultural laborers, and more than 700,000 domestic workers. Though many states have statutes that protect public employees' rights to organize and bargain collectively, we have seen broad attempts to erode these rights over recent years. Furthermore, public employees in many states do not have the legal right to organize and bargain collectively.[65]

Making labor organizing a civil right at the state and local levels for these groups could build momentum for eventual federal civil rights legislation for all workers, once a friendlier Congress comes to power. Moreover, building a movement around "labor rights as civil rights" could galvanize millennials to add worker rights to the great triumphs of "Seneca Falls and Selma and Stonewall," as President Obama memorably put it. Young people may have missed the chance to be part of the great civil rights protests of the 1950s and 1960s, but they may have the chance to be part of a new civil rights movement to rebuild organized labor and revive the American middle class.

3. Fighting for Civil and Human Rights at Home and Abroad

Finally, social justice unionism needs to strenuously oppose efforts that would roll back civil rights protections for women, people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ communities at home, and human rights abroad. At the same time, social justice unionism needs to think creatively about efforts to expand civil rights remedies to be inclusive of working-class white people, including some of those who were so desperate that they voted for Trump.

The rhetoric of individual rights can be harnessed to promote the collective good of groups.

While it might seem antithetical to civil rights principles to reach out to those who threw women and minorities under the bus to elect an anti–civil rights candidate, commentator Van Jones notes people voted for Trump for complex reasons, and that the idea "that if you voted for a bigot, you are a bigot" is an oversimplification. The fact that Trump won the votes of working-class white women by 28 percentage points and garnered the votes of many former Obama voters suggests that many supporters probably voted for Trump despite his bragging about grabbing women by the genitals and his decision to question the citizenship of America's first black president, not because of them.

"Resistance must be accompanied by persuasion," as commentator E. J. Dionne has noted.[66] There is no other alternative. Democrats' representation in state legislatures is down 23 percent, and in governors' mansions, nearly 45 percent, since 2008.[67] When a candidate as reckless as Trump manages to win, one has to ask, why did so many white working-class voters feel so forgotten? And can significant numbers of this group be reached through appeals to common interests with people of color?

Today, when Americans talk about diversity—in colleges and in the workforce—they usually are referring to race and gender rather than economic class. Indeed, sometimes the term diversity is used awkwardly, as a synonym for people of color, as when the Academy

One of the most attractive features of American liberalism, its hallmark, is its commitment to inclusion.

of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences passed a plan "doubling the membership of women and diverse members."[68] Adding working-class whites from rural Pennsylvania would surely diversify the membership of the academy, but that is not what is meant by "diverse members." Working-class whites are also left out of college affirmative action programs. Being an underrepresented minority, researchers find, increases one's chance of admission by 28 percentage points, while being low income provides no boost whatsoever.[69]

The irony here is that one of the most attractive features of American liberalism, its hallmark, is its commitment to inclusion—inclusion of racial minorities, women, gays and lesbians, religious minorities, and immigrants. Yet policies too often leave working-class whites out of the agenda.

Liberalism once had a bigger heart, both as a matter of political necessity and moral sensibility. Years ago, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin noted that lower middle-class whites were neither liberal nor conservative; they were both, and they would vote depending on how issues were presented to them. Martin Luther King Jr. also took an inclusive approach on affirmative action. King said we owed black people a debt to remedy an egregious history of discrimination, but that economically disadvantaged whites should be part of the program. King wrote: "It is a simple matter of justice that America, in dealing creatively with the task of raising the Negro from backwardness, should also be rescuing a large stratum of the forgotten white poor."[70] In 1968, at a time of great racial tensions, Robert F. Kennedy won the hearts of working-class blacks and Latinos alongside working-class whites who had voted for George Wallace four years earlier. Almost a half century later, Trump won with an astonishing 41-point edge among white working-class supporters who once formed the backbone of the Democratic Party.[71] Like Kennedy and King and Rustin, advocates of social justice unionism must broaden the civil rights tent to include working-class people of all races.

Social justice unionism must also confront the worldwide threat to democracy. Freedom House reported this year that overall freedom has declined for the 11th year in a row.[72] Hungary, Kenya, Poland, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Venezuela have all seen democratic rights erode in recent years. The threat involves right-wing ethno-nationalism and left-wing ideologies, all purporting to speak on behalf of "the people" but eschewing basic human rights.

For some on the left, it will be tempting, in reaction to the ill-advised Iraq War, to join Trump's call for withdrawal from the world, weakening ties to NATO, and putting America first. But that would represent a profound mistake. As Eric Chenoweth of the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe notes, it is time to "build alliances and coalitions (even unlikely ones) in order to restore a policy of support for democracy, democratic alliances, and human rights in the world."[73]

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who as CEO of ExxonMobil made business deals with some of the world's most brutal dictators, is unlikely to provide strong moral leadership on the world stage. But just as American trade unions, in contrast to business interests, provided consistent support for anti-Communist forces during the Cold War, so today, social justice unions should fight the rhetoric of moral equivalence espoused by Trump and Tillerson. When Trump adopts the talking points of leftists like Noam Chomsky ("What, you think our country's so innocent?"), social justice unionists should be the first to say that while not innocent, the United States stands for something better than raw self-interest. We "hold ourselves to higher standards" than killers like Vladimir Putin, as foreign policy analyst Anne-Marie Slaughter has argued. "Striving to attain those ideals, and holding ourselves to account when we fail, is a central part of what holds us together as a people."[74]

Trump rode to power with the support of struggling white workers, on the promise of making America great again. In office, Trump has thus far engaged in one un-American idea after another—attempting to strip 24 million Americans of health insurance, imposing a religiously loaded immigration ban, proposing to move toward a system of privatized education, and siding with billionaires over organized labor.

Social justice unionism can offer Americans something better: an unabashed patriotism rooted not in blood-and-soil nationalism but in democratic ideals that are nourished by vibrant trade unions, public education open to all, civil rights for everyone, and world leadership that puts democracy at its core. ☐

(Endnotes and photo credits on page 42)

History and Tyranny

BY TIMOTHY SNYDER

History does not repeat, but it does instruct. As the Founding Fathers debated our Constitution, they took instruction from the history they knew. Concerned that the democratic republic they envisioned would collapse, they contemplated the descent of ancient democracies and republics into oligarchy and empire. As they knew, Aristotle warned that inequality brought instability, while Plato believed that demagogues exploited free speech to install themselves as *tyrants*. In founding a democratic republic upon law and establishing a system of checks and balances, the Founding Fathers sought to avoid the evil that they, like the ancient philosophers, called tyranny. They had in mind the usurpation of power by a single individual or group, or the circumvention of law by rulers for their own benefit. Much of the succeeding political debate in the United States has concerned the problem of tyranny within American society: over slaves and women, for example.

It is thus a primary American tradition to consider history when our political order seems imperiled. If we worry today that the American experiment is threatened by tyranny, we can follow the example of the Founding Fathers and contemplate the history of other democracies and republics. The good news is that we can draw upon more recent and relevant examples than ancient Greece and Rome. The bad news is that the history of modern democracy is also one of decline and fall. Since the American colonies declared their independence from a British monarchy that the Founders deemed "tyrannical," European history has seen three major democratic moments: after the First World War in 1918, after the Second World War in 1945, and after the end of communism in 1989. Many of the democracies founded at these junctures failed, in circumstances that in some important respects resemble our own.

History can familiarize, and it can warn. In the late 19th century, just as in the late 20th century, the expansion of global trade generated expectations of progress. In the early 20th century, as in the early 21st, these hopes were challenged by new visions of mass politics in which a leader or a party claimed to directly represent the will of the people. European democracies collapsed into right-wing authoritarianism and fascism in the 1920s and '30s. The communist Soviet Union, established in 1922, extended its model into Europe in the 1940s. The European history of the 20th century shows us that societies can break, democracies can fall, ethics can collapse, and ordinary men can find themselves standing over death pits with guns in their hands. It would serve us well today to understand why.

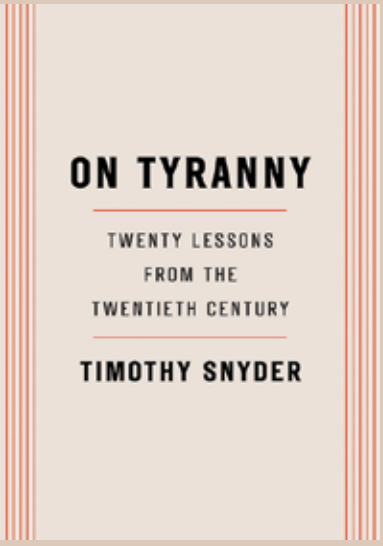
Both fascism and communism were responses to globalization: to the real and perceived inequalities it created, and the apparent helplessness of the democracies in addressing them. Fascists rejected reason in the name of will, denying objective truth in favor of a glorious myth articulated by leaders who claimed to give voice to the people. They put a face on globalization, arguing that its complex challenges were the result of a conspiracy against the nation. Fascists ruled for a decade or two, leaving behind an intact intellectual legacy that grows more relevant by the day. Communists ruled for longer, for nearly seven decades in the Soviet Union, and more than four decades in much of Eastern Europe. They proposed rule by a disciplined party elite with a monopoly on reason that would guide society toward a certain future according to supposedly fixed laws of history.

We might be tempted to think that our democratic heritage automatically protects us from such threats. This is a misguided reflex. In fact, the precedent set by the Founders demands that we examine history to understand the deep sources of tyranny, and to consider the proper responses to it. Americans today are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism in the 20th century. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience. Now is a good time to do so.

In my new book, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, I present 20 lessons from the 20th century, adapted to the circumstances of today. The second lesson, "defend institutions," is especially relevant for labor unions, whose role in defending democracy is explained in the article on page 6 of this issue.

It is institutions that help us to preserve decency. They need our help as well. Do not speak of "our institutions" unless you make them yours by acting on their behalf. Institutions do not protect themselves. They fall one after the other unless each is defended from the beginning. So choose an institution you care about—a court, a newspaper, a law, a labor union—and take its side.

It is a primary American tradition to consider history when our political order seems imperiled.



Timothy Snyder is the Richard C. Levin Professor of History at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. *This article is adapted from* ON TYRANNY.

Elevating Relationships

How Collaboration Shapes Teaching and Learning

By Esther Quintero

> *"Whatever level of human capital schools acquire through hiring can subsequently be developed through activities such as grade-level or subject-based teams of teachers, faculty committees, professional development, coaching, evaluation, and informal interactions. As teachers join together to solve problems and learn from one another, the school's instructional capacity becomes greater than the sum of its parts."*[1]

This quote from Harvard professor Susan Moore Johnson may make perfect sense to you. Our systems and organizations, however, are largely structured around individual values. As such, a primary goal is to optimize and reward performance at the individual level. So, while some of us (perhaps many of us) might agree that a team's capacity can exceed the sum of individual members' capacity, we generally have a difficult time translating that knowledge into action—for example, rewarding individual behaviors that enhance team dynamics. Part of the problem is that there's still a lot to learn about how teamwork and collaboration are effectively nurtured.

