EDUCATING TEACHERS:

The Best Minds Speak Out

Trustees for Better Teachers

Educating Teachers: The Best Minds Speak Out is the first of two publications by the **Trustees for Better Teachers project**, a multi-year initiative of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni aimed at improving teacher education in the United States. As stewards of their institutions, trustees are ideally placed to take a critical look at teacher training programs at their schools and press for reforms. This collection of articles explores the current state of teacher training in this country and suggests alternatives to the status quo.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is an educational nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC dedicated to academic freedom, excellence and accountability. ACTA provides a broad range of services to college and university trustees ranging from independent information and publications to conferences and consultations on academic and governance matters. ACTA publications include: *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century* (2000); *The Shakespeare File: What English Majors Are Really Studying* (1996); and *The Intelligent Donor's Guide to College Giving* (1996).

For further information about ACTA and its programs, please contact:

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-467-6787; 1-888-ALUMNI-8
Facsimile: 202-467-6784
Email: info@goacta.org
Website: www.goacta.org

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George C. Leef, Editor
Director, Higher Education Policy

June 2002

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Introduction

Ever since the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform,* there has been a growing awareness in the United States that our K-12 educational system is not performing well. On standardized tests of basic knowledge and skills, American students compare poorly with those of other industrialized nations, and even some non-industrial ones. For example, in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), 12th grade American students finished 19th out of 21 nations in mathematics—behind countries such as Slovenia and Lithuania. In science, the result was not much better: American 12th graders finished 16th out of 21 nations. Comparing American students of today with those of earlier generations also shows a decline in academic achievement. In 1960, the average SAT total score was 975. By 2000, it had fallen to 919 (using a constant scale, not the "recentered" scores that are significantly higher).

Many college professors report that they find that their students are increasingly ill-prepared for and disinterested in college-level work, demanding that their college classes be made easy and entertaining (*see, e.g., Generation X Goes to College* by Peter Sacks). Approximately one-third of entering college students have to take a remedial course in math or English. Employers report that they have to spend more and more resources on teaching newly-hired workers how to do simple tasks involving reading, writing, or arithmetic. If we were a nation at risk in 1983, we are at least as much so today.

There is no single cause for our educational weaknesses, but one of the causes, in the opinion of many experts in the field of education, is that American teachers do not receive good preparation in the teacher

training programs they take in college. The curriculum in most college departments of education requires prospective teachers to devote most of their coursework to classes in "teaching methods" that purport to instruct them in *how to teach,* but with little or no emphasis on mastery of any particular subject matter, that is, *what to teach.* That is why one finds, for example, that many high school history teachers did not take more than a smattering of history while in college, that the typical high school economics teacher has no more than a "man in the street" grasp of economics, and that English teachers often have difficulty in writing a coherent paragraph.

Moreover, there is a great deal of controversy over the efficacy of those teacher training programs. Rather than emphasizing pedagogical methods that are known to work, such as phonics, the curriculum in many education schools is heavily laden with educational fads and theories. One reigning theory is that knowledge should be "constructed" by the student rather than imparted by the teacher. This approach gives rise to "learner-centered" classrooms where the teachers don't teach much, but act as "facilitators" who guide the students as they "construct their own knowledge." Supposedly, this approach instills a greater desire to learn in students, but teachers who will speak frankly say that it is just a waste of time. And the experience of colleges and businesses is that this kind of "teaching" leads to large numbers of young people with low academic achievement. The poor performance of American students is due in large measure to the way we train teachers.

In the readings that follow, you will receive a highly critical look at American education schools—their theories, books, presumptions, their *mindset*—from people who have been there and know whereof they speak. While there are occasional education programs that refuse to go along with the constructivist trend, they are few and far between. Most education schools have courses like those described by Heather Mac Donald in

her essay, and advocate the kind of time-wasting techniques described by Louisa Spencer in hers. The professors are probably adherents of the constructivist theory that is dissected in several other essays.

In other readings, the authors present models for change. One, for example, presents the very traditional teacher preparation program at Hillsdale College; another discusses differences between the teaching *profession* in Japan and the teaching *occupation* in the United States.

We at ACTA believe that the near-monopoly that education schools have on the training of new teachers is highly undesirable. Monopolies inhibit experimentation and discovery. There is no more reason for government to specify *the method* for training teachers than it should specify *the method* for training violinists, carpenters, or computer specialists. We applaud the steps that have been taken in a number of states to allow for alternative paths to teacher certification. Those alternative certification programs allow individuals, such as retired military officers or college-educated professionals seeking a second career, the opportunity to teach without going through the dreary, time-consuming, and often counter-productive education school curriculum.

But we cannot rely exclusively on the opening up of alternate routes into the field of teaching. For the foreseeable future, most of America's teachers will be trained in education schools. We regard it as imperative to change the programs that currently exist and hope that, after reading this book, you will agree.

College and university trustees are in a position to work for change in teacher training programs. In fact, it is hard to imagine that initiatives for change could come from any other quarter. The ed school dean and faculty are not apt to see the error of their ways and unilaterally institute changes. While some college

presidents are aware of the deficiencies of their education schools, few of them want to have another battle to fight. A strong dose of sound, independent judgment is necessary—something that will only come from trustees. A companion book, to be released later, will give practical advice on how trustees can go about reviewing and improving their educational programs.

Of the ten essays that comprise this book, seven have been published previously and three have been written for this book. In most cases, footnotes have been omitted for ease in reading, but if you would like to read the original with footnotes, citations are provided.

This book is the first publication of ACTA's **Trustees for Better Teachers** project, a multi-year initiative working towards the improvement of teacher education in the United States. As an independent force in university governance, trustees are ideally placed to take a critical look at teacher training programs at their schools. We are currently forming a group of trustees who will be associates of the project. Please contact project director George Leef if you desire further information.

We wish to thank the distinguished advisory panel for its assistance in the preparation of this book:

Edwin J. Delattre
Resident Scholar at the Center for School Improvement, Boston University and former President of St. John's College

Candace de Russy
Trustee, State University of New York and Chair of the Academic Standards Committee

Marci Kanstoroom
Research Director, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

Michael Podgursky
Professor of Economics, University of Missouri

Benno Schmidt
President, Edison Schools and former President of Yale University

J. E. Stone
Professor of Education, East Tennessee State University

Sandra Stotsky
Member of Massachusetts Board of Education and author of Losing Our Language

Any errors, of course, are our own.

Jerry L. Martin
President

George C. Leef
Director, Higher Education Policy

Contributors

Lawrence A. Baines is Professor of Education at Texas Tech University.

Douglas Carnine is Professor of Education at the University of Oregon.

George Cunningham is Professor of Education at the University of Louisville.

Donald Crawford is Professor of Education at the University of Western Washington.

Edwin J. Delattre is Resident Scholar at the Center for School Improvement and Professor of Philosophy at Boston University, and former President of St. John's College.

Candace de Russy is a trustee of the State University of New York and Chair of the Academic Standards Committee.

Robert C. Hanna is Director of the teacher education program at Hillsdale College.

James Hiebert is Robert J. Barkley Professor of Education at the University of Delaware.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal*, John M. Olin fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and the author of *The Burden of Bad Ideas*.

Michael Poliakoff is President of the National Council on Teacher Quality.

Louisa C. Spencer is a volunteer reading tutor working in the New York City public schools.

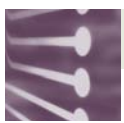
Gregory Stanley is a teacher at Calhoun High School, Calhoun, Georgia.

James Stigler is Professor of Psychology at UCLA and President of LessonLab.

J. E. Stone is Professor of Education at East Tennessee State University and the founder of the Education Consumers ClearingHouse—an Internet source for parents, taxpayers, and policymakers.

What really goes on inside education school classrooms? Do the professors work hard with students to show them how best to get students to understand fractions, how to write good paragraphs, or how to explain the causes of the Civil War? Journalist Heather Mac Donald ventured into one of the nation's premier schools of education—Teachers College at Columbia University—and found that the program there is a morass of muddled thinking, political indoctrination, and dogmatic adherence to the doctrines of "progressive" education. Columbia has long been at the epicenter of educational theory, and the beliefs Mac Donald writes about are found in most American schools of education.

This article is reprinted from the Spring 1998 issue of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal* (www.city-journal.org).



Why Johnny's Teacher Can't Teach

By Heather Mac Donald

Americans' nearly last place finish in the Third International Mathematics and Sciences Study of student achievement caused widespread consternation this February, except in the one place it should have mattered most: the nation's teacher education schools. Those schools have far more important things to do than worrying about test scores—things like stamping out racism in aspiring teachers. "Let's be honest," darkly commanded Professor Valerie Henning-Piedmont to a lecture hall of education students at Columbia University's Teachers College last February. "What labels do you place on young people based on your biases?" It would be difficult to imagine a less likely group of bigots than these idealistic young people, happily toting around their *Handbooks of Multicultural Education* and their exposés of sexism in the classroom. But Teachers College knows better. It knows that most of its students, by virtue of being white, are complicitous in an unjust power structure.

The crusade against racism is just the latest irrelevancy to seize the nation's teacher education schools. For over 80 years, teacher education in America has been in the grip of an immutable dogma, responsible for endless educational nonsense. That dogma may be summed up in the phrase: Anything But Knowledge. Schools are about many things, teacher educators say (depending on the decade)—self-actualization, following one's joy, social adjustment, or multicultural sensitivity—but the one thing they are not about is knowledge. Oh sure, educators will occasionally allow the word to pass their lips, but it is always in a compromised position, as in "constructing one's own knowledge," or "contextualized knowledge." Plain old knowledge, the kind passed down in books, the kind for which Faust sold his soul, that is out.

The education profession currently stands ready to tighten its already vise-like grip on teacher credentialing, persuading both the federal government and the states to "professionalize" teaching further. In New York, as elsewhere, that means closing off any routes to the classroom that do not pass through an education school. But before caving in to the educrats' pressure, we had better take a hard look at what education schools actually teach.

The course in "Curriculum and Teaching in Elementary Education" that Professor Anne Nelson (a pseudonym) teaches at the City College of New York is a good place to start. Dressed in a tailored brown suit with close-cropped hair, Nelson is a charismatic teacher, with a commanding repertoire of voices and personae. And yet, for all her obvious experience and common sense, her course is a remarkable exercise in vacuousness.

As with most education classes, the title of Professor Nelson's course doesn't give a clear sense of what it is about. Unfortunately, Professor Nelson doesn't either. The semester began, she said in a pre-class interview, by "building a community, rich of talk, in which students look at what they themselves are doing by in-class

writing." On this, the third meeting of the semester, Professor Nelson said that she would be "getting the students to develop the subtext of what they're doing." I would soon discover why Professor Nelson was so vague.

"Developing the subtext" turns out to involve a chain reaction of solipsistic moments. After taking attendance and—most admirably—quickly checking the students' weekly handwriting practice, Professor Nelson begins the main work of the day: generating feather-light "texts," both written and oral, for immediate group analysis. She asks the students to write for seven minutes on each of three questions: "What excites me about teaching?" "What concerns me about teaching?" and then, the moment that brands this class as hopelessly steeped in the Anything But Knowledge credo: "What was it like to do this writing?"

This last question triggers a quickening volley of self-reflexive turns. After the students read aloud their predictable reflections on teaching, Professor Nelson asks: "What are you hearing?" A young man states the obvious: "Everyone seems to be reflecting on what their anxieties are." This is too straightforward an answer. Professor Nelson translates into ed-speak: "So writing gave you permission to think on paper about what's there." Ed-speak dresses up the most mundane processes in dramatic terminology—one doesn't just write, one is "given permission to think on the paper"; one doesn't converse, one "negotiates meaning." Then, like a champion tennis player finishing off a set, Nelson reaches for the ultimate level of self-reflexivity and drives it home: "What was it like to listen to each other's responses?"

The self-reflection isn't over yet, however. The class next moves into small groups—along with in-class writing, the most pervasive gimmick in progressive classrooms today—to discuss a set of student-teaching guidelines. After ten minutes, Nelson interrupts the by-now lively and largely off-topic conversations, and

asks: “Let’s talk about how you felt in these small groups.” The students are picking up ed-speak. “It shifted the comfort zone,” reveals one. “It was just acceptance; I felt the vibe going through the group.” Another adds: “I felt really comfortable; I had trust there.” Nelson senses a “teachable moment.” “Let’s talk about that,” she interjects. “We are building trust in this class; we are learning how to work with each other.”

Now, let us note what this class was not: it was not about how to keep the attention of eight-year-olds or plan a lesson or make the Pilgrims real to first-graders. It did not, in other words, contain any material (with the exception of the student-teacher guidelines) from the outside world. Instead, it continuously spun its own subject matter out of itself. Like a relationship that consists of obsessively analyzing the relationship, the only content of the course was the course itself.

How did such navel-gazing come to be central to teacher education? It is the almost inevitable consequence of the Anything But Knowledge doctrine, born in a burst of quintessentially American anti-intellectual fervor in the wake of World War I. Educators within the federal government and at Columbia’s Teachers College issued a clarion call to schools: cast off the traditional academic curriculum and start preparing young people for the demands of modern life. America is a forward-looking country, they boasted; what need have we for such impractical disciplines as Greek, Latin, and higher math? Instead, let the students then flooding the schools take such useful courses as family membership, hygiene, and the worthy use of leisure time. “Life adjustment,” not wisdom or learning, was to be the goal of education.

The early decades of this century forged the central educational fallacy of our time: that one can think without having anything to think about. Knowledge is changing too fast to be transmitted usefully to students, argued William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College, the most influential American educator of the century;

instead of teaching children dead facts and figures, schools should teach them "critical thinking," he wrote in 1925. What matters is not what you know, but whether you know how to look it up, so that you can be a "lifelong learner."

Two final doctrines rounded out the indelible legacy of progressivism. First, Harold Rugg's *The Child-Centered School* (1928) shifted the locus of power in the classroom from the teacher to the student. In a child-centered class, the child determines what he wants to learn. Forcing children into an existing curriculum inhibits their self-actualization, Rugg argued, just as forcing them into neat rows of chairs and desks inhibits their creativity. The teacher becomes an enabler, an advisor; not, heaven forbid, the transmitter of a pre-existing body of ideas, texts, or, worst of all, facts. In today's jargon, the child should "construct" his own knowledge rather than passively receive it. By the late 1920s, students were moving their chairs around to form groups of "active learners" pursuing their own individual interests, and, instead of a curriculum, the student-centered classroom followed just one principle: "activity leading to further activity without badness," in Kilpatrick's words. Today's educators still present these seven-decade-old practices as cutting-edge.

As E. D. Hirsch observes, the child-centered doctrine grew out of the romantic idealization of children. If the child was, in Wordsworth's words, a "Mighty Prophet! Seer Blest!" then who needs teachers? But the Mighty Prophet emerged from student-centered schools ever more ignorant and incurious as the schools became more vacuous. By the 1940s and 1950s, schools were offering classes in how to put on nail polish and how to act on a date. The notion that learning should push students out of their narrow world had been lost.

The final cornerstone of progressive theory was the disdain for report cards and objective tests of knowledge. These inhibit authentic learning, Kilpatrick argued; and he carried the day, to the eternal joy of students everywhere.

The foregoing doctrines are complete bunk, but bunk that has survived virtually unchanged to the present. The notion that one can teach "metacognitive" thinking in the abstract is senseless. Students need to learn something to learn how to learn at all. The claim that prior knowledge is superfluous because one can always look it up, preferably on the Internet, is equally senseless. Effective research depends on preexisting knowledge. Moreover, if you don't know in what century the atomic bomb was dropped without rushing to an encyclopedia, you cannot fully participate in society. Lastly, Kilpatrick's influential assertion that knowledge was changing too fast to be taught presupposes a blinkered definition of knowledge that excludes the great works and enterprises of the past.

The rejection of testing rests on premises as flawed as the push for "critical thinking skills." Progressives argue that if tests exist, then teachers will "teach to the test"—a bad thing, in their view. But why would "teaching to a test" that asked for, say, the causes of the Civil War be bad for students? Additionally, progressives complain that testing provokes rote memorization—again, a bad thing. One of the most tragically influential education professors today, Columbia's Linda Darling-Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, an advocacy group for increased teacher "professionalization," gives a telling example of what she considers a criminally bad test in her hackneyed 1997 brief for progressive education, *The Right to Learn*. She points disdainfully to the following question from the 1995 New York State Regents Exam in biology (required for high school graduation) as "a rote recall of isolated facts and vocabulary terms": "The tissue which conducts organic food through a vascular plant is composed of: (1) Cambium cells; (2) Xylem cells; (3) Phloem cells; (4) Epidermal cells."

Only a know-nothing could be offended by so innocent a question. It never occurs to Darling-Hammond that there may be a joy in mastering the parts of a plant or the organelles of a cell, and that such memorization

constitutes learning. Moreover, when, in the progressives' view, will a student ever be held accountable for such knowledge? Does Darling-Hammond believe that a student can pursue a career in, say, molecular biology or in medicine without it? And how else will that learning be demonstrated, if not in a test? But of course such testing will produce unequal results, and that is the real target of Darling-Hammond's animus.

Once you dismiss real knowledge as the goal of education, you have to find something else to do. That's why the Anything But Knowledge doctrine leads directly to Professor Nelson's odd course. In thousands of education schools across the country, teachers are generating little moments of meaning, which they then subject to instant replay. Educators call this "constructing knowledge," a fatuous label for something that is neither construction nor knowledge but mere game-playing. Teacher educators, though, possess a primitive relationship to words. They believe that if they just label something "critical thinking" or "community-building," these activities will magically occur. …

The Anything But Knowledge credo leaves education professors and their acolytes free to concentrate on far more pressing matters than how to teach the facts of history or the rules of sentence construction. "Community-building" is one of their most urgent concerns. Teacher educators conceive of their classes as sites of profound political engagement, out of which the new egalitarian order will emerge. A case in point is Columbia's required class, "Teaching English in Diverse Social and Cultural Contexts," taught by Professor Barbara Tenney (a pseudonym). "I want to work at a very conscious level with you to build community in this class," Tenney tells her attentive students on the first day of the semester this spring. "You can do it consciously, and you ought to do it in your own classes." Community-building starts by making nameplates for our desks. Then we all find a partner to interview about each other's "identity." Over the course of the semester, each student will conduct two more "identity" interviews with different partners. After the inter-

view, the inevitable self-reflexive moment arrives, when Tenney asks: "How did it work?" This is a sign that we are on our way to "constructing knowledge." …

All this artificial "community-building," however gratifying to the professors, has nothing to do with learning. Learning is ultimately a solitary activity: we have only one brain, and at some point we must exercise it in private. One could learn an immense amount about Schubert's lieder or calculus without ever knowing the name of one's seatmate. Such a view is heresy to the education establishment, determined, as Rita Kramer has noted, to eradicate any opportunity for individual accomplishment, with its sinister risk of superior achievement. For the educrats, the group is the irreducible unit of learning. Fueling this principle is the gap in achievement between whites and Asians, on the one hand, and other minorities on the other. Unwilling to adopt the discipline and teaching practices that would help reduce that gap, the education establishment tries to conceal it under group projects. …

The consequences of the Anything But Knowledge credo for intellectual standards have been dire. Education professors are remarkably casual when it comes to determining whether their students actually know anything, rarely asking them, for example, what can you tell us about the American Revolution? The ed schools incorrectly presume that the students will have learned everything they need to know in their other or previous college courses, and that the teacher certification exams will screen out people who didn't.

Even if college education were reliably rigorous and comprehensive, education majors aren't the students most likely to profit from it. Nationally, undergraduate education majors have lower SAT and ACT scores than students in any other program of study. Only 16 percent of education majors scored in the top quartile of 1992-93 graduates, compared with 33 percent of humanities majors. Education majors were overrepre-

sented in the bottom quartile, at 30 percent. In New York City, many education majors have an uncertain command of English—I saw one education student at City College repeatedly write "choce" for "choice"—and appear altogether ill at ease in a classroom. To presume anything about this population without a rigorous content exit exam is unwarranted.

The laissez-faire attitude toward student knowledge rests on "principled" grounds, as well as on see-no-evil inertia. Many education professors embrace the facile post-structuralist view that knowledge is always political. "An education program can't have content [knowledge] specifics," explains Migdalia Romero, chair of Hunter College's Department of Curriculum and Teaching, "because then you have a point of view. Once you define exactly what finite knowledge is, it becomes a perspective." The notion that a culture could possess a pre-political common store of texts and ideas is anathema to the modern academic.

The most powerful dodge regurgitates William Heard Kilpatrick's classic "critical thinking" scam. Asked whether a future teacher should know the date of the 1812 war, Professor Romero replied: "Teaching and learning is not about dates, facts, and figures, but about developing critical thinking." When pressed if there were not some core facts that a teacher or student should know, she valiantly held her ground. "There are two ways of looking at teaching and learning," she replied. "Either you are imparting knowledge, giving an absolute knowledge base, or teaching and learning is about dialogue, a dialogue that helps to internalize and to raise questions." Though she offered the disclaimer "of course you need both," Romero added that teachers don't have to know everything, because they can always look things up. …

Disregard for language runs deep in the teacher education profession, so much so that ed school professors tolerate glaring language deficiencies in schoolchildren. Last January, Manhattan's Park West High School

shut down for a day, so that its faculty could bone up on progressive pedagogy. One of the more popular staff development seminars was "Using Journals and Learning Logs." The presenters—two Park West teachers and a representative from the New York City Writing Project, an anti-grammar initiative run by Lehman College's Education School—proudly passed around their students' journal writing, including the following representative entry on "Matriarchys v. pratiarchys [sic]": "The different between Matriarchys and patriarchys is that when the mother is in charge of the house. sometime the children do whatever they want. But sometimes the mother can do both roll as a mother and as a father too and they can do it very good." A more personal entry described how the author met her boyfriend: "He said you are so kind I said you noticed and then he hit me on my head. I made-believe I was crying and when he came naire me I slaped him right in his head and than I ran … to my grandparients home and he was right behind me. Thats when he asked did I have a boyfriend."

The ubiquitous journal-writing cult holds that such writing should go uncorrected. Fortunately, some Park West teachers bridled at the notion. "At some point, the students go into the job market, and they're not being judged 'holistically,'" protested a black teacher, responding to the invocation of the state's "holistic" model for grading writing. Another teacher bemoaned the Board of Ed's failure to provide guidance on teaching grammar. "My kids are graduating without skills," he lamented.

Such views, however, were decidedly in the minority. "Grammar is related to purpose," soothed the Lehman College representative, educrat code for the proposition that asking students to write grammatically on topics they are not personally "invested in" is unrealistic. A Park West presenter burst out with a more direct explanation for his chilling indifference to student incompetence: "I'm not going to spend my life doing error diagnosis! I'm not going to spend my weekend on that!" Correcting papers used to be part of the necessary

drudgery of a teacher's job. No more, with the advent of enlightened views about "self-expression" and "writing with intentionality."

However easygoing the education establishment is regarding future teachers' knowledge of history, literature, and science, there is one topic that it assiduously monitors: their awareness of racism. To many teacher educators, such an awareness is the most important tool a young teacher can bring to the classroom. It cannot be developed too early. Rosa, a bouncy and enthusiastic junior at Hunter College, has completed only her first semester of education courses, but already she has mastered the most important lesson: America is a racist, imperialist country, most like, say, Nazi Germany. "We are lied to by the very institutions we have come to trust," she recalls from her first-semester reading. "It's all government that's inventing these lies, such as Western heritage."