No matter how challenging, understanding the social dynamics that underpin our work organizations seems particularly timely given the interdependent nature of the modern workplace. According to a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, "the time spent by managers and employees in collaborative activities has ballooned by 50% or more" over the past two decades. At many companies, employees spend more than 75 percent of their day communicating with their colleagues.[2]

The disconnect between what organizations need and do (i.e., collaboration and teamwork) and what they support and reward (i.e., individual performance) underscores the need to develop a better understanding of the social-relational dimension of work and work performance. What makes some groups work better than

Esther Quintero is a senior fellow at the Albert Shanker Institute, where she conducts and synthesizes research on schools as organizations, teachers' social capital, diversity in the teaching workforce, and the sociology of the classroom. She is the editor of Teaching in Context: The Social Side of Education Reform *(Harvard Education Press, 2017), which further explores this topic, its research base, and policy implications.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL ZWOLAK

Most measures of teacher effectiveness ignore the social and organizational factors that are foundational to teaching quality.

others? How does one build an effective team? Are the best teams made up by combining the "best" individuals? These questions are as important for schools and educators as they are for organizations and professionals in other fields.

A 2015 study sheds light on some of these questions.[3] The researchers looked at data from various sports and demonstrated that, when a sport requires coordination among team members, having too many superstars on the team can actually hurt overall team performance. If, as indicated earlier, much of today's work is precisely about coordination and working with others effectively, a focus on top talent may do a disservice to the team (or organization) and its performance.

But these ideas aren't exactly new. More than a decade ago, organizational behavior experts cautioned about the pitfalls of seeking to employ only extraordinary employees, but for different reasons. If every business were to follow this strategy, they argued, we would all be headed to an escalating "war for talent." Furthermore, in the right environment, most people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to their organization's performance and growth. A smarter strategy would be to focus on improving work environments so that "regular" people can perform at a high level. This research offers examples of organizations that have achieved extraordinary levels of success "with people who really aren't that much different or smarter than those working in the competition."[4]

While research shows that teamwork increases organizational performance, and firms are seeking out employees who work effectively with peers, collaborative behaviors aren't necessarily rewarded, or even monitored, in the modern workplace. In fact, the study described in the *Harvard Business Review* article mentioned above suggests that, while collaborators are in high demand, they feel overwhelmed and overloaded, and their good deeds often go unnoticed.

This study was conducted across more than 300 organizations and showed that those employees "seen as the best sources of information and in highest demand as collaborators in their companies … have the lowest engagement and career satisfaction scores." In addition, it showed that the distribution of collaborative behavior can be extremely unbalanced: "In most cases, 20% to 35% of value-added collaborations come from only 3% to 5% of employees." And "roughly 20% of organizational 'stars' don't help; they hit their numbers (and earn kudos for it) but don't amplify the success of their colleagues."

Paradoxically, as skilled collaborators are drawn into more and more projects and the volume and diversity of work they do with others increases, their contributions become less and less noticed. In fact, as the researchers explain, when they analyze the strongest collaborators in organizations, "leaders are typically surprised by at least half the names on their lists." The bottom line is, if collaborators add value to the organization, they need to be recognized and protected. They are the real "organizational stars," but they are often invisible.

Ultimately, we must learn to identify and reward employees who both perform well individually and contribute to the success of their peers. "Efficient sharing of informational, social, and personal resources should … be a prerequisite for positive reviews, promotions, and pay raises," the researchers say.[5] Evidently, we are not there yet.

Seeing Education as a Social Endeavor

What's now happening in schools and with educators is not so different from the picture described above. For the past two decades, teachers and their individual effectiveness have been the primary focus of education reform in the United States. Most measures of teacher effectiveness, however, ignore the social and organizational factors that are foundational to teaching quality.

There is solid evidence that strong professional environments (e.g., collaborative colleagues, a culture of trust) increase

teacher effectiveness, and that teachers' professional interactions (e.g., formal and informal social contact) with colleagues as well as teacher collaboration (e.g., lesson study and professional learning communities) produce student test score gains. While these social aspects of teaching are starting to receive some attention as a vehicle for teacher and student growth, there is still much to learn about how to understand, incentivize, support, and reward the cooperative practices and norms that would sustain reforms based on these tenets. This caution, however, should not preclude us from acting on some of what we do know; after all, the learning that needs to happen will not come from knowledge generated by research and researchers exclusively, but from experimentation with practitioners in school settings.

Collaborative school cultures and professional relationships must be facilitated and nurtured.

To take on this challenge, we need a different way of envisioning educational improvement. The social side of education reform underscores a critical oversight in the public debate on education and its policies: the idea that teaching and learning are not solo but rather social endeavors that are achieved in the context of schools and their broader school systems and communities, through relationships and partnerships rather than competition and a focus on individual prowess.

This perspective shifts the focus from the individual attributes of stakeholders (e.g., teachers, principals) to the supports and constraints afforded by the school and the broader social context in which individuals operate. It also highlights the interdependence at all levels of the system—for example, among teachers within a school, leaders across a district, schools within the community, etc.—and the idea that a complex system is more than the sum of its parts. Finally, it recognizes that valuable resources (e.g., information, advice, support) are exchanged through relationships within and across social networks, and that monitoring and strengthening this infrastructure is crucial for educational improvement.

Reviewing the Research

Context, relationships, and collaboration aren't magic, but, as research synthesized in *Teaching in Context: The Social Side of Education Reform* (which I edited) shows, these factors are at least as important as individual (e.g., teacher quality) and technical (e.g., standards) aspects of improvement. In the remainder of this article, I share some findings from the book that educators and policymakers alike would do well paying attention to in order to nurture the kinds of collaborative school cultures and systems that drive and sustain improvement.

First, contrary to what has become conventional wisdom, it is not clear that teachers always "plateau" in their effectiveness after their first few years as teachers.[6] Educators working in schools with strong professional environments continue to learn throughout their careers and improve at much faster rates than colleagues in schools characterized by weaker professional environments.[7]

Second, successful schools that serve predominantly disadvantaged students seem to have one thing in common: they use a comprehensive approach to hire, evaluate, and develop their faculties. Importantly, leaders in these schools know how to orchestrate these human and social capital systems.[8]

Third, not all collaboration is created equal. Both in-service and pre-service teachers improve at faster rates in schools where teachers report that collaboration is more extensive and helpful.[9]

Fourth, collaborative school cultures and professional relationships don't just happen by chance. Instead, they must be facilitated and nurtured. While it's true that you can't force individuals to work with each other, social relations in schools are malleable and shaped by elements like job titles, organizational routines, and scheduling. Tweaking these aspects to encourage teachers to work together is possible and can produce positive results.[10]

Fifth, schools are not alone in how interpersonal aspects of work affect the performance of staff members. Research that has looked across settings (e.g., education, medical, and manufacturing) has established that social aspects of work are critical to the success of *any* type of work organization. In schools, this research has found that student performance increases dramatically when teachers have frequent and instructionally focused conversations with their peers.[11]

Sixth, excessive levels of personnel churn can make systems vulnerable, disrupting social relations that are critical for improvement. In their article on page 24 of this issue, Alan J. Daly and Kara S. Finnigan explain how leadership churn can work to disrupt reform efforts.[12]

Student performance increases dramatically when teachers have frequent and instructionally focused conversations with their peers.

Seventh, interpersonal aspects matter across the board: among teachers, between teachers and administrators, and between school staff and the larger communities in which schools are situated. While neighborhoods influence the climate of a school, recent studies show that it can go both ways. When parents, teachers, and students work together, safety improves meaningfully in schools that serve disadvantaged communities.[13]

Most teachers don't need research to be persuaded by the idea that their colleagues, as well as their school systems and communities, matter a great deal to their job performance. Educators who teach in schools characterized by supportive cultures know this firsthand; they are allowed to share their expertise with colleagues, receive support from administrators who cultivate their staff, and benefit from working in a climate of learning for students and adults.

But what about teachers who have never worked in these kinds of schools? What about educators who have experienced collaboration very differently—as another required, often inauthentic activity? And what about decision makers who are far removed from the classroom? For them, as well as educators already working in collaborative schools, *Teaching in Context* can serve several purposes:

- It can help them persuade policymakers that bettering the organizations where teachers work is an urgent and research-supported policy goal. For more than a decade, decision makers have focused on individual teacher accountability, neglecting to look at the social dynamics of schools and how they shape teachers' ability to be successful with students. This research says it's time to broaden our policy focus.
- It provides a road map on how to go from a kind of school where faculty are friendly but work independently, to a kind of school where faculty are interdependent and operate as a learning community. The book offers specific strategies, interventions, and policy proposals.
- For practitioners who know and have experienced how these things matter, it can strengthen and validate their experiences. In a context where teachers are routinely blamed for student underachievement, research that contextualizes this simplistic view, and offers concrete solutions, could be of great value to educators, inoculating them from explanations that are incomplete at best.

Clearly, individual teachers are important to educational progress, and major structural issues like poverty and inequality are tremendous challenges to educational achievement. However, when schools and school systems prioritize strengthening the interpersonal aspects of teaching and learning, even schools serving low-income students can attract, develop, and retain skillful and stable faculties and achieve good academic results. Many teachers have long known or suspected this. Now it's time to get others on board; we cannot ignore this evidence any longer. ☐

Endnotes

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7. John P. Papay and Matthew A. Kraft, "Developing Workplaces Where Teachers Stay, Improve, and Succeed: Recent Evidence on the Importance of School Climate for Teacher Success," in *Teaching in Context: The Social Side of Education Reform*, ed. Esther Quintero (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2017), 15–35.

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13. Elaine M. Allensworth, "How the Organization of Schools and Local Communities Shape Educational Improvement," in Quintero, *Teaching in Context*, 147–161.

What Teacher Collaboration Looks Like

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL ZWOLAK

BY JOSEPH VINCENTE

So, 300 homework assignments checked, 200 emails replied to, 100 quizzes graded, 50 more lab reports left from Monday still to read, 30 lessons executed, 10 revised notebook entries regraded, five phone calls and texts made to check in with parents, four curriculum maps revised, three extra-help sessions held before and after school and during lunch, two pep-talks with students about their college aspirations, and one mediation between quarreling best friends conducted.

Phew.

I take a deep breath and do a bit of mindless silent cleaning and organizing in my classroom to decompress. Another exhausting week in the life of a high school teacher comes to a close. Must be time for the weekend, right? Well, almost.

Friday afternoon at my school is when we do some of our most demanding but essential work as teachers. You may be thinking it's time for the dreaded weekly professional development meetings or for some "collaboration." Yes, that's right, but at East Side Community High School in New York City, a sixth- to 12th-grade college-preparatory public school where I teach 10th-grade chemistry, collaboration isn't just an activity or being friendly, respectful, or cooperative with colleagues. Rather, collaboration underpins how we structure and conduct most of our work, how we serve students, and how we learn and grow as professionals. In the next few paragraphs, I describe some of East Side's collaborative structures as well as the norms and conditions that support them.

* * *

At East Side, I work with a "grade team" that shares a cohort of students. This allows me, the 10th-grade science teacher, to have powerful conversations with the history, math, and English teachers who teach the same students.

Throughout the year at daily "kid talk" meetings, we compare successes and struggles across subject areas by discussing the varying strengths and needs of our students. At these meetings, we look deeply at student data and write "smileys"—postcards commending students for improvement or great work. After that, we may brainstorm academic interventions for struggling students, such as mandating afterschool tutoring, reviewing individualized education plan supports, or sharing successful strategies particular to a student. We also consider a spectrum of students' social-emotional needs through counseling referrals or extracurricular activity recommendations.

Grade teams are organized into smaller advisory classes, in which teachers advise small groups of students, that also meet at the start and end of each day for a five-minute check-in and twice a week for longer lessons. And grade teams work together to design the advisory class curriculum that is taught in those longer advisory lessons, which cover everything from health and healthy relationships, to college and career preparation, academic support, discussion of current events, and more.

In these ways, the grade team structure allows each individual teacher to leverage the collective expertise of a group of close colleagues all striving to serve the same group of students and forge authentic relationships with them.

"Vertical teams" are another vehicle for teacher collaboration at East Side. These teams include all same-subject teachers—in my case, all science teachers—within the school. I personally look forward to science meetings because I know the work we do as a sixth- to 12th-grade science team benefits us all.

Over my nine years of teaching, we have had reiterative discussions to articulate curriculum. It is incredibly powerful to sit in a room full of other science educators who are designing curricular materials that leverage the instruction of teachers in preceding grade levels and that intentionally feed into the following year's work. I know that the ninth- and 11th-grade science teachers who flank my chemistry class are depending on me to pick up where they left off or pave the way for more advanced work in the upcoming year.

Vertical teams meet about once or twice a month to set schoolwide instructional goals, develop common language, reflect

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Joseph Vincente, a former 10th-grade chemistry teacher, is an assistant principal and science and math instructional coach at East Side Community High School in New York City. This article, written when he was still in the classroom, was originally a blog post for the Albert Shanker Institute, posted on March 29, 2016, and available at www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/vincente.

on pedagogy, test-drive new lesson ideas, discuss new reads in their subjects, share lesson materials, collectively design rubrics, and honestly critique our interdependent curricula. The kind of mutual accountability that vertical teams create seems more authentic to me than other attempts to standardize accountability and assessment. It feels like I answer more directly to our students and to my colleagues as we all drive toward the same set goals.

A third collaborative structure at East Side is "professional learning groups" (PLGs), which are organized around shared professional development interests, needs, or themes. Though we have been experimenting with the exact design of PLGs for a few years, they have evolved to focus on peer observation and feedback. Belonging to a community where high-level pedagogical teacher-to-teacher talk is nurtured motivates and challenges me to attempt new instructional strategies. This is an example of how collaboration can support innovation. PLGs provide the space that teachers need to try out new teaching techniques and refine them. PLGs are especially useful when master teachers model strategies and other peers provide nonevaluative feedback.

Finally, "roundtables" are another collaborative hallmark at East Side. Twice a year in each grade (at the end of each semester), students present their choice of best work from each class. Roundtables are special because, beyond celebrating their work, students must also demonstrate on demand what they have learned throughout the semester. They often present to outside guests, such as parents, scientists, mathematicians, historians, writers, professionals from a variety of fields, college professors, and educators from other middle and high schools. All staff members at the school also serve as roundtable judges, and this builds trust as my colleagues evaluate what my students have learned. In such an authentic system of assessment, collaboration is a critical part of planning for and providing feedback on each other's roundtables.

* * *

As with all relationships, sometimes it's the small things that matter the most. Much of the crucial work done during the meetings described above depends on the smaller interactions that occur daily among teachers, way before they sit next to each other to work together formally. And in many cases, it's not even what you do, but how you do it, that counts.

When you take time to simply listen—maybe not even give advice, but just truly hear another colleague—it can build the trust necessary for future joint work. For example, you build trust when you listen to the new science teacher on your team who vents about a lesson that went well in one block but crashed in another. Those small moments can plant the seeds for meaningful collaboration. That new teacher might have an administrator to help him or her formally, but the idea that a peer can also provide support through nonjudgmental listening creates professional friendships that set the foundation for us to work together authentically in other contexts.

In my experience, genuine trust and sustained professional friendships lead to increased teacher and student learning. Being able to visit a colleague's classroom because I know he or she is really strong at facilitating rich classroom discussion, routinely being asked to share student work across grades or disciplines, and regularly meeting to discuss the needs of a cohort of shared students—these are all examples of structures stemming from a school culture where collaboration isn't one activity, or something we do during a designated day and time, but rather, it's the way we do everything.

Throughout my career, strong relationships with peers have enriched my efforts to grow as a teacher.

Throughout my career, strong relationships with peers have enriched my efforts to grow as a teacher. And it looks like I am not alone; research shows[1] that collaboration can be directly linked to both teacher improvement and student achievement.*

Some of the structures described above—grade teams, vertical teams, PLGs, and roundtables—may be similar in name to what other schools across the country do. What I believe makes my school's structures especially authentic and effective is their focus on rigorous project- and portfolio-based work. East Side is one of a growing number of New York Performance Standards Consortium schools,† mainly in New York City, where students complete capstone projects, known as performance-based assessment tasks, in each subject area to meet their graduation requirements.

Consortium schools gather regularly to hold each other accountable through "moderation studies," in which many schools get together to blindly study, score, and provide feedback on other schools' performance-based assessment tasks. We tend to be very tough on each other's work, but in a professional, constructive way that spurs each of us to return to our schools and raise the level of our work. Interschool collaboration can be a powerful way for teachers to share ideas relating to curriculum and instruction, inspiring us to work harder in the context of our own schools' individual contexts, needs, and student populations. In addition, the sharing of student work within and across schools provides a larger sense of professional community.

Teachers and schools cannot create and sustain this collaborative, interdependent culture on their own. Policies and incentives must encourage trust among teachers and among teacher teams. At a minimum, existing policies shouldn't get in the way of collaboration and coordination, as might be the case in other schools. If, at the end of the day, my students and I are judged primarily on a single exam score from a single day, I imagine this could inevitably breed isolation and an unhealthy competitiveness among teachers, and in the long run, fail to foster collaboration as a way of doing things.

Endnote

1. See Esther Quintero, ed., *Teaching in Context: The Social Side of Education Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2017).

*For more on how collaboration can strengthen education, see the Winter 2013–2014 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2013-2014.

†For more on the New York Performance Standards Consortium, see "Putting the Focus on Student Engagement" in the Spring 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2016/barlowe-and-cook.

The Trust Gap

Understanding the Effects of Leadership Churn in School Districts

By Kara S. Finnigan and Alan J. Daly

As every educator knows, it's important who your colleagues are—fellow teachers and principals alike. After all, relationships with colleagues shape so much of what goes on in schools. Over time, these interactions transform into what researchers call formal and informal networks; it is through these networks that learning takes place, as educators interact with one another, exchanging knowledge, advice, and professional support and engaging in friendships. The strongest of those social ties are grounded in trusting relationships, which are the cornerstone of productive human relations.

Indeed, much has been written about how positive relationships, by their very nature, involve a high level of reciprocal trust developed and earned over time.[1] Trust is based on interpersonal interdependence[2] and involves an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that that party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open.[3] High levels of trust have been associated with a variety of efforts that require collaboration, learning, complex-information sharing, problem solving, shared decision making, and coordinated action[4]—the very types of efforts that occur daily in high-functioning organizations (including schools).

When we interact with others in our networks, we assess "risk" in terms of how they might react. Over time, with repeated positive interactions, our level of trust increases and our caution concerning risk decreases. Individuals can interact more effectively with high levels of trust. Consider how you and a work colleague might have a shorthand for communicating and acting; it is trust that allows for this efficiency. Moreover, when you have a high-trust relationship with someone, you are more likely

Kara S. Finnigan is an associate professor of educational leadership and the director of the educational policy program in the Warner School of Education at the University of Rochester. Alan J. Daly is a professor and chair of the Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego. *This article is adapted from the chapter "How Leadership Churn Undermines Learning and Improvement in Low-Performing School Districts," by Kara S. Finnigan, Alan J. Daly, and Yi-Hwa Liou, in Daly and Finnigan, eds.,* Thinking and Acting Systemically: Improving School Districts under Pressure. *Both authors contributed equally to this article.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL ZWOLAK

Change at the top can change life in the classroom, and constant change can make teachers want to hunker down and wait things out.

to share your struggles, and it is in that moment of vulnerability with a close colleague that some of the best learning happens.

The back and forth exchanges between individuals in the process of developing trust are referred to as "reciprocal relationships." In reciprocal relationships, each person contributes to the other; these relationships provide opportunities for individuals to interact, learn together, and build trust, critical components in education systems oriented toward change.[5]

The opposite is true in networks where individuals come and go. When there is what we call "churn" among colleagues, opportunities for trust and reciprocal interactions can't fully develop, and the risk or cost of interacting increases significantly.

Ultimately, the social and economic costs of churn are deeply intertwined. For instance, when someone who's a trusted colleague, key listener, helpful resource, friend, or confidant leaves a school, that departure creates a hole that's hard to fill. The departure can involve a loss of knowledge, social support, and institutional memory. Moreover, it can create a sense of instability and disrupt routines, which in turn can lead to a loss of productivity. These are very real social costs associated with turnover in schools and districts—in addition to the financial expense in terms of training and development.

By and large, research has focused more on the departure of teachers and has overlooked the fact that central office leaders and principals also leave school districts at high rates, especially in large urban districts. This oversight is important to highlight for several reasons. First, we know that educational leadership matters for educational improvement.[6] Second, research suggests that it takes about five years for education reforms to take hold.[7] Third, absent district leadership, churn can potentially have a cascading disruptive impact, from the superintendent's office all the way to the classroom. Our research attempts to broaden understanding about leadership churn and how it affects the entire school system.

In an era of multiple education reforms, administrator churn, particularly at the district office, can disrupt educational priorities and initiatives and cause classroom teachers to adopt the mentality of "this too shall pass." At some point, most teachers have wondered, "How long will this approach last?," "What will be the *new* focus?," or "Who will be in charge next and what does that mean for my school?" Anyone who's been in education even a short time knows that change at the top can change life in the classroom, and constant change can make teachers want to hunker down and wait things out.

The anxiety and concern caused by administrative churn can take enormous time and energy, moving the focus away from creating the conditions to support teaching and learning. Moreover, classroom teachers are often given conflicting messages about what they, their school, and their district should prioritize. This is a reality that many teachers, particularly those in urban schools, face frequently. Given the ubiquity of this experience for educators across the country, we wanted to better understand administrator churn and shine a light on how system disruption can take the work of education in some not-so-promising directions.

In this article, we argue that studying churn among central office leaders and school principals can improve retention of high-quality leaders who can better support teachers.[8] To be clear, we are not saying that all churn is negative. In fact, some turnover can be healthy and healing to relationships and wider communities. However, constant churn often means that initiatives barely have the opportunity to get off the ground before a new central office administrator or principal comes on board and rolls out a different approach. In essence, constant churn at the leadership level has a significant social cost that affects teachers on multiple levels.

To study administrator churn, we use social network theory, a core aspect of which is social capital. Social capital is concerned with the resources that exist in relationships between individuals.[9] The ability to access relationships with others and the quality of those relationships often determine opportunities for success. Networks can be seen as the patterned structure of relationships that exist within a particular organization or group. To make this come to life in an educational setting, we use a technique called social network analysis to answer two questions: To what extent do leaders in low-performing school districts have the relationships necessary for large-scale learning and improvement? And how does network churn affect the underlying social networks of educators?

A District Example

While studies of churn have often focused on the classroom level, we argue that it is critical to examine churn across the

Those leaders who were really important in terms of sharing expertise and knowledge were overwhelmingly the ones who left.

entire school system. Specifically, we focus here on the relationships among and between school principals and central office leaders to understand the district as a larger organizational unit. Districtwide leadership, in particular, is critical to systemwide (as opposed to school-by-school) change.

In this work, we focus on educators in formal leadership roles who directly support teachers and the core mission of teaching and learning. That said, the ideas we present also apply to networks of teachers. So consider this work as insight into what is happening at the formal leadership level and how this affects the work of teachers. But also consider this as an example of what can happen when a trusted teacher leaves your school.

To illustrate these ideas about relationships and churn, we turn to our recent study of a midsize urban school district in the northeastern United States serving approximately 32,000 students. Although here we present results from this one district, our use of social network analysis in other districts has found similar patterns, suggesting broad implications, particularly for urban districts and districts on the "urban fringe." Initially, we were not focused on churn but rather on the underlying relationships among district leaders and the structures and conditions necessary for school improvement. However, churn quickly rose to the surface as an important aspect of improvement efforts in these districts.