The source of Rosa's newfound wisdom, Donaldo Macedo's *Literacies of Power: What Americans Are Not Allowed to Know*, is an execrable book by any measure. But given its target audience—impressionable education students—it comes close to being a crime. Widely assigned at Hunter, and in use in approximately 150 education schools nationally, it is an illiterate, barbarically ignorant Marxist-inspired screed against America. Macedo opens his first chapter, "Literacy for Stupidification: The Pedagogy of Big Lies," with a quote from Hitler and quickly segues to Ronald Reagan: "While busily calling out slogans from their patriotic vocabulary memory warehouse, these same Americans dutifully vote … for Ronald Reagan, giving him a landslide victory. … These same voters ascended [sic] to Bush's morally high-minded call to apply international laws against Saddam Hussein's tyranny and his invasion of Kuwait." Standing against this wave of ignorance and imperialism is a lone 12-year-old from Boston, whom Macedo celebrates for his courageous refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

What does any of this have to do with teaching? Everything, it turns out. In the 1960s, educational progressivism took on an explicitly political cast: schools were to fight institutional racism and redistribute power. Today, Columbia's Teachers College holds workshops on cultural and political "oppression," in which students role-play ways to "usurp the existing power structure," and the New York State Regents happily call teachers the "ultimate change agents." To be a change agent, one must first learn to "critique" the existing social structure. Hence, the assignment of such propaganda as Macedo's book. …

But Macedo is just one of the political tracts that Hunter force-fed the innocent Rosa in her first semester. She also learned about the evils of traditional children's stories from education radical Herbert Kohl. In *Should We Burn Babar?* Kohl weighs the case for and against the dearly beloved children's classic, *Babar the Elephant*, noting in passing that it prevented him from "question[ing] the patriarchy earlier." He decides—but let Rosa expound the message of Kohl's book: "[Babar]'s like a children's book, right? [But] there's an underlying meaning about colonialism, about like colonialism, and is it OK, it's really like it's OK, but it's like really offensive to these people." Better burn Babar now! …

Though the current diversity battle cry is "All students can learn," the educationists continually lower expectations of what they should learn. No longer are students expected to learn all their multiplication tables in the third grade, as has been traditional. But while American educators come up with various theories about fixed cognitive phases to explain why our children should go slow, other nationalities trounce us. Sometimes, we're trounced in our own backyards, causing cognitive dissonance in local teachers.

A young student at Teachers College named Susan describes incredulously a Korean-run preschool in Queens. To her horror, the school, the Holy Mountain School, violates every progressive tenet: rather than

being "student-centered" and allowing each child to do whatever he chooses, the school imposes a curriculum on the children, based on the alphabet. "Each week, the children got a different letter," Susan recalls grimly. Such an approach violates "whole language" doctrine, which holds that students can't "grasp the [alphabetic] symbols without the whole word or the meaning or any context in their lives," in Susan's words. Holy Mountain's further infractions include teaching its wildly international students only in English and failing to provide an "anti-bias multicultural curriculum." The result? By the end of preschool the students learn English and are writing words. Here is true belief in the ability of all children to learn, for it is backed up by action. …

Given progressive education's dismal record, all New Yorkers should tremble at what the Regents have in store for the state. The state's teacher education establishment, led by Columbia's Linda Darling-Hammond, has persuaded the Regents to make its monopoly on teacher credentialing total. Starting in 2003, according to a Regents plan steaming inexorably toward adoption, all teacher candidates must pass through an education school to be admitted to a classroom. We know, alas, what will happen to them there.

This power grab will be a disaster for children. By making ed school inescapable, the Regents will drive away every last educated adult who may not be willing to sit still for its foolishness but who could bring to the classroom unusual knowledge or experience. The nation's elite private schools are full of such people, and parents eagerly proffer tens of thousands of dollars to give their children the benefit of such skill and wisdom.

Amazingly, even the Regents, among the nation's most addled education bodies, sporadically acknowledge what works in the classroom. A Task Force on Teaching paper cites some of the factors that allow other

countries to wallop us routinely in international tests: a high amount of lesson content (in other words, teacher-centered, not student-centered, learning), individual tracking of students, and a coherent curriculum. The state should cling steadfastly to its momentary insight, at odds with its usual policies, and discard its foolhardy plan to enshrine Anything But Knowledge as its sole education dogma. Instead of permanently establishing the teacher education status quo, it should search tirelessly for alternatives and for potential teachers with a firm grasp of subject matter and basic skills. Otherwise ed school claptrap will continue to stunt the intellectual growth of the Empire State's children.

Should the foremost aim of schooling be to ensure that young people are skilled in reading, writing, mathematics and have learned the vital background knowledge that will enable them to become productive and thoughtful citizens? Or should schooling aim primarily at making sure that young people have the right attitudes—toward learning, toward society and toward themselves? In this article, Professor J. E. Stone comments on the great difference between those two views; the former reflecting the ideas of most members of the public, and the latter reflecting the ideas of most professional educators.

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A Disharmony That Impairs Schooling

By J. E. Stone

Public Agenda's recent poll of education professors offers an answer to a question that has troubled citizens and policymakers for more than a decade. How can it be that we pile dollars upon dollars and launch reform after reform yet have so little impact on student learning in our public schools? Instead of results, we get fads and failures.

"Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education" reveals what may be the heart of the problem: The public's aims are not achieved because teachers are taught that other educational aims should come first.

According to Public Agenda, there is a "staggering" disconnection between the educational aims of parents, teachers, and students and those of the professors who train teachers. The public wants schools with order-

ly classrooms that produce mastery of conventional knowledge and skills. Teacher-educators, by contrast, consider the public's expectations "outmoded and mistaken." They want classrooms in which the top priorities are positive attitudes toward learning and the presence of activities intended to encourage "learning how to learn." In their view, learning how to read, write, and do math is secondary to whether students find their classroom experience a satisfying one. Their ideal is schooling without schoolwork.

The discrepancy between professors' views and those of the public reflect an ideology that has dominated teacher education for over 80 years. In the World War I era, it was called "progressive education." Today it is called learner-centered education, and it encompasses all the latest fads, from "authentic assessment" to the "integrated thematic curriculum" to whole-language reading instruction. Within the world of teacher training, innovations and buzzwords emerge daily, but nearly all of them fit the learner-centered mold. As E. D. Hirsch Jr. has observed: Within the schools of education, there is no *thinkable* alternative.

The theories of teacher-educators would be only of academic interest if they did not have an impact on schools and teachers. But, given the working relationship between teacher training institutions and teacher licensing agencies, teacher-educators are effectively able to ensure that all teachers are indoctrinated in a "pedagogically correct" view of teaching. Technically, state agencies approve training programs and set teacher license requirements, but their standards are guided mainly by recommendations coming from the teacher education community.

The relationship between teacher education programs and state education agencies is a form of what economists call "regulatory capture." The licensing agencies that are supposed to be defending the public's interest are effectively controlled by the teacher-trainers and the schools they purport to regulate.

Teacher licensure is primarily a matter of successfully completing an "approved" program of study, and approved programs are built around the concepts and beliefs favored by a majority of program faculty. Thus, teacher-educators are able to impose their aims on public schooling by emphasizing methods that conform to their aims and by characterizing those that are suited to the public's aims as old-fashioned, ineffectual, and detrimental to full intellectual development. For example, the teaching of phonics and the memorization of math facts is called "drill and kill" and a "factory model of learning." Teachers are given to understand that such methods are contrary to good practice and strongly disapproved.

Favored methods are designed to produce what John Dewey called "intellectual growth." Instead of building proficiency in basic knowledge and literacy skills, their first priority is to promote "critical thinking" and "creativity." Theoretically, fundamentals are integrated later, on an as-needed basis. Unfortunately, they often achieve neither. Implemented fully, learner-centered methods discourage teacher direction and minimize orderly, result-oriented activity. Resources are wasted and precious learning opportunities are squandered. Despite inherent ineffectiveness and inefficiency, almost every graduate of an "approved" teacher training program is given to understand that such methods are grounded in the latest research, known to be practical and effective, and, indeed, are the only responsible approach to teaching.

Within the past year, a flurry of reforms has been proposed by organizations and agencies closely tied to the teacher training community. Examined superficially, these reforms seem to reflect movement toward the public's vision of schooling. For example, in the fall of 1996, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future released a report saying that many teachers are unqualified and standards must be upgraded. The commission appeared to acknowledge that the system is broken, and in unusually blunt language it urged policymakers to "get serious" about standards for teachers and students. A companion set of

licensure proposals was developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium—a group linked to the Council of Chief State School Officers. Both organizations called for teachers to meet the standards set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—not incidentally, another group dominated by teacher-educators. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education added its support by requesting public funding for the $2,000-per-teacher NBPTS certification fee.

A proposal for upgrading teacher training that parallels the INTASC licensure standards was recently announced by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. NCATE 2000 includes more-stringent and performance-based evaluation of prospective teachers and is said to be a major revision of training standards. NCATE President Arthur Wise remarked that the overhaul will be as ambitious as the one the organization undertook in 1987. From the tenor of his statement, one might infer that NCATE 2000 heralds a new result-conscious age in teacher training.

Are teacher-educators really moving toward the public's view of education? Not if history is any indication.

In truth, the parties serving up these bold proposals represent the interests that have governed teacher training and licensure all along. If existing standards are woefully inadequate, it must be remembered who wrote them and who now claims to be launching a round of revolutionary improvements. NCATE, for example, is proposing a grand new set of standards, yet the ink is barely dry on its "refined" standards of 1995. Since publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, teacher training and licensure have undergone repeated rewrites, none of which has produced any noticeable improvements in schooling.

Is there any reason to believe that new standards from organizations like INTASC, NCATE, and the NBPTS will accomplish any more than those of the past? To the contrary, new standards from these groups can be expected to do exactly what past standards have done: legitimize learner-centered training and shield it from competition. If anything, the recent proposals are more congenial to learner-centered teaching and more antagonistic to result-oriented alternatives than their predecessors—and not surprisingly. Linda Darling-Hammond, the executive director of the National Commission, and Mr. Wise of NCATE are well known proponents of learner-centered instruction. Their book, *Excellence in Teacher Education: Helping Teachers Develop Learner-Centered Schools*, was published by the National Education Association in 1992.

Under the current teacher training and licensure standards, all manner of untested and unworkable educational practices—mostly learner-centered ones—have been foisted on the teaching profession and the schools. In truth, virtually all of the fads and faulty practices visited on the public schools have originated in the schools of education, virtually all have been disseminated under the auspices of state education agencies, and, of course, all have been in keeping with prevailing teacher training and licensure standards. If taxpayers want to know why spending more on education rarely produces more learning, they need only look at the "innovations" funded by past expenditures. Almost all come from an academic stronghold of failed ideas: the schools of education.

There seems a clear contradiction between the teacher training community's rhetoric about improving educational outcomes and its unquestioning allegiance to learner-centered principles. Teacher-educators, however, see no contradiction because they genuinely believe that the public's aims can be achieved through learner-centered methods. In their view, learner-centered schooling may be less direct and more costly, but with sufficient commitment of time and effort it can work—evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. The

criticism that learner-centered schooling effectively places the teacher education community's aims ahead of those of the public is largely discounted because professors believe that, despite a slow start on fundamentals, students will eventually learn all they need to know. Moreover, by virtue of the learner-centered approach, the student's educational experience will not be unnecessarily transformed from pleasure to work. In other words, they believe that a kind of lifelong "don't worry, be happy" approach to learning is what the public really wants—time, expense, and defective outcomes all considered.

Teacher-educators believe the public is appropriately patronized and ignored because the public does not fully appreciate the promise of learner-centered schooling. Their belief is an unspoken but institutionalized self-deception that effectively blocks meaningful discussion of educational alternatives. Anyone who seriously questions the learner-centered vision is considered foolish or indifferent to the needs of children, and thus their views are not deserving of serious consideration.