Labeled as "in need of improvement" under No Child Left Behind, the federal education law at the time, the district's student enrollment is 90 percent nonwhite, with 88 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Within the district, nearly all of the high schools and many of the elementary schools are identified as "underperforming," based on state and federal accountability guidelines. This district typifies many across the country in that it serves primarily students of color from low-socioeconomic communities, has a pattern of underperformance, and is engaged in districtwide improvement efforts to move beyond sanctions.

As part of our study, we surveyed individuals in formal leadership positions in the district, including the superintendent, chiefs and directors from the central office, and principals at each school. Each person was given a list of every other central office administrator and principal in this network of more than 120 people and asked to indicate, for each of them:

- Do you work with this person regularly?
- Is this person a source of knowledge and new ideas for you?
- Do you have an emotional connection with this person?

Our survey questions asked people to consider two types of relationships—those that are work-related (e.g., with people you seek for advice about your work or consult as your "go to" experts for doing your job better), and those that are more emotional, expressive, and social (e.g., with people you consider friends or you vent to). For example, for a work-related relationship, we ask, *"Please select the frequency of interaction for each school/district staff whom you consider a reliable source of expertise related to your work."* And for an emotional relationship, we ask, *"Whom do you consider a close friend, and by 'close friend' we mean someone you really trust and engage in activities with outside of school?"*

We asked respondents to quantitatively assess their relationships with each individual on a scale ranging from 0 ("I do not interact with this person at all") to 4 ("I interact with this person one or two times a week"). As such, the survey questions asked them to consider and then quantify both work-related relationships and emotional relationships. Both are important for change and improvement. Emotional relationships are especially critical during times of change, because individuals can be quite vulnerable when trying out new approaches and such relationships can make change seem less daunting .

We administered the survey to the district's leadership team annually during our four-year study,* from 2010 to 2013, and found substantial leadership churn—51 percent. A 51 percent churn rate is particularly significant when one considers that academic outcomes, especially in high-poverty schools, typically decrease the year after a leader leaves.[10] Our study revealed that those leaders who were really important in terms of sharing expertise and knowledge were overwhelmingly the ones who left. In addition, we found that during the time of our study, work-related relationships increased while emotional relationships diminished among district leaders, hindering the formation of the high-trust relationships necessary for productive work. Below, we provide details of our study as well as its significance for teachers.

*In total, we surveyed 181 individuals over the four-year period.

A Constant State of Flux Undermines Connections around Work

Work-related interactions tell us whether a district has the set of relationships necessary for school improvement. We started by examining the work-related relationships among school and central office leaders, as these relationships help illuminate connections around a particular work practice—in this case, the work of educational leaders.

In 2010, the district's leaders were on average connected to roughly six other leaders from whom they sought work-related information. These linkages more than doubled in the time period of our study, to an average of 12 connections in 2011, 10 in 2012, and 11 in 2013, suggesting that leaders were seeking other leaders' work-related expertise at a higher rate after the first year of our study. This increase in connections is important because it provides leaders with more sources of work-related expertise, which could help improve practices and outcomes at their schools. However, we found that those who were more highly sought for work-related expertise were ultimately the ones who left.

From 2010 to 2013, as mentioned above, approximately half the leaders moved into and out of the district over the four-year period. Given this churn, one can imagine how difficult it would be to support teachers in meaningful ways. Any educator reading this article has likely experienced the disruption when one leader leaves. Now imagine one out of every two leaders leaving over four years. As discussed earlier, school improvement is grounded in relationships, trust, and collaboration—all difficult to develop and sustain with a revolving door of leaders.

Weakened Emotional Ties

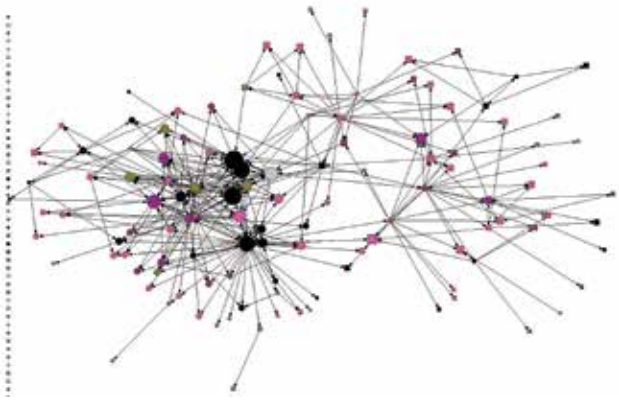
While we found work-related ties were increasing, we simultaneously found emotional relationships were decreasing. The average number of connections between leaders decreased from five in 2010 to two in 2011, then slowly built back up to just three emotional connections in 2013. This decrease matters because we know that work practices are enhanced through such relationships. Having fewer or weaker social-emotional relationships hinders the ability of educators to collaborate on school and district improvement.

Mapping our social network analysis can help us visually represent these patterns. Network maps are not yet that common in education, so a bit of explanation and orientation will be helpful. In the maps below, each symbol represents a leader in the district, while the lines between them represent the connections—in this case, emotional connections—the leaders have to each other. The maps also show leaders by shape, with school leaders designated by squares and central office leaders designated by circles. The lines are directional, and the arrow indicates whom the person goes to (in this case, for emotional support). If the line has an arrow on both ends, it indicates a reciprocal relationship, meaning they mutually seek out each other for an emotional connection. Dots running down the left-hand side of the map are leaders who were isolated from everyone else—in other words, no school or central office leader turned to them, nor did they turn to anyone else. The symbols are sized by how much activity a particular individual has in the network—that is, the larger dots mean that more people go to these particular leaders.

The maps show the entire leadership network, with the pink symbols representing the "stayers"—or those leaders who stayed throughout the four years—and the other colors representing those who left. These network maps illustrate the decrease in

Having fewer or weaker social-emotional relationships hinders the ability of educators to collaborate on school and district improvement.

Network Churn for Emotional Ties, 2010 to 2013



2010

2013

emotional ties from churn and, importantly, the challenges it could lead to, since there are no central symbols in the stable group of leaders (in pink).

Ultimately, leaders in this district had to re-establish underlying relationships each year, both work-related and emotional, because of the movement into and out of the district. Our analysis indicates just how tenuous these relationships were, with leaders having slightly more work-related ties than emotional ties. In addition, reciprocal ties (which are considered a reflection of strong relationships) represented less than 17 percent of work-related ties identified in 2013. Reciprocated emotional relationships dropped from 12 percent to 4 percent during our study, suggesting weak emotional connectedness in the district and making the formation of trusting ties—and ultimately the collegiality necessary for collaboration and improvement—extremely difficult. Compared with other studies we have done, this proportion of strong (i.e., reciprocated) relationships is quite low, particularly in terms of the emotional relationships.

With a revolving door of leaders, educators often get pulled in multiple directions or are presented with conflicting approaches.

Principal Churn

Since we know the work of principals directly influences the lives of teachers and the overall school climate, we looked more carefully at the networks of principals specifically. In looking at principal churn, we found the underlying relationships among principals were quite sparse, indicating a weak system of connections between school leaders in this district. Our data suggest that principals were cut off from both other principals and central office leaders, effectively making them islands in the leadership network. While some principals may find it useful to just "do their own thing," being isolated from the rest of the network of leaders likely means less access to information and other resources that flow through these connections. This isolation has direct implications for a principal's ability to support teachers within a school as well as limits the overall district's ability to bring about support and improvement across schools.

Besides examining social-emotional ties, we also examined the overall work-related ties among principals. While work-related ties initially increased, the principals who were sought for advice by other principals subsequently left. In 2012, and again in 2013, we saw a decrease in work-related relationships between principals. Importantly, nearly all of the high schools and many of the elementary schools in this district were under sanction, and they faced even greater challenges because of the revolving door of school leaders. Principal flux and a lack of work-related relationships, as well as a lack of social-emotional ties, can result in less trust in schools and, potentially, in every classroom.

Our work also suggested that the principals of the lowest-performing schools were least likely to be connected into the larger network. This is particularly troubling, as the leaders of these schools may be the ones who most need to identify new strategies and approaches to support teachers in the hard work of teaching students with academic, and often socio-emotional, challenges. Without relationships with other principals and central office leaders—which provide access to information and supports—it may become increasingly difficult for leaders of these schools to turn around low performance, a task that is already very challenging.[11] Moreover, this isolation does not position these high-need schools to be in the flow of resources and support that often come from central office leaders and help shape districtwide efforts.

Think about it as a web of relationships that provides support and information for district leaders—and now picture the principals of the highest-need schools as operating outside of that web. Ensuring principals are well connected and supported may be one of the most important roles of central office leaders, as the support of and care for principals directly affects the lives of teachers.

While the performance of schools in urban settings receives overwhelming attention, the organizational instability that results from the churn of educational leaders is generally overlooked. As our data show, more than half of the leaders in the district we studied left during a four-year period, with the constant flow into and out of leadership positions resulting in fiscal, human, and social capital losses. Those losses, including the departure of people who helped bind together a social system, have detrimental effects on an organization in terms of training, development, and support. The sense of foreboding and anxiety teachers face when there is churn at the top is real.

Greater attention should be paid to relationship building and leadership development for both central office administrators and principals.

Constant churn has two distinct and negative effects on the lives of teachers. First, the ongoing movement of leaders into and out of the district and schools can undermine a consistent vision and set of approaches. With a revolving door of leaders, educators often get pulled in multiple directions or are presented with conflicting approaches. This alone is disruptive to the heart of teaching and learning. Second, this disruption can inhibit the formation of relationships among teachers. Further, with a lack of clarity and consistency in direction, low morale is likely to follow as educators struggle to move forward. High levels of churn are not just limited to the district we studied but are present elsewhere and show few signs of abating, particularly in school systems that serve youth from high-poverty communities.

Our research suggests that greater attention should be paid to relationship building and leadership development for both central office administrators and principals, to allow leaders to develop relationships within and between these groups built on the trust and respect that enable true collaboration. Unfortunately, our data show that, over time, leaders who played a more central role in the expertise network left the district—shattering the underlying relationships that did exist—while more-peripheral leaders remained in leadership positions. Our results align with a previous study[12] that found that leaders who were most sought for their expertise but received less reward and recognition tended to leave the school system. Such departures contribute to challenges in professional growth districtwide.

Finally, our data indicate weak connections among principals, resulting in extremely limited sharing of ideas and practices across schools. Most connections that existed in the last year of our study were among those principals who had remained across the four years, with newcomers either occupying peripheral positions or isolated from the existing expertise network. In fact, newcomer principals rarely connected with other principals. As a result, these longer-term principals' schools, and ultimately the teachers in them, may suffer, since it is through newer principals that new ideas and strategies enter schools and school systems. Because these leaders were isolated from others in the district, their schools' potential for innovation was diminished.

These results have implications at both the state and local levels, as well. First, as states work to support schools and districts in the current educational policy context, it will be important to review policies that result in high levels of movement into and out of the leadership team (including principals and central office staff). Prior accountability policies may have contributed to the churn we see here—for example, the school turnaround strategy requiring the replacement of principals in struggling schools. Second, strengthening trust within a system should be given top priority. This can be difficult, given the emphasis on technical aspects of reform (e.g., teacher evaluation and testing), particularly in places where emotional ties have become highly fractured. At the heart of forming trusting relationships is the ability to be vulnerable and share, to show respect for others' ideas, and to learn from the knowledge that others bring to an organization. Both innovation and improvement require risk taking and idea sharing, but underlying emotional connections are critical in helping the technical aspects of work to take hold.

An African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." For too long, we have focused on going fast at the expense of going far. Worse, we have strayed from focusing on the relationships necessary to bring about change. At its core, our education system succeeds by virtue of its professionals. We have been calling for complex changes in our system without understanding how change happens. To ensure the people with expertise stay to do the important work of leading schools, supporting teachers, and educating our children, leadership competency must include learning how to develop trusting and collaborative relationships among all educators within schools and school systems. ☐

Endnotes

1. Janine Nahapiet and Sumantra Ghoshal, "Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage," *Academy of Management Review* 23 (1998): 242–266.

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(Continued on page 43)

One Sentence at a Time

The Need for Explicit Instruction in Teaching Students to Write Well

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

By Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler

When Monica entered high school, her writing skills were minimal. After repeating first grade and getting more than 100 hours of tutoring in elementary school, she'd managed to learn to read well enough to get by, and she was comfortable with math. But writing seemed beyond her reach.

During her freshman year at New Dorp High School, a historically low-performing school on Staten Island in New York City, Monica's history teacher asked her to write an essay on Alexander the Great. "I think Alexander the Great was one of the best military leaders," Monica wrote. Her entire response consisted of six simple sentences, one of which didn't make sense.

An actual essay, Monica said later, "wasn't going to happen. It was like, well, I got a sentence down. What now?"

Monica's mother, who had spent many frustrating years trying to help her daughter improve her academic performance, was equally skeptical about Monica's ability to write an essay. "It just didn't seem like something Monica could ever do."[1]

Unfortunately, Monica is far from alone. Across the country—and especially in schools serving students from low-income families and English language learners—students at all grade levels have similar problems expressing themselves clearly and coherently in writing. On nationwide tests, only about 25 percent of students are able to score at a proficient level in writing.[2]

And yet, expository writing—the kind of writing that explains and informs—is essential for success in school and the work-

Judith C. Hochman is a former superintendent and a former head of the Windward School in White Plains, New York. She is the founder of The Writing Revolution, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching students how to think and write clearly. Natalie Wexler is an education journalist and blogger in Washington, D.C. This article is excerpted with permission from their book, The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking through Writing in All Subjects and Grades. *Copyright 2017 Jossey-Bass/Wiley.*

place. Students who can't write at a competent level struggle in college. With the advent of e-mail and the Internet, an increasing number of jobs require solid writing skills. That's true even of many jobs—such as being a paramedic—that people may not think of as involving writing. No matter what path students choose in life, the ability to communicate their thoughts in writing in a way that others can easily understand is crucial.

The problem is not that students like Monica are incapable of learning to write well. Rather, the problem is that American schools haven't been teaching students how to write. Teachers may have assigned writing, but they haven't explicitly taught it in a careful sequence of logical steps, beginning at the sentence level.

That's not the fault of the teachers: in the vast majority of cases, their training didn't include instruction in how to teach writing. The assumption has been that if students read enough, they'll simply pick up writing skills through a kind of osmosis. But writing is the hardest thing we ask students to do, and the evidence is clear that very few students become good writers on their own. Many students—even at the college level—have difficulty constructing a coherent sentence, let alone a fluid, cohesive essay. If you're reading this article, which is drawn from our book, *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking through Writing in All Subjects and Grades*, chances are that at least some of your students, and perhaps most, fall into that category.

To be effective, writing instruction should start in elementary school. But when students do get a chance to write in elementary school, they're often encouraged to write at length too soon, sometimes at a furious pace. They don't learn how to construct interesting and grammatically correct sentences first, and they aren't encouraged to plan or outline before they write. The idea is that later on they'll refine their writing, under the teacher's guidance, bringing coherence and—perhaps—correct grammar and punctuation to what they've produced. But after getting feedback, students may be reluctant to rewrite a multipage essay that they've already worked on for hours. And teachers, confronted by page after page of incoherent, error-riddled writing, may not know where to begin.

When students get to middle school or high school, it's assumed that they've already learned the basics of writing. As many secondary teachers know, that assumption has little to do with reality. But rather than beginning with teaching the fundamental skills their students lack—by, say, guiding students through the process of writing well-crafted sentences—teachers feel pressured to have their students meet grade-level expectations and produce multiparagraph essays.

High school teachers are also likely to ask students to write analytically about the content of the courses they're taking. But many students have written nothing except narratives in elementary and middle school, often about their personal experiences. That kind of writing doesn't prepare them for the demands of high school, college, or the workforce.

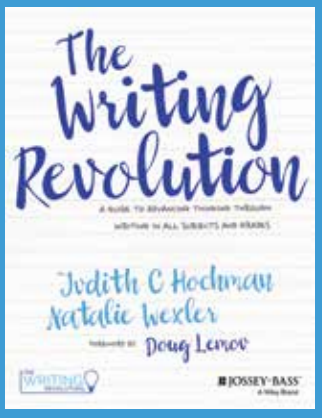
In recent years, with the advent of the Common Core State Standards and the revamping of many states' standards, teachers at almost all grade levels have been expected to have students write not just narratives but also informative and argumentative essays. But there's been little reliable guidance on how to teach students those skills.[3] The writing standards tell teachers where their students should end up. But what teachers need is a road map that tells them how to get there.

Our approach to teaching writing, which we call The Writing Revolution (TWR), offers just such a road map. It provides a clear, coherent, evidence-based method of instruction that you can use no matter what subject or grade level you teach. It works just as well with elementary students as with those, like Monica, who are in high school. The method has demonstrated repeatedly that it can turn weak writers into strong ones by focusing students' writing practice on specific techniques that match their needs and providing them with prompt and clear feedback. Insurmountable as the writing challenges faced by many students may seem, TWR can make a dramatic difference.

A History of The Writing Revolution

Teachers from around the country—in fact, from around the world—have been using this method for more than 25 years, learning it through teacher-training courses held in or near New York City. First known as the Hochman Method, TWR is being implemented at a broad range of schools, spanning all grade levels. Since 2013, we have been partnering with schools and school districts in Louisiana, New York, Texas, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere to provide more intensive and hands-on training and coaching.

> Writing is the hardest thing we ask students to do, and very few become good writers on their own.



The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking through Writing in All Subjects and Grades, by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler, is published by Jossey-Bass/Wiley, which is offering a 25 percent discount off the purchase of this book through May 31, 2018. To order, visit **www.bit.ly/TWR_AFT** and use discount code TWR25.

But how did this method originate? Years ago, like most classroom teachers, I (Judith) would assign writing activities that focused on my students' perceptions and feelings: a visit to an imaginary country, a meaningful moment in their lives. My undergraduate and graduate training hadn't included any preparation for teaching writing, nor had I been assigned to read any research on effective writing instruction. Later, as a school administrator, I observed many lessons in a similar vein.

I tried consulting the research, but, at the time, academic researchers were paying far more attention to reading than writing. So I began to experiment. I was fortunate to be at the Windward School, an independent school in New York for students with learning and language disabilities in first grade through high school. The Windward staff members and I were able to try varying approaches to writing instruction.

We stopped teaching the mechanics of writing in isolation as a set of rules and definitions. Instead, we asked students at all grade levels to write about the content they were learning and then used their writing to give specific guidance. The feedback might be, "Use an appositive in your topic sentence," "Put your strongest argument last," "Use transitions when presenting your points," or "Try starting your thesis statement with a subordinating conjunction." These are the kinds of moves that students often have trouble implementing, because they appear more often in writing than in spoken language. But because we had explicitly taught our students how to do these things, they were able to respond. Students improved not just in their writing, but also in their analytical thinking, reading comprehension, and oral communication.

Seeing such dramatic gains, we decided to share what we were learning with teachers who, like myself, had no proper training in writing instruction. To that end, we founded the Windward Teacher Training Institute.

In 2012, an article appeared in *The Atlantic* magazine about how the method we developed had produced dramatic results at a public high school with 3,000 students on Staten Island—New Dorp, where Monica started as a freshman in 2009. The article detailed the New Dorp faculty members' discovery that many of their students didn't know how to construct sentences using conjunctions such as *but* and *so*—not to mention words such as *although* and *despite*. The principal of New Dorp, Deirdre DeAngelis, heard about Windward from a friend, went to visit, and decided she wanted to bring that approach to writing instruction to her school.

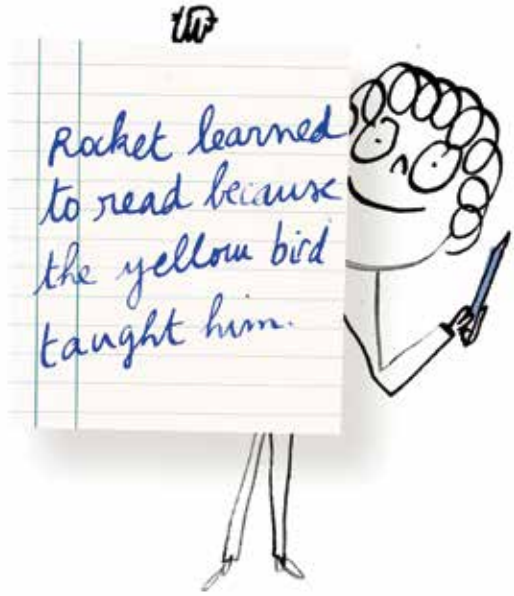
After New Dorp had been implementing our method for a couple of years, the article reported, pass rates on state exams that included essay questions rose sharply—in the case of English, from 67 percent to 89 percent—as did the graduation rate, from 63 percent to nearly 80 percent. The article spurred a tremendous amount of interest in the method, and in response I founded a nonprofit that used the title of the *Atlantic* article: The Writing Revolution.

Good Writing Requires Deliberate Practice

TWR is as much a method of teaching content as it is a method of teaching writing. There's no separate writing block, and no separate writing curriculum. Instead, teachers of all subjects adapt TWR's strategies and activities to their preexisting curriculum and weave them into their content instruction.

In other approaches to writing instruction, a teacher might give students a description of the elements of a good paragraph or essay, or perhaps present a model piece of writing and have them try to emulate it. But for many students, that's not enough. They may be able to read and appreciate writing that flows well and uses varied sentence structure, but that doesn't mean they can figure out how to write that way themselves. For them, the techniques of good writing are a secret code they just can't crack.

TWR is as much a method of teaching content as it is a method of teaching writing.



TWR's method helps them break the writing process down into manageable chunks and then has students practice the chunks they need, repeatedly, while also learning content. For example, if you want your students to make their sentences more informative and varied, you won't just ask them to do that and leave it up to them to figure out how. Instead, you'll introduce them to specific ways of creating more complex sentences, using structures that frequently appear in writing and provide the reader with more information—for example, by using appositives.

But you won't just give students the definition of an appositive—"a noun or noun phrase placed next to another noun to explain it more fully"—and ask them to start using appositives

in their writing. You'll first show them examples of appositives and then have them underline appositives in sentences you provide. For example, you might give them "George Washington, the first president of the United States, is often called the father of our country." In that sentence, they would underline "the first president of the United States." Then you'll give them a list of nouns—related to the content they've been studying—along with a list of appositives, and ask them to make the appropriate matches. After that, students will add appositives to sentences you provide, or construct sentences around appositives you give them. After a while, you'll ask them to create their own sentences using appositives—and eventually, they'll simply do that spontaneously.

This kind of practice—"deliberate practice," as cognitive scientists call it[4]—is quite different from having students practice writing by giving them, say, half an hour to write and simply turning them loose. Merely doing the same thing over and over is unlikely to improve their performance. To make their writing better, they need a series of strategies that specifically target the skills they haven't yet mastered, while building on the skills they already have, in a gradual, step-by-step process. They also need clear, direct feedback that helps them identify their mistakes and monitor their progress.