For example, when a state commissioner of education recently was asked about standardized achievement testing in the 2nd grade, she dismissively pronounced the practice "wicked." In reference to such dogmatism, Public Agenda commented: "It seems ironic that so many of those who profess to believe that 'the real [educational] endeavor' is about questioning and learning how to learn are seemingly entrapped in a mindset that is unquestioning in its conviction of its own rightness."

When teacher-educators speak of school reform, they mean improvement in the application of learner-centered principles. From their vantage point, poor results imply insufficient time, effort, and money, not faulty teaching principles. Teachers are told that all students can learn provided that teachers are creative and enthusiastic. If students fail, it suggests that teachers did not do enough. Parents are told that their children

can learn provided that parents are patient and encouraging. If children fail, insufficient parent effort is suspected. Communities are told that attractive facilities and stimulating materials are vital to successful schooling because many students are bored or preoccupied with youthful distractions. If results are lacking despite the best that money can buy, other community shortcomings are found responsible. For example, failure by minorities may suggest that students, teachers, and community leaders are insufficiently accepting of economic, social, cultural, and linguistic differences.

In the view of its proponents, learner-centered schooling never fails. It is premised on the idea that learning is optimal when school, home, and community are well fitted to the student. Since the fit can always be improved there is never reason to doubt that learner-centered schooling could work under more-ideal conditions. In their view, failure occurs only because adults are unwilling to make the necessary effort.

Result-oriented reforms can be imposed, but they cannot be sustained if teachers continue to be indoctrinated with a conflicting vision of schooling. As has been the case throughout the history of school reform, changes that are not valued by teachers last only until the money runs out. In the absence of result-oriented teaching, programs that emphasize accountability—school-to-work, for example—will boost results only to the extent permitted by learner-centered methodology. Ultimately, expectations will have to be watered down to fit reality. By contrast, wider use of result-oriented methods would produce results and without the need for legislated intrusions and diminished local control of schools.

As "Different Drummers" makes clear, teacher-educators are at odds with the public. Despite talk of new and more-rigorous standards, training and licensure in the hands of the same interests will only yield more old wine in new bottles. So long as teacher-educators maintain a monopoly, they and their allies in the state

education agencies have no reason to question their progressive vision. After all, it has served them very well for a very long time.

Alternative teacher training has been tried, but to this point has had little impact. Given the regulatory partnership between the teacher training programs and state licensing agencies, training that substantially disagrees with the learner-centered view has been pretty well bottled up in a hostile environment. For the most part, only alternatives that fit progressive strictures have been permitted to flourish. Until there is a greater public awareness of the degree to which state education agencies are the captives of the parties they purport to regulate, teacher training that breaks the learner-centered mold will continue to be stifled.

Other proposals that would permit teacher training to escape the learner-centered box are largely in their infancy. Two economists—Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky—have argued that "the movement to deregulate the schools while holding them accountable for outcomes" suggests that similar reforms might work with teacher training. Their research shows that nonreligious private schools—the schools whose success depends most directly on consumer satisfaction—hire large numbers of well-educated but noncertified instructors. In essence, the economists ask why public schools of choice—charter schools, for example—should be required to hire certified teachers if the traditional schools of choice—private schools—find that parents place little importance on such credentials.

A recent proposal by Richard Wisniewski in these pages, calling for "charter colleges of education" may hold some promise. ("Charter Colleges of Education," Nov. 19, 1997.) But, given the aims of most teacher-educators, such colleges would have to be held to real-world standards of accountability—preferably ones set and enforced by the educational equivalent of a Dun & Bradstreet. Perhaps graduates of such institutions might

be required both to pass objective subject-matter exams and to demonstrate an ability to produce student-achievement gains in a school setting.

Whatever the solution to this dilemma, it is clear that more "approved" teacher training is not the answer. Teacher training is a de facto monopoly, and there is no real incentive for it to change. Yet until its intellectual stranglehold is broken, no amount of planning or funding is going to substantially change the performance of public schools. Teacher training as traditionally constituted is not the cure, it is the problem.

Constructivism is a key tenet of the "progressive" approach to education. In brief, constructivists hold that it is good educational practice to allow students to set their own agendas and "construct" their own knowledge. The authors of this article find much to criticize in the dogmatic insistence on the constructivist approach that one finds in many education schools. After publishing their article, Baines and Stanley received a comment from a student who said that he had taken an education course from a professor who told the students, "If I ever catch you giving a lecture to the students, you will automatically receive an F for the course." Unfortunately, the "rage against expertise" is widespread in American schools of education.

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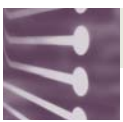

'We Want to See the Teacher': Constructivism and the Rage Against Expertise

By Lawrence A. Baines and Gregory Stanley

When disco was king, protest bumper stickers began to appear that proclaimed, "Disco Stinks! We want to see the band." Many disco bands at the time actually consisted of a couple guys with access to synthesizers and drum machines that could keep a beat. These bands never went on tour for the simple reason that there was no real band behind the machinery. Similarly, students today want to see the teacher, although in many cases the teacher has been banished to the scrap heap by the currently popular educational theory known as constructivism.

Textbooks tell us that constructivism is student-centered and is on the opposite side of the continuum from subject-centered or teacher-centered instruction. According to constructivist thinking, "knowledge is per-

sonal, and arises out of experiences and interactions which are unique to each individual." The teacher's role is to "facilitate personal learning by establishing a community of learners, and by making it clear to the student that he or she is part of that community."

In truth, many aspects of constructivism are commendable. Few could quarrel with the desire for students in a class to feel that they belong to a "community of learners." The drive to engage students actively in their learning is timely. But somewhere, somehow, the constructivist paradigm has become as inflexible as the instructional approach its proponents are eager to dismantle. Not only is it no longer ideologically correct for a teacher to serve as an authority on a subject, but many constructivists characterize direct instruction as a clear and present danger, like some atavistic form of intellectual cruelty. Constructivists routinely invoke the work of Paolo Freire as substantiation for fostering ideals of empowerment in lieu of teaching content.

> We find inspiration from Freire (1998) when he exhorts, *We must redefine our understanding of the world; though it is historically produced in the world, this understanding is also produced by conscious bodies in their interactions with the world.* His comprehension of the potential for human agency impels us to continue to define our actions as necessary and vital if we actually are to understand that schools are historically produced and that through our interactions we may have the opportunity to make a contribution to the realization of democratic schools that exist to enhance the lives of all learners. (Emphasis in original.)

Imagine a teacher consulting such advice in the process of formulating a plan for teaching physics first period on Monday morning.

The Evils of Rote Learning

The teacher as a "sage on the stage" has been tossed aside in favor of the learning facilitator, more commonly known as a "guide on the side." In the constructivist view, memorization of multiplication tables, poetry, dates of historical importance, or scientific formulas is decried as "mindless" and even "hegemonic." Indeed, in the current educational climate, the worst insult that can be leveled at a teacher is that a lesson involves "rote learning."

While there is something to be said for having interests in many areas, the rage against expertise and the vehemence shown toward repetitive practice is bewildering. How else does a pianist learn to play Chopin? How else does a lawyer synthesize points of law to elucidate inconsistencies? How else does an artist know the precise mix of colors needed for the autumn sky? How else does a child learn to spell? Mastery of any subject does not come easily. Joseph Campbell once said that he was qualified to be an academic because he had locked himself up in a room and read for five years. If expertise has become passé, then the decades that a professional spends studying a subject, earning advanced degrees, and pursuing research and publication have become nugatory.

Perhaps it is because we live in a fast-paced world in which patience is rarely considered a virtue that we have come to the point where the desired goal is certification in multiple subject areas—as is the current practice in the preparation of middle school teachers (who can be certified to teach almost everything)—rather than the deliberate, specialized ordeal of building expertise. Unfortunately, we now find ourselves acting as if superior knowledge in one field is suspect while ignorance in many is ideal. Interdisciplinary

units and team teaching are great concepts, but a teacher should still be highly knowledgeable in at least one field as a prerequisite to making complex connections among many.

Given the uneven quality of instruction, aggravated by the large number of teachers teaching out-of-field, it is only natural to hope that students will be able to teach themselves. Yet the widespread adoption of constructivist nonintervention styles is not likely to produce better results. According to Richard Ingersoll, about one-third of all secondary teachers who teach math do not have either a major or a minor in the subject or in any related discipline, one-fourth of English teachers have neither a major nor a minor in English, one-fifth of science and social studies teachers have little science or social studies in their backgrounds. In some states, the statistics are even more alarming. For example, two-thirds of history teachers in Georgia are teaching out-of-field.

There is no excuse for making learning dull, either as a lecturer or a facilitator. However, as a facilitator, the teacher is not required to know any of the answers. Even if a facilitator does know an answer, he or she is not supposed to communicate it to students. That would be a tyrannical imposition of the teacher's will upon the minds of the students.

The Teacher as a Force for Social Change

One of the most troublesome aspects of constructivism is that many of its adherents pretend to play in the realm of social justice as if, by virtue of their own insight, they hold the keys to the enlightenment that would set free the nefarious world:

> To use knowledge to improve society from this perspective requires advocacy of some form of social action against the forces of status quo thinking and dominant behaviors reproducing unequal relations on the basis of skin color, ethnic origins, gender, or sexual preference. Although we realize the limitations of curriculum transformation for reconstructing society, we understand the vitality of a curriculum that recognizes diverse perspectives leading to the social reconstruction of schools and society.

Apparently, the current focus in some teacher education programs is not on preparing students to teach a subject, but on enabling them to act as guardians of generic democratic principles and liberators of children who apparently are too ignorant to see such "truths" for themselves. Commonly, constructivists place themselves above the fray and are quick to blame obstacles to learning on uncontrollable external forces rather than on factors within the domain of the teacher or student.

Unfortunately, blame is scattered around everywhere except where it often belongs. At the Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, for example, coaches do not blame equipment. If a cyclist does not go fast enough, it is not the fault of the bike. If a shooter cannot demonstrate Olympic-class accuracy, he or she is passed over in favor of someone who can. It is not the gun's fault. So too, when constructivists point accusing fingers at everything but the student and teacher, they often miss their mark. Perhaps the problem, if that is indeed the correct word, with the "sage on the stage" format is that too many teachers can in no sense be referred to as sages. In short, a teacher who possesses a thorough grounding in the subject matter and an enthusiasm for sharing it with students is almost as rare a specimen as the principal who wants to hire such a teacher.

Ignorance of subject matter is not something a teacher should "celebrate," as some have proposed. Rather, lack of preparation should be a source of embarrassment. As a spokesman for a subject, a teacher must stay current enough to provide the guidance students need to make quantitative intellectual leaps. When a teacher ceases to be an expert in the subject matter taught or, worse, ceases to care about it, the time has come for that teacher to seek employment outside the classroom.

Married to the Method

Teaching is one of the most demanding and dynamic occupations on earth. With that in mind, the pronouncement that one method of teaching is best seems dubious. In a constantly changing environment, a teacher must be eclectic, spontaneous, and highly adaptable. The insistence on a single strategy bears the hallmark of academic educators who are isolated in their own theoretical models. Consider this "call for papers" from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), an organization made up of deans and department heads from colleges of education across the country: "A simple 'transfer of information' from presenter to participant will not suffice. ... Sessions must utilize collaborative learning principles."

So much for empowerment and academic freedom! Despite the mandate from AACTE, Kenneth Stunkel contends that no single instructional model, whether interactive or not, "can substitute for a well-organized lecture that structures a mass of information, illuminates basic concepts, reviews relevant literature, and displays what it means for someone to care about learning, inquiry, and teaching."

At this point, it might be helpful to note that when the situation calls for serving as nonintrusive, coffee-drinking guides on the side, we think that teachers who have the presence of mind to step back and shut up are doing the right thing. We do not, however, view such teaching as the only way to go about providing a stimulating learning environment. Rather, we view such an approach as only one choice in an array of possible instructional strategies, a decision that should lie wholly with the teacher, who knows better than anyone, the needs of the students, his or her own talents, and the objectives for the course.