The Six Principles of The Writing Revolution

TWR's method rests on the following principles:

1. Students need explicit instruction in writing, beginning in the early elementary grades.
2. Sentences are the building blocks of all writing.
3. When embedded in the content of the curriculum, writing instruction is a powerful teaching tool.
4. The content of the curriculum drives the rigor of the writing activities.
5. Grammar is best taught in the context of student writing.
6. The two most important phases of the writing process are planning and revising.

Principle #1: Students need explicit instruction in writing, beginning in the early elementary grades.

Students won't pick up writing skills just by reading, and they need to learn how the conventions of written language differ from those of spoken language.

Many students who are good readers struggle when it comes to writing. Unlike reading, writing involves deciding what to say, which words to use, how to spell them, perhaps how to form the letters, and what order to place the words in—and that's just at the sentence level. Writing a paragraph or an entire essay requires even more decision making, planning, and analysis.

Just as good readers aren't necessarily good writers, students who can speak coherently may still write incoherently. Far too many students write the way they speak, using simple or rambling sentences or fragments. That kind of communication may

Students need to learn how the conventions of written language differ from those of spoken language.

The Benefits of Writing Instruction

As important as it is for students to learn to write well, it's not the only reason to teach writing. When teachers embed explicit writing instruction in the content of the curriculum—no matter the subject area—they see their students' academic abilities blossom. When students have the opportunity to learn TWR strategies and practice them through carefully scaffolded activities, they become better at understanding what they read, expressing themselves orally, and thinking critically.

Explicit writing instruction plays a key role in:

- **Identifying comprehension gaps.** When you ask your students to write about what they're learning, you may uncover significant gaps in their knowledge and comprehension—before it's too late to do anything about them.
- **Boosting reading comprehension.** When students learn to use more sophisticated syntax in their own writing, they become better able to understand it when they encounter it in their reading.*
- **Enhancing speaking abilities.** As students begin to use more complex terms and sentence constructions in their written language, they begin to incorporate those features into their spoken language as well.
- **Improving organizational and study skills.** TWR activities teach students to paraphrase, take notes, summarize, and make outlines. These techniques help them absorb and retain crucial information.
- **Developing analytical capabilities.** The process of writing requires even young students to organize their ideas and sequence information. They must decide for themselves what's important, which facts and ideas are connected to one another, and how to organize their thoughts into a logical progression. When done in a systematic and sequenced way, teaching students to write is equivalent to teaching them how to think.

–J.C.H. and N.W.

*Gail Gillon and Barbara Dodd, "The Effects of Training Phonological, Semantic, and Syntactic Processing Skills in Spoken Language on Reading Ability," *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 26 (1995): 58–68.

work when we're speaking to someone in front of us. But when we write, we don't have visual cues to draw on, and we often don't know exactly who the audience is. We need to express ourselves with far more precision and clarity, anticipating the facts and details a reader will require to grasp our meaning. We also need to rely on words and punctuation rather than intonation and pauses to indicate nuances in meaning or breaks in the narrative. We have to abide by conventions of spelling and grammar to ensure that mistakes don't distract a reader from the content.

Although good writing should be clear and direct, it often involves more complex sentence structures and a more varied and precise vocabulary than spoken language. When we speak, we rarely begin sentences with words such as *despite* or *although*, but they can be extremely useful in written language. And connecting our thoughts with phrases like *as a result* or *for example*, although unnecessary in most conversational speech, can be vital in creating a fluid piece of writing.

More generally, when we write, our words are preserved on paper—or perhaps on a screen—making not just grammatical and syntactical errors but also logical flaws far more glaring than in spoken language. And we rarely sustain spoken language for the equivalent length of a paragraph, let alone an essay, unless we're delivering a speech or participating in a formal debate. Shaping a logical, unbroken narrative or argument in writing requires far more thought and planning than having a conversation or making a contribution to a class discussion.

The elementary grades are the ideal time to begin writing instruction. If we assign only stories, journal entries, and poems in the early grades—as I did as a young teacher—we're wasting precious time. Although it's certainly possible to teach expository writing skills to older students, it's much easier to begin the process in elementary school. Elementary students can practice their spelling and vocabulary words by writing original sentences, and they can acquire knowledge by developing questions about what they're reading. At the same time, they can hone their handwriting skills.*

*For more on the importance of teaching handwriting, see "Want to Improve Children's Writing?" in the Winter 2009–2010 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2009-2010/graham.

Certainly, we want children to enjoy writing and use it as a means of self-expression. But many students produce writing so incoherent that readers are unable to respond. We need to equip children with the tools that will give them confidence as writers and enable them to express themselves in a way that others can understand. And far from feeling that practicing the mechanics of writing is drudgery, students often gain a sense of pride and mastery from learning to craft well-constructed sentences and logically sequenced paragraphs.

Principle #2: Sentences are the building blocks of all writing.

In many schools, the quantity of writing has long been valued over its quality. The Common Core and other standards have only increased the pressure on teachers to assign essay-length writing. But if students haven't learned how to write an effective sentence, that is where instruction needs to begin.

The elementary grades are the ideal time to begin writing instruction.

Of course students must learn to write at length, and TWR includes strategies and activities designed to guide them through that process. But a writer who can't compose a decent sentence will never produce a decent essay—or even a decent paragraph. And if students are still struggling to write sentences, they have less brain power available to do the careful planning that writing a good paragraph or composition requires.

A sentence-level assignment is manageable for students who are still grappling with grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation. It's also manageable for their teachers, who may be overwhelmed by correcting an essay full of mechanical errors, especially if it also contains substantive misunderstandings.

Sentence-level writing shouldn't be dismissed as something that's too basic for older students to engage in. As one writing researcher has observed, sentences "are literally miniature compositions."[5] Producing even a single sentence can impose major cognitive demands on students, especially if it requires them to explain, paraphrase, or summarize sophisticated content.

Even at the sentence level, however, students need appropriate guidance if their writing skills are to improve. TWR gives teachers an array of activities that guide students to use complete sentences, vary their structure, and use complex syntax and vocabulary—while at the same time ensuring that students master content.

Once students have acquired basic sentence-level skills, TWR also provides structured support for lengthier writing. But crafting an effective sentence is a useful and important exercise, no matter the skill level of the student, and teachers should continue to assign sentence-level activities even after students have moved on to writing paragraphs and compositions.

Principle #3: When embedded in the content of the curriculum, writing instruction is a powerful teaching tool.

When schools do focus on expository writing, the assignments are often on topics that draw only on students' personal experiences or opinions rather than on the content they are actually studying in English, history, science, or other subjects. Students may, for example, practice persuasive writing by taking pro or con positions on school uniforms or an extended school day or year. They may learn to write a compare-and-contrast essay by weighing the benefits and disadvantages of being famous.

Such general topics can be useful for introducing students to a particular aspect of writing—say, creating topic sentences. But to maximize the benefits of writing instruction, students should start practicing their writing skills on topics embedded in content as soon as possible. When writing is embedded in content, students from the earliest grades through high school are better able to express themselves orally and in writing.

In addition, until students have had quite a bit of systematic and targeted instruction, the writing skills they develop with regard to one subject are unlikely to transfer to another. Having students write about topics unrelated to content represents a huge wasted opportunity to boost their learning. Writing isn't merely a skill; it's also a powerful teaching tool. When students write, they—and their teachers—figure out what they don't understand and what further information they need. And, when students write about the content they're studying, they learn to synthesize information and produce their own interpretations. That process helps them absorb and retain the substance of what they're writing about and the vocabulary that goes with it.

So, if students are learning about ancient Egypt, or about tornadoes and hurricanes, part of the instruction in those subjects should include having students write about them. Writing and content knowledge are intimately related. *You can't write well about something you don't know well.* The more students know about a topic before they begin to write, the better they'll be able to write about it. At the same time, the process of writing will deepen their understanding of a topic and help cement that understanding in their memory.

A corollary of this principle is that *all* teachers must be writing teachers. Although teachers of subjects other than English may be apprehensive about incorporating the teaching of writing into their curricula, in our experience most of them find that, rather than detracting from their instruction, implementing TWR actually enhances their ability to teach and boosts their students' performance. And although the strategies should be practiced daily, they may take only five to 15 minutes of class time. The strategies can be used as quick comprehension checks, do-now activities, and exit tickets.

Principle #4: The content of the curriculum drives the rigor of the writing activities.

If you follow the third principle and connect your students' writing activities with the subject matter that you're teaching, you'll find that you can use the same activities for any grade level or content area and still challenge your students. The form of the activity will stay the same, but the content is what makes it more or less rigorous.

For example, one TWR sentence-level strategy uses the conjunctions *because*, *but*, and *so* to encourage extended responses. The teacher gives students a sentence stem and an independent clause ending with one of the conjunctions, and asks them to finish it in three different ways, using each of the three conjunctions.

The more students know about a topic before they begin to write, the better they'll be able to write about it.

If you're teaching elementary students, you might give them this stem:

> Rocket learned to read _____.

You'll ask the students to complete the stem with a phrase beginning with *because*, *but*, *and*, or *so*. They might respond:

> Rocket learned to read *because the yellow bird taught him*.

> Rocket learned to read, *but at first he was bored*.

> Rocket learned to read, *so he was proud of himself*.

In math, instead of asking, "What is a fraction?," you can give your students this stem:

> Fractions are like decimals _____.

They might complete it like this:

> Fractions are like decimals *because they are all parts of wholes*.

> Fractions are like decimals, *but they are written differently*.

Fractions are like decimals, *so they can be used interchangeably*.

If you're teaching science, you could give your students this stem:

Aerobic respiration is similar to anaerobic respiration _____ _____.

Here's what they might say:

Aerobic respiration is similar to anaerobic respiration *because both start with glucose and make ATP*.

Aerobic respiration is similar to anaerobic respiration, *but anaerobic respiration does not require oxygen*.

Aerobic respiration is similar to anaerobic respiration, *so both autotrophs and heterotrophs use aerobic and anaerobic respiration*.

Research has consistently found that teaching grammar rules in isolation doesn't work.

In each of these cases, students need to return to the material they have been studying and mine it carefully for information to complete the stems.

No matter what content you use with these kinds of activities, the specificity of the prompts makes them far more powerful than an open-ended question such as, "Why did Rocket learn to read?" Instead, adding the conjunction *but*, for example, to the sentence stem "Rocket learned to read..." demands that students hold two contrasting ideas in their minds and find evidence in a text to support one of them. Your students will be exercising their own judgment independently but in a way that gives them the structure they need.

Principle #5: Grammar is best taught in the context of student writing.

Research has consistently found that teaching grammar rules in isolation doesn't work. But that doesn't mean teachers can't, or shouldn't, teach grammar. What does work is to teach writing conventions and grammar in the context of students' own writing.[6]

Just as skills developed in writing about one subject may not transfer to another, many students won't be able to apply rules they've learned in the abstract to their own writing. Although it's useful for students to have a general familiarity with basic concepts such as "noun" and "verb," that won't necessarily prevent them from writing "sentences" that lack one or the other.

Some people swear by sentence diagramming—often, those who feel that they themselves learned to write by using the technique. And it may work for some students. But for many, and especially those who struggle with language, breaking sentences into their component parts, labeling them as parts of speech, and plotting them on a diagram just adds to the confusion.