A local high school English teacher divided the class into two groups to study *Macbeth*. One class was taught using lecture and discussion without cooperative groups. The experimental class employed constructivist techniques, which divided students into groups of three to five students and used film, CD-ROM, relevant websites, and books. On the final exam, the average grade of the students in the lecture/discussion group was 82%, and the average grade of students in the constructivist group was 67%.

In a second experiment, to study *Hamlet*, the groups were reversed (the group that scored 67% was given the lecture/discussion, and the group that scored 82% was given the constructivist treatment). Again, the students in the lecture/discussion group far outscored their peers in the constructivist treatment. In addition, on an attitude survey that queried students about their learning preferences, only one student out of 60 stated a preference for the constructivist approach. The other 59 favored lecture and discussion. One student commented, "We could talk among ourselves or read a book at home. We go to school so that you can teach us."

Similarly, in another local high school history course that made use of both constructivist and lecture/discussion approaches, students overwhelmingly ranked the constructivist component as their least favorite. In

a questionnaire given to students at the end of the first semester, they wrote these comments: "Why should we teach ourselves when we have you?" "We miss the neat things you tell us about the subject." "We enjoy your extensive knowledge." This teacher holds a doctorate in history. And although he does spend a good deal of time "on the side," he has the intellectual authority to be a true sage.

There is a thirst for knowledge in our classrooms. Although the desire to learn is a natural and self-reinforcing human trait, the instinct sometimes seems hopelessly buried in some students. However, even with regard to history (the subject students consistently seem to choose as their least favorite), people have responded enthusiastically to media presentations pertaining to historical events. The History Channel, the A&E Network, and such productions as Ken Burns' documentary on the Civil War were not created to bore viewers. And it is no accident that Oscar nominations so often go to movies that deal with historical topics: World War II, the sinking of the Titanic, or the re-creation of Shakespearean England.

In English classes, students want to know effective ways of speaking, writing, and reading. They want to know what an adult who has been reading books for decades thinks about classic and contemporary literature. In science and mathematics, students want to know if their answers are correct. They want to understand the processes by which solutions to complex problems are reached, how scientists think, how mathematicians calculate, and so on. High school students want to hear from a teacher who has more knowledge of and insight into a subject than they do. Lecture and discussion, as parts of a diverse teaching strategy, are powerful educational tools, especially in the hands of a charismatic, demanding, and knowledgeable teacher.

The Rage Against Expertise

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of constructivism is that there is no body of knowledge associated with it. With constructivism, the teacher is supposed to set up the learning environment, know student preferences, guide student investigations, and then get out of the way. Such an approach would seem to be more of an edict than a theory. Nevertheless, thousands of articles by thousands of professorial constructivists have found their ways into the pages of respectable, refereed journals in education. The momentum of the constructivist movement has had a profound effect on how prospective teachers are educated and on how they perceive the duties of a teacher.

Consider the following revelation written by a team of teacher educators at a state university in California regarding the redesign of their curriculum: "In developing a teacher credential program, … the faculty emphasized reflective practice for the general preparation of preservice teachers so that they might become reflective practitioners." Or consider this conclusion from an article about collaborations between prospective special education and general education teachers: "Results provide evidence that many new teachers understand teaming difficulties. They view collaboration preparation as setting the stage for future conferring arenas, indicating that they believe collaboration opportunities in university preparation opened their eyes to knowledge of necessary dedication of all involved."

At a time when student achievement, school violence and the quality of teachers have become grave, national concerns, too many professors in colleges of education have opted to focus on the abstruse details of constructivist theory rather than on the pressing educational issues of the day. In reading recent

constructivist jargon, one can readily understand the growing public prejudice against teacher education programs and the drive to quickly ratify alternative certification programs across the country.

Despite the flagrant shortcomings of the constructivistic approach to teacher preparation, education courses can be among the most rigorous and relevant in a student's college career. Learning how to teach something of value to a group of students who might be hostile or comfortably complacent is no easy task. Teacher education courses must help prospective teachers present subject matter effectively to a diverse group of students in innumerable and unpredictable situations.

In many ways, the future of the teaching profession and the fates of colleges of education rest upon the ability of professors of education to abandon their silly, theoretical turf guarding and to seek to create an earnest response to the formidable problems facing public education. Students deserve a chance to learn at the elbow of an expert. Ask them, and they'll tell you. They want to see the teacher.

In this article, teacher Louisa Spencer discusses her experiences with the kind of progressive education techniques and programs that are so widely taught in schools of education. She contends that they lead to a great waste of time and are especially ill-suited to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who desperately need to have structure and discipline in their education—precisely what progressivism disdains.

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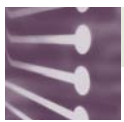


Progressivism's Hidden Failure

By Louisa C. Spencer

For the past four years, I have been a volunteer tutor in grades 1-4 of a K-5 public elementary school in New York City's Community School District 2. As in countless other urban schools nationwide, more than 70 percent of this school's children receive free lunches, more than 50 percent are Hispanic, and 30 percent are African-American.

The progressive educational practices embraced by District 2 are not suited to the elementary education of underprivileged children.

District 2, located in Manhattan, is nationally celebrated for its dramatic improvement in reading and math scores since 1987. My school is one of the district's greatest successes. Among the worst schools in New York City until the mid-'90s, it rose by last year to 170th out of 677 city elementary schools on the state 4th grade reading test.

Yet even at this ranking, 45 percent of the school's students did not meet the minimum state standard; what is more, only 10 percent exceeded it. Four District 2 schools with poorer demographics did much worse, ranking 300th, 340th, 402nd, and 512th in the city.

In other words, most of District 2's deprived children cannot read fluently enough to face comfortably the rest of their schooling. Instead, all too many approach middle and high school susceptible to frustration, boredom, and passivity, crippling to their futures.

Why this failure? It is not lack of care and effort. The trouble is the districtwide use of "progressive" educational practices, well-known, according to a consensus of rigorous experimental research, to be destructive to the elementary education of underprivileged children.

Startlingly, it would appear that the revered progressive educator Howard Gardner agrees: "Progressive education works best," he writes, "with children who come from richly endowed homes. … It is optimistic … to expect success with children who come from impoverished backgrounds, who lack the knowledge … to explore an environment and learn from their own activities. … A large and possibly growing number of students need the kind of help, support, modeling, and/or scaffolding that has often been seen as antithetical to the unstructured atmosphere of progressive education."

And on content, referring to E. D. Hirsch Jr.'s Core Knowledge curriculum, Mr. Gardner declares that "for those disadvantaged children who do not acquire literacy in the dominant culture at home, such a prescribed curriculum helps to provide a level playing field and to ensure that future citizens enjoy a common knowledge base." On these topics, mainstream experimental research consistently supports Mr. Gardner's judgment.

But District 2 does not agree. Deeply committed to progressive methods, district leadership requires them in all schools, including schools like mine. I see them in action daily.

Classrooms are attractive and colorful. Desks are in clusters of five or six, the children facing inward toward one another. This design serves both the grouping of children by reading level and the progressive method called "cooperative learning." Group work takes up much of the morning, a teacher visiting each group, guiding joint reading, while the rest of the children guide each other or read to themselves. All classrooms have a cleared area covered with a rug, and the children sit on it for whole-class activities.

This all sounds benign, but the results are not.

During group work, many unsupervised children daydream or fool around. If a teacher must say something to the whole class, half the children must crane their necks to see her. When the whole class is on the rug, an easel supports a large book or art pad to write on. The teacher stands or sits beside it, rather uncomfortably, and children close to her on the floor must often strain to see her face or what's on the easel. Sitting in the lotus-like "best learning position" is not easy, especially juggling workbooks or notebooks. Resulting handwriting is horrendous. When chairs are available around the perimeter of the rug, children compete to sit in them.

Yet the rug is compulsory. Its main role is to convey an informal, campfire-like image of schooling, rather than a presumed oppressive rigidity. A rug in each classroom is a hallmark of progressive education.

A progressive classroom also requires that an entire class of small children must often move around all at once, from desks to rug or vice versa, carrying book or papers. Without a countervailing authority figure, overseeing them from a fixed point visible to all, the result too often is a rising tide of noise and disorder.

The upshot is the most fearful waste of precious time in the school day. Perhaps middle-class children can benefit from the leisurely use of time required by progressive methods. But the children I tutor cannot afford this luxury. A major cause of the notorious socioethnic achievement gap stands revealed before our eyes.

District 2's very success masks this situation. Starting in 1987, extremely effective top-down districtwide administrative reforms replaced comparative chaos. Strong leadership replaced weak principals with strong ones, who fired poor teachers and hired better ones. Communication, coordination, and oversight at all levels, supplemented by ample, required professional development, galvanized staff energies and morale, inevitably improving performance in all schools.

But the educational policies adopted were something else again, and have tragically limited the progress of District 2's poor children during this same period, compared to what it could have been.

A self-commissioned study of District 2 unintentionally bears out these statements.

The High Performance Learning Communities, or HPLC project, a five-year Harvard University-University of Pittsburgh study still in progress, has two purposes: first, to analyze the success of District 2 since 1987, and, second, to "assist … District 2 as it moves to the next stage of its improvement strategy."

The reports already available totally satisfy the first purpose. District 2's administrative triumph is ably described and provides a blueprint that many a school district should emulate.

But the HPLC's second assignment is wholly unfulfilled. Educational policy and how it might be improved is shockingly neglected.

For example, on the crucial subject of teaching reading, the reports tell how the district's centerpiece Balanced Literacy program was based at its outset solely on writings associated with progressively oriented whole-language reading methodology. Unmentioned is any experimental reading research then available, by such eminent investigators as Jeanne Chall, Keith Stanovich, and others, supporting early explicit phonics instruction as important to all children, but essential to the deprived.

Nor is any intention shown to consider such research now. This is especially hard to justify, for much more is available than in 1987, and the latest is difficult to ignore. The 1997 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development report on its 30-year, $200 million study and the April 2000 National Reading Panel report are examples.

The American Federation of Teachers' 1999 report, "Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do," also ignored, summarizes much that is missing: "The first step is to apply the consistent findings of hundreds of research studies … [finding] that all children must master … phonemic awareness … [and] phonics … [because while] 50 percent to 60 percent of students are able to master the first two subskills with relative ease—though systematic, explicit instruction can make them even

better readers—the remaining 40 to 50 percent—especially those without a language-rich home environment … may experience very real problems … likely to place them at a permanent educational disadvantage." …

District 2's Balanced Reading program reflects no such comprehensive scholarship or the methodical, sequenced procedures experimental science recommends. The children I tutor recognizably suffer.

As to curriculum, District 2 equally ignores the research. Making no distinction between deprived and middle-class students, one HPLC report states that District 2's Balanced Literacy program does not specify content-to-be-learned because its "outline, structure, or boundaries" cannot be defined, nor "correct" choices made. Instead, "teachers need to make their own choices about which topics to cover and when."

Such lack of defined substance is well-known to harm poor children. Studies show that vocabulary best reflects a child's level of knowledge, and that when children start school, the biggest academic gap between socioethnic groups is in vocabulary. Knowledge growth feeds vocabulary growth, in turn, raising reading comprehension and more knowledge growth, and so on, and on. In countries that teach substantive, sequenced curricula, the vocabulary/knowledge gap narrows by the end of schooling. But in the United States, it actually grows. As Howard Gardner says, the only way to level the playing field is to provide to poor children, as efficiently as possible, a strong knowledge-based curriculum in elementary school. …

For all these reasons, many distinguished figures concerned about the education of poor children totally dissent from the curricular policies followed by District 2.

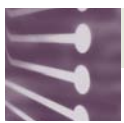
Sandra Feldman, the successor to Albert Shanker as president of the American Federation of Teachers, serves as he did on the board of the Core Knowledge Foundation, provider of the Core Knowledge curriculum, now in successful use in schools nationwide of all socioeconomic levels. Harvard University's distinguished professor of African-American studies, Henry Louis Gates, helped formulate the Core Knowledge curriculum, and his Harvard colleague Orlando Patterson endorses E. D. Hirsch's thinking. Like Mr. Gates and Mr. Patterson, other minority leaders, intent upon closing the socioethnic education gap, support substantive, prescribed curricula and efficient teaching methods.

The African-American educator Lisa Delpit makes her reasons bitterly clear. While urging preservation of African-American culture, she insists that black children must also learn the majority language and culture of power. As a teacher, she painfully discovered that progressive methods don't accomplish this. Middle-class parents daily provide their children with information on those subjects, she writes, and "the kids go into a 'language rich' environment and appear to achieve without any kind of explicit instruction." Knowing their children's deprivations, many black teachers and parents see the message of white progressive teachers that teaching facts and skills inhibits understanding and creativity as "just another racist ploy to keep African-Americans down."

District 2's hidden failure is all too widely replicated nationwide. Deeply indoctrinated administrators, teachers, and their like-minded academic allies are so committed to progressivism that they will not even explore, outside that box, how schools could do better by deprived children. What an irony that "progressives," once seen as liberating, democratizing influences on education, have become the "establishment," stubbornly dogmatic and self-protective, at the expense of our neediest children.

American educators, argues education professor Douglas Carnine, are willfully blind to evidence showing that their preferred methods of teaching are largely ineffective and that a method that runs contrary to the "progressive" education philosophy leads to far better results for most children. By its continuing insistence on discredited educational theories and abrupt dismissal of anything resembling traditional pedagogy, the American education profession shows itself to be immature.

The essay was originally published by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in April 2000 and is reprinted here with permission.



Why Education Experts Resist Effective Practices

By Douglas Carnine

Education school professors in general and curriculum and instruction experts in particular are major forces in dictating the "what" and "how" of American education. They typically control pre-service teacher preparation, the continued professional development of experienced teachers, the curricular content and pedagogy used in schools, the instructional philosophy and methods employed in classrooms, and the policies espoused by state and national curriculum organizations.

Although they wield immense power over what actually happens in U.S. classrooms, these professors are senior members of a field that lacks many crucial features of a fully developed profession. In education, the judgments of "experts" frequently appear to be unconstrained and sometimes altogether unaffected by objective research. Many of these experts are so captivated by romantic ideas about learning or so blinded by ideology that they have closed their minds to the results of rigorous experiments. Until education becomes the kind of profession that reveres evidence, we should not be surprised to find its experts dispens-

ing unproven methods, endlessly flitting from one fad to another. The greatest victims of these fads are the very students who are most at risk. …

Embracing Teaching Methods that Don't Work

The reaction of a large number of education experts to converging scientific evidence about how children learn to read illustrates the basic problem. Data strongly support the explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, and phonics, which is often combined with extensive practice with phonic readers. These are the cornerstones of successful beginning reading for young children, particularly at-risk youngsters. The findings of the National Reading Panel, established by Congress and jointly convened by the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, confirm the importance of these practices. Congress asked the panel to evaluate existing research on the most effective approaches for teaching children how to read. In its February 1999 Progress Report, the panel wrote,

> [A]dvances in research are beginning to provide hope that educators may soon be guided by scientifically sound information. A growing number of works, for example, are now suggesting that students need to master phonics skills in order to read well. Among them are *Learning to Read* by Jeanne Chall and *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print* by Marilyn Adams. As Adams, a senior scientist at Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc., writes, "[It] has been proven beyond any shade of doubt that skillful readers process virtually each and every word and letter of text as they read. This is extremely counter-intuitive. For sure, skillful readers neither look nor feel as if that's what they do. But that's because they do it so quickly and effortlessly."

Even the popular media have recognized this converging body of research. As James Collins wrote in *Time* magazine in October 1997: "After reviewing the arguments mustered by the phonics and whole-language proponents, can we make a judgment as to who is right? Yes. The value of explicit, systematic phonics instruction has been well established. Hundreds of studies from a variety of fields support this conclusion. Indeed, the evidence is so strong that if the subject under discussion were, say, the treatment of the mumps, there would be no discussion." Yet in the face of such overwhelming evidence, the whole-language approach, rather than the phonics approach, dominated American primary classrooms during the 1990s. …

This phenomenon is not just the story of reading. Math education experts also live in an enclosed community. In 1989, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) developed academic content standards that have since been adopted by most states and today drive classroom practice in thousands of schools. The standards not only specified what children were to learn, but how teachers were to teach. According to the NCTM, these standards were designed to "ensure that the public is protected from shoddy products," yet no effort was made by the NCTM to determine whether the standards themselves were based on evidence. …

The resistance of education experts to evidence is so puzzling that it is worth closely investigating what educators say about research. In 1995, the Research Advisory Committee of the NCTM expressed its disdain for the kind of research that the FDA routinely conducts: "The question 'Is Curriculum A better than Curriculum B?' is not a good research question, because it is not readily answerable." In fact, that is *exactly* the kind of research question that teachers, parents, and the broader public want to see answered. This kind of research is not impossible, though it is more complicated to undertake than other kinds of research—particularly the qualitative research that most education experts seem to prefer. …

With research understood in this way, it should not be surprising to find that the education profession has little by way of a solid knowledge base on which to rest its practices. But if we don't know what works, how are teachers to know how to respond in a sure and confident way to the challenges they face? …

What is clear … is that lack of evidence does not deter widespread acceptance of untested innovations in education; indeed, a pedagogical method can even be embraced in the face of contradictory evidence. Conversely, the evidence for an instructional approach may be overwhelmingly positive, yet there is no guarantee that it will be adopted. The case of Direct Instruction is a prime example.

A Large-scale Education Experiment

In the annals of education research, one project stands out above all others. Project Follow Through was probably the largest education experiment ever conducted in the United States. It was a longitudinal study of more than twenty different approaches to teaching economically disadvantaged K-3 students. The experiment lasted from 1967 to 1976, although Follow Through continued as a federal program until 1995. Project Follow Through included more than 70,000 students in more than 180 schools, and yearly data on 10,000 children were used for the study. The project evaluated education models falling into two broad categories: those based on child-directed construction of meaning and knowledge, and those based on direct teaching of academic and cognitive skills.

The battle between these two basic approaches to teaching has divided educators for generations. Each is rooted in its own distinctive philosophy of how children learn. Schools that have implemented the child-centered approach (sometimes called "constructivist") have a very different look and feel from schools that have

opted for the more traditional, teacher-directed approach (often called "direct instruction" in its most structured form).

First graders in a constructivist reading classroom might be found scattered around the room; some children are walking around, some are talking, some painting, others watching a video, some looking through a book, and one or two reading with the teacher. The teacher uses a book that is not specifically designed to be read using phonics skills, and, when a child misses a word, the teacher will let the mistake go by so long as the meaning is preserved to some degree (for instance, if a child reads "horse" instead of "pony"). If a child is stuck on a word, the teacher encourages her to guess, to read to the end of the sentence and then return to the word, to look at the picture on the page, and, possibly, to look at the first letter of the word.

In a direct instruction classroom, some children are at their desks writing or reading phonics-based books. The rest of the youngsters are sitting with the teacher. The teacher asks them to sound out challenging words before reading the story. When the children read the story, the teacher has them sound out the words if they make mistakes.

In the category of child-directed education, four major models were analyzed in Project Follow Through:

- *Constructivism/Discovery Learning.* The Responsive Education Model, sponsored by the Far West Laboratory and originated by Glenn Nimnict. The child's own interests determine where and when he works. The goal is to build an environment that is responsive to the child so that he can learn from it.

- *Whole Language.* The Tucson Early Education Model (TEEM), developed by Marie Hughes and sponsored by the University of Arizona. Teachers elaborate on the child's present experiences and interests to teach intellectual processes such as comparing, recalling, looking, and relationships. Child-directed choices are important to this model; the content is less important.

- *Developmentally Appropriate Practices.* Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, sponsored by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and developed by David Weikart. The model builds on Piaget's concern with the underlying cognitive processes that allow one to learn on one's own. Children are encouraged to schedule their own activities, develop plans, choose whom to work with, etc. The teacher provides choices in ways that foster development of positive self-concept. The teacher demonstrates language by labeling what is going on, providing interpretations, and explaining causes.

- *Open Education Model.* The Education Development Center (EDC) sponsored a model derived from the British Infant School and focused on building the child's responsibility for his own learning. Reading and writing are not taught directly, but through stimulating the desire to communicate. Flexible schedules, child-directed choices, and a focus on intense personal involvement characterize this model.

The major skills-oriented, teacher-directed model tested in Project Follow Through was Direct Instruction, sponsored by the University of Oregon and developed by Siegfried Engelmann and Wes Becker. It emphasizes the use of small group, face-to-face instruction by teachers and aides using carefully sequenced lessons in reading, mathematics, and language in kindergarten and first grade. (Lessons in later grades are more complicated.) A variety of manuals, observation tools, and child assessment measures have been developed to provide quality control for training procedures, teaching processes, and children's academic

progress. Key assumptions of the model are: (1) that all children can be taught (and that this is the teacher's responsibility); (2) that low-performing students must be taught more, not less, in order to catch up; and (3) that the task of teaching more requires careful use of educational technology and time. (The author of this report was involved with the Direct Instruction Follow Through Project at the University of Oregon.)

Data for the big Follow Through evaluation were gathered and analyzed by two independent organizations—Stanford Research Institute and Abt Associates. Students taught according to the different models were compared with a control group (and, implicitly, with each other) on three types of measures: basic, cognitive, and affective. …

In only one approach, the Direct Instruction (DI) model, were participating students near or at national norms in math and language and close to national norms in reading. Students in all four of the other Follow Through approaches—discovery learning, language experience, developmentally appropriate practices, and open education—often performed worse than the control group. This poor performance came in spite of tens of thousands of additional dollars provided for each classroom each year.

Researchers noted that DI students performed well not only on measures of basic skills but also in more advanced skills such as reading comprehension and math problem solving. Furthermore, DI students' scores were quite high in the affective domain, suggesting that building academic competence promotes self-esteem, not vice versa. This last result especially surprised the Abt researchers, who wrote:

> The performance of Follow Through children in Direct Instruction sites on the affective measures is an unexpected result. The Direct Instruction model does not explicitly emphasize affective outcomes

of instruction, but the sponsor has asserted that they will be consequences of effective teaching. Critics of the model have predicted that the emphasis on tightly controlled instruction might discourage children from freely expressing themselves, and thus inhibit the development of self-esteem and other affective skills. In fact, this is not the case.

An analysis of the Follow Through parent data found moderate to high parental involvement in all the DI school districts. Compared to the parents of students from schools being served by other Follow Through models, parents of DI students more frequently felt that their schools had appreciably improved their children's academic achievement. This parental perception corresponded with the actual standardized test scores of the Direct Instruction students.

These data were collected and analyzed by impartial organizations. The developers of the DI model conducted a number of supplementary studies, which had similarly promising results.

Significant IQ gains were found in students who participated in the program. Those entering kindergarten with low IQs (below 71) gained 17 points, while students entering first grade with low IQs gained 9.4 points. Children with entering IQs in the 71-90 range gained 15.6 points in kindergarten and 9.2 points in first grade.

Longitudinal studies were undertaken using the high school records of students who had received Direct Instruction through the end of third grade as well as the records of a comparison group of students who did not receive Direct Instruction. Researchers looked at test scores, attendance, college acceptances, and retention. When academic performance was the measure, the Direct Instruction students outperformed the control group in the five comparisons whose results were statistically significant. The comparisons favored

Direct Instruction students on the other measures as well (attendance, college acceptances, and retention) in all studies with statistically significant results.

Additional research showed that the DI model worked in a wide range of communities. Direct Instruction Follow Through sites were located in large cities (New York, San Diego, Washington, D.C.); mid-sized cities (Flint, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; East St. Louis, Illinois); rural white communities (Flippin, Arkansas; Smithville, Tennessee); a rural black community (Williamsburg, South Carolina); Latino communities (Uvalde, Texas; E. Las Vegas, New Mexico); and a Native American community (Cherokee, North Carolina).