An alternative technique for teaching grammar that has been shown to produce excellent results in numerous studies—and that is incorporated into TWR activities—is sentence combining. Rather than breaking down a preexisting sentence, students create their own complex sentences by combining two or more simple sentences in a variety of ways. Perhaps they'll use a conjunction, a pronoun, or an appositive or subordinate clause. Students often find this approach more engaging than diagramming, and it eliminates the need to devote mental energy to memorizing and remembering grammatical terms.

Principle #6: The two most important phases of the writing process are planning and revising.

When students are ready to tackle longer pieces of writing—paragraphs and compositions—they'll need to go through four steps before producing a final copy: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. But the most critical phases are planning and revising.

All students need to plan before they write. Although experienced writers may be able to turn out a well-developed paragraph or essay on the fly, most of the students we work with find it overwhelming to organize their thoughts at the same time they're choosing words and figuring out the best way to structure their sentences.

That's why we provide two basic outline templates: one for planning paragraphs, and the other for planning multiparagraph writing. The lion's share of the work of writing occurs at the plan-

ning stage, as students identify the main idea or theme of their writing, the points they will make, and the order they will make them in. As they do this work, students are discovering what further information or clarification they need, making the necessary connections between ideas or claims and relevant details or evidence, and ensuring that they don't wander off into irrelevancy or repetition.

Once students have a well-organized outline, it's a fairly simple matter to translate it into a rudimentary draft. Then comes the next major phase of writing: revising the draft so that it reads smoothly and coherently. This is where students will draw on the sentence-level skills they've acquired: using subordinating conjunctions, appositives, and other techniques to vary their sentence structure and inserting transition words and phrases between sentences and paragraphs to make them flow.

Because teachers embed TWR activities in the content of their own curricula, the approach doesn't look exactly the same in every school or even in every classroom that uses it. But across the board, teachers who adhere to these six principles while implementing TWR's method have found it to be a powerful way not only of teaching writing skills but also of ensuring their students are grasping content and thinking analytically. They've learned to give students clear, explicit writing instruction and feedback, using sentence-level activities regardless of what grade they're teaching. They ground TWR's strategies in whatever substance the class is learning, forcing students to grapple with text and using the complexity of the content to ratchet up the activities' rigor. They use students' own writing and specific sentence strategies to guide them to the correct use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and other conventions. And they break the writing process into manageable steps, with particular attention to planning and revising, so that students don't become overwhelmed by all the factors that writing requires them to juggle.

These are the principles that teachers at New Dorp High School resolved to embrace shortly after Monica arrived there, adopting TWR's method in every subject except math. In her chemistry class, for example, Monica got a worksheet to fill out after learning about the properties of hydrogen and oxygen. She had to write three sentences about hydrogen and oxygen, one beginning with *although*, one with *unless*, and one with *if*. She wrote:

> *Although* hydrogen is explosive and oxygen supports combustion, a compound of them puts out fires.
>
> *Unless* hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they are explosive and dangerous.
>
> *If* hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they lose their original properties of being explosive and supporting combustion.

Monica found that the writing activities her teachers gave her dramatically boosted her reading comprehension. "Before, I could read, sure," she said. "But it was like a sea of words. The more writing instruction I got, the more I understood which words were important."

By her sophomore year, Monica—along with the rest of her class—had moved on to outlining and revising paragraphs and compositions. One of the strategies that she found helpful was using transition words. "There are phrases—*specifically*, *for instance*, *for example*—that help you add detail to a paragraph," she said. After a pause, she added, "Who could have known that, unless someone taught them?"

By senior year, Monica said, she was able to "write paragraphs and paragraphs, and essays, and *pages*." Despite having entered high school reading far below grade level, she was able to score a 77 on her state Regents exam, two points above the cutoff signaling a student is ready for college-level coursework. On her U.S. History and Government Regents exam, she got a 91.

The essay she wrote for her Global History Regents exam, which she hurried through, began:

> Throughout history, societies have developed significant technological innovations. The technological innovations have had both positive and negative effects on the society of humankind. Two major technological advances were factory systems and chemical pesticides.

Teachers have found TWR to be a powerful way of ensuring their students are grasping content and thinking analytically.

Although that may not be knock-your-socks-off writing, the essay went on for six paragraphs, was logically ordered, cited examples, and used transitions to connect ideas.

As a special education student, Monica had assumed she would never go to college. But as she developed her writing abilities—along with her reading, speaking, and thinking abilities—that assumption changed.

"I always wanted to go to college," she said during her junior year, when she was starting the process of applying, "but I never had the confidence that I could say and write the things I know." She smiled and swept her brown bangs from her eyes. "Then someone showed me how."[7] □

Endnotes

1. Peg Tyre, "The Writing Revolution," *The Atlantic*, October 2012, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/10/the-writing-revolution/309090.

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3. Madeline Will, "As Teachers Tackle New Student-Writing Expectations, Support Is Lacking," *Education Week*, July 20, 2016, www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2016/06/20/as-teachers-tackle-new-student-writing-expectations-support.html.

4. Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool, *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

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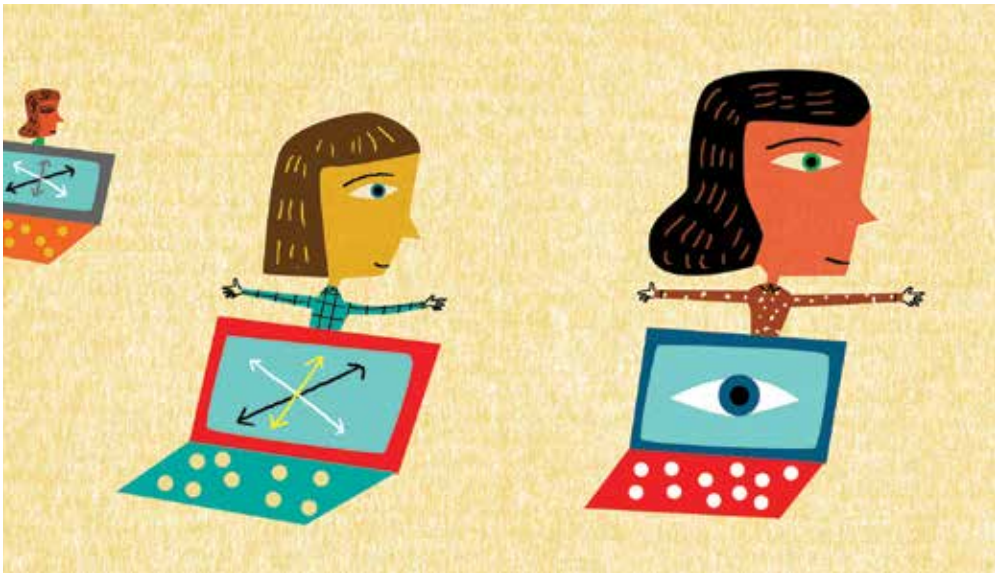
Promising Practices for Education Technology

By Molly B. Zielezinski



Despite all the celebratory rhetoric around our nation's declining dropout rates, during a given year, nearly 20 percent of students expected to graduate do not.[1] Furthermore, according to Johns Hopkins University and Civic Enterprises, "unacceptably low levels of minority, low-income, English Language Learners, and special education students are graduating from high school."[2] This is true for 27 percent of African American students, 24 percent of Hispanic students, 37 percent of students who have limited English proficiency, and 25 percent of low-income students.[3] Given these numbers, bridging the digital divide between more- and less-advantaged students seems especially urgent.

In the last few years, U.S. schools have begun seeing an unprecedented level of new hardware and software in their classrooms. But access alone can't fill the digital divide—especially when K–12 schools in low-income neighborhoods are only using technology for remediation purposes. So, how can we use this massive influx of technology to support our nation's underserved students?

The (alarming) research on education technology and equity

Recently, I had the opportunity to work with education scholars Linda Darling-Hammond and Shelley Goldman on a massive literature review and policy brief guided by the very question posed above.[4] During this project, I vetted almost 400 publications, landing on 52 that were relevant, rigorous, and grounded in actual research. Taken as a collection, they revealed a holistic picture of the parts that must work together for education technology to be effective in the classroom.

You may be wondering, Why isn't the massive influx of technology supporting those who need it the most? Research on education technology points to an explanation of why access is not enough to close the digital divide for underserved students: "Overall, students who are black, Hispanic, or low-income are more likely to use computers for drill and practice, whereas students who are white or high-income are more likely to use computers for simulations or authentic applications."[5]

When we only use education technology for basic skills with underserved students—but use it in much more meaningful ways with more privileged students—we are driving the boundaries of the digital divide even farther apart, not closing it. Using digital tools solely for drill-and-practice activities and remediation can, and often does, negatively affect student achievement, not to mention engagement, motivation, and self-esteem.

If we can't use education technology for skills and drills, then what can we use it for? Here are five tips that provide a good starting point for anyone who wants to implement new digital tools or evaluate those tools already being used.

Tip 1: Use technology to engage students.

Instead of using technology for remediation and to drill kids on grade-level standards, use it to help them engage in authentic tasks—those that are grounded in relevant, ongoing work that has some purpose beyond the immediate completion of the activity.

This can play out in a lot of different ways, but we bumped into the same few promising practices in our literature review. Based on the research, we recommend digital tools that support problem solving, inferencing, analyzing, and synthesizing information from multiple sources, as well as tools that develop communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. These should always be prioritized over activities that only include basic skill tasks (memorizing facts, applying rules, etc.). Some great tools for this include:

- ***Visual Understanding Environment (VUE)*:** Powerful open-source software—software that can be freely used and shared—for concept mapping. VUE allows users to create complex visual

Molly B. Zielezinski is a doctoral candidate at the Stanford Graduate School of Education with a dual specialization in Learning Sciences and Technology Design and Curriculum Studies and Teacher Education. *This piece is adapted from an article that originally appeared on EdSurge.com on May 19, 2016, available at www.bit.ly/1sBrYoB.*

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES YANG

representations of information from scratch. (**http://vue.tufts.edu**)

- ***Canva*:** A content-creation web-based tool that allows users to design presentations, social media graphics, posters, book covers, business cards, and more. Canva allows beginners to engage in professional-looking information design without the huge learning curve that usually comes with this kind of work. (**www.canva.com**)
- ***Declara*:** Another web-based tool for teams and individuals that allows educators to curate collections of learning resources and collaborate within these collections by sharing insights and posing and responding to questions. (**https://declara.com**)

Tip 2: Let students create original digital content.

Give students opportunities to be content creators rather than content consumers. Content creation—when done well—allows students to communicate their own ideas creatively. Some examples include using technology to craft multimedia stories, filming and producing documentaries or designing posters, leveraging social media as a tool for teaching and learning, and publishing on wikis, blogs, and/or websites. The idea is that students engage deeply in ongoing projects within and across platforms. As an added benefit, students can begin to build lifelong learning portfolios showcasing what they know and are able to do as well as work that makes them proud.

Tip 3: Pick digital tools that promote interactivity.

Does the app or program allow students to construct their own understanding of complex phenomena? Does it encourage students to represent thinking in multiple forms (text, pictures, videos, digital interactions, or some combination of these)? Will students engage with data or true-to-life simulations? Will they use sensors to measure real-life phenomena?

These are some of the markers of digital tools that support learning. To really find out about a tool's level of interactivity (whether you are a designer, educator, administrator, or policymaker), you need to engage with the digital tool—get your hands dirty with the technology and use it the way students will. Test the digital tool, and use your activity and engagement as a lens to evaluate its capacity to support meaning-making and active reflection related to desired learning outcomes.

> We must abandon the argument that access to digital tools is the *only* way to minimize the digital divide.

Tip 4: Let students share their expertise with an authentic audience.

With the Internet at our fingertips, we have access to all kinds of potential audiences—known and unknown; local and global; those with shared interests, questions, and goals. Giving students an authentic audience to share their work improves the quality of their work. For example, students can be writing or producing a video about how to create a working calculator in Minecraft for the robust Minecraft digital community. In this example, the readers are interested, their feedback is targeted and contextualized, and there are higher risks and rewards in terms of building confidence, content knowledge, and identity formation.

Tip 5: Find the right blend of teacher and technology.

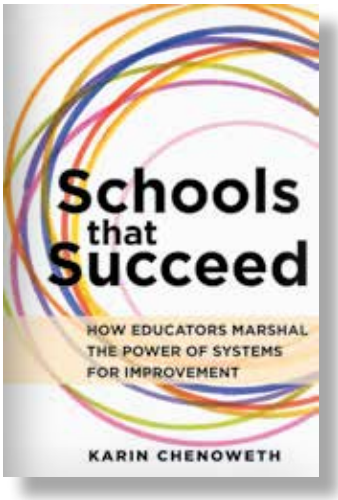
I can say without hesitation that the world needs a lot more research on blended learning in K–12, but from what there is, it's clear that the teacher must play a crucial role in supporting the content students encounter through digital learning. The only substantial study published on this prior to 2013 found significantly greater student satisfaction in environments with (1) high levels of teacher support for the digital material, and (2) opportunities for peer interaction.[7] The authors of this report also recommended the use of real-time digital feedback in digital learning environments.

Where I live in Silicon Valley, it is not uncommon for many middle and high school students to write computer code, participate in blended lessons, or engage in high tech engineering projects, which we call fabrication labs. But other students—who are the same age and living across the highway in a lower-income area—are much more hard-pressed to find such opportunities within their schools and communities. In a panel last year at Stanford University on Combating Inequity in Education, Darling-Hammond pointed out that usage of computers at East Palo Alto Library is limited to 15 minutes and the lines to use them are often long. If you are a student without access to a computer at home and have only limited access to technology within your community, you simply cannot engage deeply in the kind of tasks the literature recommends.

To help our underserved students learn, we must abandon the argument that access to digital tools is the *only* way to minimize the digital divide. We must advocate both for greater access to such tools and for changes in how these tools are used, to better engage our underserved students in authentic tasks that support their learning and development. ☐

(Endnotes on page 43)

SCHOOLS THAT SUCCEED: HOW EDUCATORS MARSHAL THE POWER OF SYSTEMS FOR IMPROVEMENT



The many books that document the problems plaguing public education overlook an important point: we can learn just as much—if not more—by studying the schools doing it right. In *Schools That Succeed: How Educators Marshal the Power of Systems for Improvement* (Harvard Education Press), longtime education writer Karin Chenoweth profiles public schools where administrators work with classroom teachers to ensure a school's total focus centers on teaching and learning.

Building on her previous books about lessons to learn from "unexpected schools," her latest work includes her "observations of educators who understand how to confront the ways in which schools have been traditionally organized and change them in ways that sometimes seem very simple and yet have profound implications." In each chapter, Chenoweth takes the reader through a different example—one in Los Angeles County, another in Mobile, Alabama, two in New York state, among others—where administrators and educators have devised thoughtful ways to increase student engagement and improve classroom instruction.

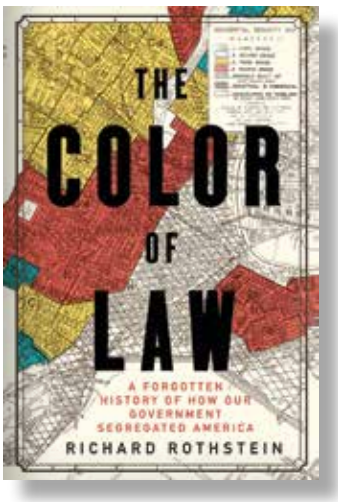
For instance, she highlights the work of Artesia High School in the ABC Unified School District in Los Angeles County. The district caught Chenoweth's eye when she read about its strong labor-management partnership that has helped its students thrive. She describes how Artesia's veteran principal, Sergio Garcia, supports teachers by fostering positive student behavior and by encouraging students not typically considered ready for Advanced Placement classes to enroll and succeed in them with support. She also explains how the school's culture of collaboration has enabled its students, many of whom come from low-income families, to make gains on state standardized tests.

Chenoweth notes that for Garcia, improving Artesia "was a matter of understanding the 'deep need' teachers have to do their job well … and building the systems to help them do it."

By "systems," she refers to "how schools organize things to get stuff done." To drive home exactly how educators build such systems, she concludes each chapter with bulleted lists of systems and observations. These often include procedures to develop leaders within a school building, the creation of a master schedule that makes time for well-rounded instruction, and the scheduling of common planning time for teachers.

Chenoweth writes that, despite the continued assaults on public education, "these schools have restored my belief that it is possible for schools to act as crucibles of democracy."

THE COLOR OF LAW: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HOW OUR GOVERNMENT SEGREGATED AMERICA



More than 60 years have passed since *Brown v. Board of Education*, yet many of our nation's schools are still highly segregated by race. An important reason for this, among many, is residential segregation. In *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright), Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute offers a history of how our neighborhoods' demographics came to look the way they do. Rothstein focuses specifically on racism against African Americans, and his book presents abundant evidence showing that racial segregation in housing was an explicit and deliberate government policy, not merely the result of personal choice or economic happenstance.

Rothstein covers a period from roughly 1900 through the end of the 1960s, and he looks at government actions at all levels, from federal to local. Each chapter lays out a separate case of government-enforced policies that prevented African Americans from living in white areas and, in many cases, took previously integrated neighborhoods and made them more racially homogeneous. Readers learn about segregation in public housing, discriminatory zoning ordinances, court enforcement of racially restrictive real estate contracts, and other topics. One of the most blatant cases concerns the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and discriminatory mortgage finance practices. During the time of expanding homeownership in the 1940s and 1950s, FHA guidelines prevented African Americans from obtaining federally backed mortgage insurance, which kept African Americans out of newly built suburbs.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 ostensibly ended these patterns of overt discrimination, but by then the damage had already been done: African Americans had lost out on the post–World War II housing boom. Unable to obtain suburban mortgages, many remained renters in struggling cities or fell victim to predatory lending practices. African American families missed opportunities to accumulate wealth through home equity and found themselves in heavily segregated urban cores with growing poverty. These denied opportunities form the backdrop to the racial justice issues of our time, from Ferguson, Missouri, to Baltimore to Chicago.

Rothstein implores us to correct this historic injustice. He acknowledges the political and logistical difficulties of undoing decades' worth of discriminatory housing policy, but he offers some concrete steps. These include the simple act of teaching our students about this dark episode of our history. He writes, "If young people are not taught an accurate account of how we became segregated, their generation will have little chance of doing a better job."

Free Materials for PreK–12

WHETHER YOU'RE SEARCHING for information on supporting students' literacy skills or engaging in opportunities for professional development, the AFT's educational issues department is here to help. Below, we highlight a few of our recent publications, which are all available for free at **www.aft.org/education/publications**.

ESSA 101

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formerly known as No Child Left Behind and now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), is a long-overdue reset of the federal role in education policy. The new law paves the way for a public education system that is more focused on teaching and learning, and it gives states and educators more latitude in making policy decisions, while maintaining federal funding for the students who need it most.

The AFT has published two briefs to help you understand ESSA. The first covers the fundamentals of the law and why it matters. The second is a guide for stakeholders to use as they develop their state plans required under ESSA. It walks through key decision points, suggests guiding questions, and offers the AFT's take on the choices to be made. A Q&A with Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute, addresses several of the questions most commonly asked by our members.

For the two briefs and more resources on ESSA, visit **www.aft.org/ESSA**.

Literacy

"The Keys to Success," a literacy series published by the AFT, is designed for parents of elementary and middle school students. Based on English language arts standards, it covers what children should know and be able to do in terms of reading, writing, and comprehension.

The series provides exercises students should be able to complete and suggests ways for parents to reinforce what their children are learning in school. Also included are links to websites with more information and resources, including videos, about the standards.

For this series and other literacy resources, visit **http://go.aft.org/AE217tft1**.

Community Schools

Community learning centers. Full-service schools. Community hubs. Whatever the name, community schools make a difference in the lives of children, families, educators, and their communities every day. By moving beyond the normal confines of the school building and partnering with local stakeholders, community schools provide real solutions to the unique challenges of the students and families they serve.

For more on community schools and how to develop and sustain them, including case studies of successful ones, visit **http://go.aft.org/AE217tft2**.

Professional Learning

The AFT has long recognized that the union's responsibilities—and our members' interests—go beyond the traditional issues of salary and benefits. Our educator members want to grow as professionals so they can better help their students and communities.

For information on the many professional learning opportunities the AFT offers, see our *Professional Learning and You* brochure, at **http://go.aft.org/AE217tft3**.

For questions on any of these topics, or to request complimentary hard copies of our publications, e-mail us at **edissues@aft.org**.

–AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT

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RESOURCES

THERE GOES THE SUN

The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) has published a new book that can help teachers prepare students for August 21, 2017—a day when millions across the United States will have a rare chance to witness a total solar eclipse. Aimed at students in grades 5–8, *When the Sun Goes Dark* tells the story of how one family simulates an eclipse using common household objects and then safely experiences the real thing through homemade pinhole viewers and other eye-friendly strategies. Browse sample pages and order online at the NSTA Science Store (**www.nsta.org/store**).

COUCH-FREE SUMMERS

Recent studies are pointing to summer vacation as a prime time for elementary school children to gain unwanted weight, adding to the risk of childhood obesity and related ailments. Changes in eating and sleeping habits and a lack of physical activity are thought to be major contributors. To help these children and others eat better and get active, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition has compiled an extensive list of programs and awards that promote a healthier lifestyle. See the list at **www.bit.ly/2pvjgqL**.

IMMIGRATION AFTER THE ELECTION

Penn State Law's Center for Immigrants' Rights Clinic has compiled an extensive "Immigration after the Election" web page that offers resources for immigrant communities and their allies. Fact sheets, PowerPoint slides, handouts, and more are available at **www.pennstatelaw.psu.edu/immigration-after-election**, which also features a section devoted to recent immigration-related executive orders.

ALMOST TIME FOR TEACH

The biennial AFT TEACH (Together Educating America's Children) professional learning conference for educators is set for July 20–22 in Washington, D.C. This year's focus will be on what AFT President Randi Weingarten calls the "four pillars" of strong and purposeful public education: promoting children's well-being; supporting powerful learning; developing teacher and staff capacity; and fostering cultures of collaboration among educators, administrators, families, and communities. Learn more about the conference at **www.aft.org/education/aft-teach**, and follow all the action on Twitter (**@AFTteach**) and Facebook (**www.facebook.com/AFTteach**).

Hope in Dark Times

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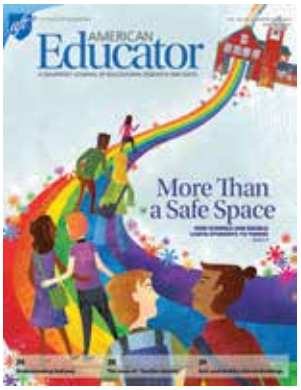

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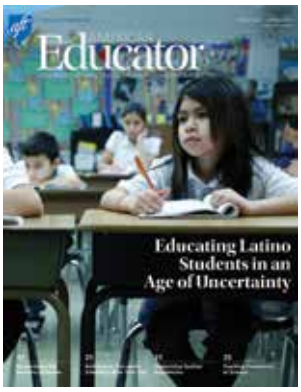

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