More than two decades later, a 1999 report funded by some of the nation's leading education organizations confirmed the efficacy of Direct Instruction. Researchers at the American Institutes of Research who performed the analysis for the *Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform* found that only three of the 24 schoolwide reform models they examined could present solid evidence of positive effects on student achievement. Direct Instruction was one of the three.

Direct Instruction after Project Follow Through

Before Project Follow Through, constructivist approaches to teaching and learning were extremely popular. One might have expected that the news from Project Follow Through would have caused educators to set aside such methods and embrace Direct Instruction instead. But this did not happen. To the contrary.

Even before the findings from Project Follow Through were officially released, the Ford Foundation commissioned a critique of it. One of the authors of that study … wrote an additional critique of Follow Through

that was published by the federal government's National Institute of Education. This report suggested that the NIE conduct an evaluation emphasizing an ethnographic or descriptive case-study approach because "the audience for Follow Through evaluations is an audience of teachers that doesn't need statistical finding of experiments to decide how best to teach children. They decide such matters on the basis of complicated public and private understandings, beliefs, motives, and wishes."

After the results of the Follow Through study were in, the sponsors of the different programs submitted their models to the Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Panel. Evidently the Panel did not value the differences in effectiveness found by the big national study of Follow Through; all of the programs—both successful and failed—were recommended for dissemination to school districts. According to Cathy Watkins, a professor of education at Cal State-Stanislaus, "A program could be judged effective if it had a positive impact on individuals other than students. As a result, programs that had failed to improve academic achievement in Follow Through were rated as 'exemplary and effective.'" The Direct Instruction model was not specially promoted or encouraged in any way. In fact, extra federal dollars were directed toward the less effective models in an effort to improve their results.

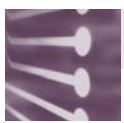
During the 1980s and early 1990s, schools that attempted to use Direct Instruction (originally known as DISTAR)—particularly in the early grades, when DI is especially effective—were often discouraged by members of education organizations. Many experts were convinced that the program's heavy academic emphasis was "developmentally inappropriate" for young children and might "hinder children's development of interpersonal understanding and their broader socio-cognitive and moral development." "DI is the answer only if we want our children to swallow whole whatever they are told and focus more on consumption than

citizenship," argued Lawrence Schweinhart of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. (High/Scope had developed one of the constructivist models.) …

The natural-learning view that underlies the other four Follow Through models described above is enormously appealing to educators and to many psychologists. The dominance of this view can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who glorified the natural at the expense of the man-made, and argued that education should not be structured but should emerge from the natural inclinations of the child. German educators developed kindergartens based on the notion of natural learning. This romantic notion of learning has become doctrinal in many schools of education and child-development centers, and has closed the minds of many experts to actual research findings about effective approaches to educating children. This is a classic case of an immature profession, one that lacks a solid scientific base and has less respect for evidence than for opinion and ideology. …

The education establishment professes to desire the best possible education for American students, but then insists on the use of "learner-centered" teaching methods that yield poor results. To education professors George Cunningham and Donald Crawford, that stance is decidedly not in the best interest of students. In the face of evidence that American students are not doing well academically, the education establishment continues to oppose educational methods with documented success, particularly Direct Instruction, while further entrenching the learner-centered approach. The key question the paper poses, but does not answer, is how change can be catalyzed.

The paper, here abridged and reprinted by permission of the authors, was written for and published by the Oklahoma Council for Public Affairs, 2002.



Are Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality Paying Off?

By George Cunningham and Donald Crawford

The public wants an education system that serves the child's future interests, i.e., an education that equips the child with the knowledge and skills that responsible adults consider necessary for success in the adult world. By contrast, the education community's ideal is a form of schooling that is concerned primarily with whether the classroom experience is well received by the student. The education community and the consuming public want what is best for children. They want students to learn and enjoy school, but they differ about the value of the "improvements" that have taken place in teacher training, which fit the education community's concept of sound practices, not the public's.

What the consuming public expects of the schools is expressed with reasonable clarity in law and policy. Specifically, voters elect or permit the appointment of citizen governing bodies to act in their behalf. These groups establish curricula, set course and grade level objectives, write policies regarding report cards, standardized tests, etc. all to ensure—to the extent possible—that students acquire knowledge and skills. School boards and boards of education define and prescribe a body of appropriate knowledge and skills and they require children to attend school. Their actions presume that responsible adults have a better idea of what children need to learn than do the children themselves and that quality schooling and effective teaching are those forms of schooling and teaching that bring about the prescribed results.

Teachers, professors of education, and members of the public education bureaucracy—i.e., public education's providers—generally take a different view. They believe that the knowledge and skills considered important by policymakers and the public are only one part of a broad range of intellectual, social, and emotional considerations with which schools and teachers should concern themselves. They value the knowledge and skills prescribed by the curriculum but not necessarily as a top priority. Instead, they believe that schooling should be a social influence that impinges on all areas of growth and development and they theorize that an overemphasis in one area can cause imbalance and disfigurement in others. Their top priority is not to ensure that each child has the knowledge and skills prescribed by the curriculum; it is to avoid an empirically unsubstantiated risk that they believe arises from overzealous teaching.

Teaching that prizes harmony with student development and a balanced set of outcomes is known by names such as "child centered," "learner-centered," "student centered," and a variety of other names. Specialized forms of such teaching include current practices such as "constructivism," "developmentally appropriate instruction," "discovery learning," and "brain-based learning" and recognized fads such as "open education,"

"self-esteem enhancement," and "whole language" reading instruction. All of these approaches to teaching are derivatives of what has historically been known as "progressive education" and what is today called "best practice" teaching. As educators currently use the term, it refers to teaching that is consistent with progressive principles, not teaching methods of proven effectiveness. Most of the well-known educational fads of the twentieth century are mutations of progressivism.

Rather than instruct or shape or guide, progressive/learner-centered teaching is intended to permit discovery and to facilitate the expression of curiosity and creativity. It is a kind of "edutainment" intended primarily to stimulate and engage. Learning is incidental, subordinate, and secondary in importance. The ideal teacher is said to be "a guide on the side," not "a sage on the stage."

Progressive/learner-centered practice not only reorders teaching's priorities, it opposes traditional or "teacher-centered" methods, i.e., teaching that requires students to pay attention, make an effort, and behave themselves. Rather than set expectations for students, it calls for social and economic reforms that are believed conducive to the development of eager and well-prepared students, i.e., the kind of students who respond well to learner-centered instruction. Teacher-training programs strongly emphasize teacher commitment to equity, diversity, and social justice precisely because they recognize that many students do not respond well to progressive/learner-centered practice. Implicitly they reason that if their pedagogical methods are correct and students fail to respond, society must be rearranged to suit the needs of the schools.

The progressive/learner-centered approach favors flexible curricula, narrative report cards, portfolio assessment, and autonomy for both the teacher and the student. It opposes clear educational standards, letter

grades, standardized tests, and accountability. It presumes that good schools and good teachers are the ones that maximize stimulation and opportunities for student enrichment and conceives of educational improvement as growth in the availability of enriching experiences.

Progressive/learner-centered teaching is not simply an alternative means to the same ends sought by parents and the public. It is an approach to education that places a distinctly lower value on knowing and understanding the accumulated wisdom of past generations. Learning directed by curiosity and passing enthusiasms inevitably produces uncertain outcomes. Students are not required to know particular facts or be able to demonstrate particular skills. Rather it is presumed that quality education results in an improved ability to find information and make use of it, i.e., improved thinking skills.

In effect, progressive/learner-centered schooling reduces a hypothetical risk to balanced developmental outcomes at the expense of increasing the well-known, longer-term risk of failing to learn vital knowledge and skills. By its unyielding adherence to pedagogical dogma, the education community effectively places its unsubstantiated concerns about overzealous teaching ahead of the public's concerns about youthful ignorance and incompetence. This corporate stance has been and continues to be the primary impediment to improved student achievement in schools throughout the U.S.

Throughout most of its history, American public education has careened from one educational fad to another. Virtually all of them have been variants of progressive/learner-centered thinking and virtually all of them have been implemented by trained and licensed teachers working in state approved schools.

In the last 50 years, state teacher training, licensure, and certification standards have been revised repeatedly. This has happened to the accreditation standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), an organization dominated by people who adhere to progressive educational theory. In many states, both training and licensure standards have been written to comport with NCATE's standards, ensuring that newly trained teachers will have been taught that the learner-centered methods are good and that traditional teaching methods are harmful. Even in states that have not chosen to mandate NCATE standards, many individual schools of education follow them anyway. Nationwide, untested fads have been adopted and disseminated, and proven but traditional practices have been discouraged consistent with progressive/learner-centered practice.

"Direct Instruction" continues to be ignored by almost all schools of education and state education agencies. Its scripted format is in complete disagreement with the progressive/learner-centered model. Only within the past few years have policymakers begun to learn about Direct Instruction's dramatic successes in the federally funded Follow Through project of the sixties and seventies. Schools with high numbers of disadvantaged learners have found it especially effective.

The education community aspires to professional standards like those in engineering and medicine; but engineers whose bridges collapse and doctors who practice quackery lose their licenses—and programs that train them lose their accreditation. By contrast, in public education, licensure and accreditation agencies rarely question or discuss past fads and failures much less penalize training programs and practitioners. Instead, they promulgate new standards that purport to correct the problems but, in fact, permit more of the same.

Although little discussed, the inability of the teaching profession's established governing bodies to protect the public from unsafe and ineffective practice is visible to all. Moreover, change is unlikely. The susceptibilities of the education community's standards are a function of the progressive/learner-centered orthodoxy that captivates both leaders and members. More standards set by these bodies will not address the problem because both the standard-setters and the faddists subscribe to the same views.

Parents and policymakers want schooling that ensures—to the extent possible—children who have the knowledge and skills needed for adulthood. They want teachers who expect students to pay attention, make an effort, and behave themselves. The education community and its leadership disagree. They prefer an approach to education that is less concerned with knowledge and skills and more in tune with pedagogical theory.

Just as war is too important to be left to the generals, education is too important to be left to the experts.

Reforming a major state university is a difficult task. In the following article, two individuals who have been instrumental in the attempt to improve the teacher training programs in the State University of New York system describe their aims and the obstacles they have encountered.

SUNY's Teacher Preparation Reforms: A Work in Progress

By Candace de Russy and Michael Poliakoff

This is the story of the State University of New York's "New Vision in Teacher Education," an urgently needed education reform with some great ideas. It has high potential to be a paradigm for the nation and a model for trustees of other colleges and universities to follow. But its beginning will ultimately prove not nearly as important as its progress. How it proceeds at this critical juncture will hold some vital insights into the life-cycle of education reform. Today's well-intentioned reforms at SUNY could be an engine for service to the taxpayers who fund the universities. But this won't happen without renewed and keenly-focused effort.

The "New Vision in Teacher Education," as it is now called, grew from efforts beginning in 1998 that Candace de Russy undertook in collaboration with SUNY's provost, Peter Salins, to improve the preparation of new teachers and to deepen SUNY's commitment to improving public education in New York urban schools. SUNY deliberations included consultation with a number of advocates for complete redesign and restructuring of teacher preparation, including Diane Ravitch, Chester Finn, Rita Kramer, Jerry Martin, and Michael Poliakoff. The "Advisory Council on Teacher Education," formed by the Provost in May 2000,

delivered its report to the Board in March 2001 with recommendations for a well-defined set of reform strategies and objectives:

- Strong subject area preparation
- Improved pedagogical training
- Partnership with school districts
- Increased recruitment of teachers
- Preparation of more teachers in high-need subjects
- Commitment to urban schools
- External review of teacher education programs
- Research on effectiveness of SUNY-trained teachers
- SUNY guarantee on the quality of its graduates

The challenges facing this comprehensive teacher quality strategy lie in the details for its implementation. In the sections that follow, we critique and analyze the plan.

Transparency and Public Trust

The Trustees—who have the fiduciary responsibility to represent the interests of the taxpayers of New York—know remarkably little about the quality of SUNY's 16 teacher education programs. The public knows even less.

The list of missing information at SUNY is a long one. Trustees need data on the academic qualifications of students admitted to teacher training programs. Trustees need data on grade distribution in education courses. We know that grade inflation is rampant in education programs—federal data shows this all too clearly—making teacher preparation a magnet for the academically underqualified. And whether the results are good news or bad news, the Trustees need to have the average licensure exam score for every teaching field at every campus every year. In other words, they need a campus-by-campus report card based on academic achievement benchmarks upon which they can craft informed policy.

Since this information wasn't available through the System office, we did some of our own informal investigations, which revealed plenty of things that should be of concern to Trustees. At the SUNY New Paltz campus a few years ago, an institutional study showed that 71 percent of the grades awarded in elementary education classes were "A's"—compared with an average of 33 percent in other courses throughout the campus. Furthermore, not every future teacher is above average—or even minimally qualified—at some SUNY campuses. Although the average teacher licensure test scores for SUNY on a System-wide basis are generally good, some of SUNY's individual education programs show appalling results. In 1999-2000, eleven of the twenty-three graduates who prepared to be high school mathematics teachers at SUNY-Oswego failed their NY State mathematics exam. The test for high school English teachers seems to have had disastrous results as well: only five of the thirteen graduates who took it managed to pass. The Trustees have not examined even the sample questions from these licensure exams—if they did, they would find that they are anything but rigorous. Stated simply, we have a relatively easy test that proves a significant barrier to graduates of some of our campuses who aspire to teach in New York public schools. And at SUNY's Old Westbury campus, the average score for its education students on the most general (and easy) of the licensure tests, the Liberal Arts and Sciences exam, was 23 points below the state average. Information like this should not

come piecemeal to public cognizance: it belongs in an annually published data book readily available to every taxpayer to be studied by every Trustee.

Some of SUNY's teacher education programs may be such chronic underperformers that they should be closed—a situation that Trustees on campuses throughout the nation should be prepared to face. Certainly the weak results we uncovered demand at the very least close public scrutiny. Terminating a program is an unnerving thought for university administrators and politicians, but it is the fiduciary responsibility of the Board of Trustees to protect the interest of the public over the interest of institutions and their employees.

The lesson here for Trustees at other institutions is self-evident. Start with the data. It is the prerequisite for crafting policy.

Who Owns and Who Watches Teacher Education?

Accountability is the watchword of the day, and reporting requirements for teacher preparation programs are built into both the 1998 reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. SUNY's "Action Plan" for implementing New Visions properly promises that "as a System and through the work of its faculty" it will conduct research on best practices. SUNY, moreover, intends to survey the school systems that employ its graduates and use this information to improve its programs. But an effective review needs to observe the same strictures against conflict-of-interest that we expect of business and government. SUNY's Advisory Council's report already expressed high confidence in the "consistently high quality" of SUNY's teacher education programs even before the reforms were to go into effect. It is unclear whether it is appropriate to use SUNY faculty to craft best practices policies and audit the performance of the

programs: the programs that have tolerated the weak or inconsistent licensure exam results that we have just seen, are not likely to be the most effective watchdogs or the most effective engine for reform. To rely on accreditors—particularly the National Council on Teacher Accreditation (NCATE)—to ensure program quality is to lean upon the proverbial bruised reed, a very poor substitute for Trustee oversight.

An institution that is serious about research on teacher effectiveness, needs unquestionably objective research, transparently reported to Trustees and the public. Teacher education programs throughout the country have—for good reason—been the object of scrutiny; federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) funded studies, moreover, have challenged the validity and design of the majority of research on the effectiveness of teacher education. Trustees can turn to many expert and reliable agencies, like Stanford University's CREDO (Center for Research on Education Outcomes), RAND, or SASinSchool, which is the research base for Dr. William Sanders, the designer of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

Best Practice or Malpractice

Trustees need to be proactive in monitoring what lies behind a pledge to improve pedagogical practice. Teacher education is a field littered with fads and theories, few of which are based on strong scientific research, and some of which are demonstrably harmful. Although SUNY as a system is clearly committed to the evidence-based practices called for in the new No Child Left Behind Act signed by President Bush, that is no guarantee that the programs themselves will follow suit. Some education programs at SUNY and elsewhere still appear to be trapped in the ideology that as agents of social change, teachers should teach children to read by so-called "whole language" methods, whereby children are not taught the mechanics of

interpreting the sounds of letters and syllables. Instead, the teacher primarily reads to the children and provides exposure to books that the teacher and school deem important. The trouble with such a method is that many children will not, in fact, learn to read on their own. Beginning reading is one of the few areas for which education has a large and convincing body of scientific research on what works, and based on that evidence, the National Reading Panel enjoins reading teachers to teach children phonemic awareness and phonetic skills for decoding printed words. This is not only best practice, it is the only acceptable practice for teaching reading. California, after an avalanche of student failures caused by its misguided adoption of "whole language instruction," now mandates by law that education schools train teachers in systematic explicit phonics. But some of the reading programs at SUNY campuses seem barely aware of such standards. At SUNY's Oneonta Campus, for example, its NCATE-approved School of Education offers the following description of its Reading Program:

> The Graduate Reading Program is firmly committed to the philosophy that reading is comprehension and that reading comprehension is a dynamic transactive process of constructing meaning as the reader brings prior knowledge to the text within the context of the reading situation. Reading is now regarded as an active search for meaning rather than a mechanical translation of the written code.

Trustees at SUNY and everywhere else need to be certain that behind such jargon there will not be a recipe for ensuring that many children will fail to gain the skills they need to sound out unfamiliar words and become confident, independent readers. Louisa Moats, project director at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Interventions Project, in her report, "Whole Language Lives On: The Illusion of 'Balanced' Reading Instruction," states that young children need instruction in systematic, synthetic phonics in which they are taught sound-symbol correspondences singly, directly and explicitly. Failure

to teach teachers to be fully proficient in phonics-based reading instruction is the recipe for building a permanent underclass of Americans with low literacy skills. The potential for harm from whole language or even inconsistently applied phonics instruction is high for all schools, but bad instruction in reading does its worst damage in high poverty schools. For SUNY to bring such methods to an Urban Teacher Center would be an injustice to the city and its children. An education school professor should have no more "academic freedom" to train teachers to use whole language methods than a medical professor has to train doctors to apply leeches for hypertension or prescribe ice-water hosings for a patient with depression. SUNY's Urban Teacher Center cannot be used as a laboratory where whole language and phonics methods can both be used, in an effort to avoid offending faculty committed to the former. Education schools that want to help urban children escape from low-literacy and poverty must look to the children's interests, not faculty preferences, and ensure that their reading curriculum is based on the overwhelming research evidence for systematic training in phonics.

More Teachers and Better Teachers, or More Revenue?

Like most states, New York badly needs a fast-track program to facilitate the entry of skilled professionals into public school careers. Efficient, streamlined alternative certification programs have appeared throughout the country, with notable success in New Jersey, Texas, California, and Massachusetts. Many of these programs feature an intense summer orientation lasting from two to four weeks, followed by a year of apprentice teaching with an available mentor. They bring some superbly skilled new teachers to the classroom; the teachers who come through alternative routes also tend to be more ethnically diverse and have a stronger and more enduring commitment to urban schools. Troops-to-Teachers taps into a large group of men and women with the technical and organizational skills that come from military training; Teach for

America recruits graduates from the most select and demanding colleges and universities in America and places them in the nation's most challenged and disadvantaged schools. But despite the success of such programs, they continue to encounter resistance from education schools, which fear that their enrollments will decline if aspiring teachers are not compelled by state regulations to take their courses.

SUNY must take the bold step of developing alternate routes that rely on short, intensive orientation programs rather than education school course credits—a track fully within the vision and regulations of the New York Board of Regents. It needs more than the vague language of the Action Plan, which specifies that SUNY leadership "will work with individual campuses or groups of campuses to develop alternative certification programs." SUNY could find itself with an alternative certification program that requires mid-career professionals to endure (as an early SUNY document suggested) "a summer session with an intense set of didactic graduate level professional education courses and field observations" during their first year, then spend 25 percent of their time during the following school year receiving further "instruction in teaching methodology," then sit through another summer to "complete a second set of intensive campus-based courses," and finally devote another 25 percent of their time to receiving more teaching methodology instruction. This ludicrous attempt to gain education school enrollments and tuition revenues is not unique to SUNY: several associations of teacher educators advocate "alternative certification" programs that are merely repackagings of traditional education school degrees. Across America, there are thousands of children who need bright and knowledgeable teachers fast. When there are senseless requirements and regulations in the way, Trustees need to tear them down.

Most states and school districts put significant pressure on teachers through regulations or financial incentives to earn a Master's degree. The New York Board of Regents requires all New York teachers to gain a

Master's degree within three years of initial employment. There is solid research evidence that shows increased student performance associated with teachers who have Master's degrees in academic content areas, but no student growth associated with teachers who gain Master's degrees in education. The Master's in Teaching has been a revenue enhancer at universities around the country. The degree allows teachers to jump to a higher salary scale at their schools, and hence it is a very popular degree. But the low level of academic challenge and limited relevance to teacher's academic needs makes the degree near worthless for student learning gains. The moral should be evident that education programs that want to be on the cutting edge—at SUNY and elsewhere—need to provide Master's degree programs for teachers that are based exclusively on the academic disciplines the candidates teach.

What's in a Major?

What is in your institution's academic catalogue? Rhetoric aside, what are the stated requirements that students must fulfill to achieve a degree in a given program? The college catalog is at least as important a document for Trustees as the annual budget, for it is the actualization of the school's mission. And, as we found at SUNY, it can contain some real surprises.

SUNY's Action Plan states as its first objective, "Assuring that students are thoroughly grounded in the subjects they teach." Future elementary school teachers, according to the Plan, will complete a "major or concentration" in a subject directly related to the elementary school curriculum. But the Devil is in the details. Currently, the Plan allows future teachers to craft their "concentrations" with "at least 18 credit hours at the upper division level"—but drawn from an unspecified number of majors. Future teachers need coherent and rigorous upper level coursework, the kind of academic experience that develops intellectual maturity and

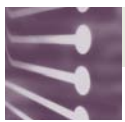
depth. The last thing future teachers need is the opportunity to water down—and dumb down—a "concentration" by drawing upper-level courses from a plurality of majors, possibly choosing the easiest course from each. At SUNY's Cortland campus, for example, a future science teacher could presumably stay within the rules and construct a major with such upper level courses: SCI 304 "Plants and People," SCI 330 "Science and the Public," SCI 325 "Biotechnology and Human Aging," SCI 310 "Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control," and SCI 300 "Science and Its Social Context," for much of the required 18 credit hours. None of those courses has prerequisites. Would the future teacher get the same intellectual benefit from them as she would from taking, for example, 18 credit hours of advanced biology and/or chemistry? The answer is almost certainly, "no," and SUNY needs to close this loophole, or Elementary Education will become the major of choice for college students who wish to avoid rigorous upper-level coursework.

Many of SUNY's campuses have created special courses that segregate education students: "Physics for Elementary Education Majors," "Mathematics for the Elementary Teacher," "Geometries for Elementary and Middle School Teachers," "The Joys of Geometry"—whose course description reads, "For MS in Education degree students only." The strong signal such courses send is that education students need to be protected from the more competitive standards of their peers in baccalaureate majors. The prestigious Holmes Group called for the elimination of such tracking over a decade ago, but it persists. SUNY, like hundreds of other institutions, must terminate all arts and science courses currently designated as courses for education majors. We will never have teachers who walk the walk of academic excellence if we continue to tolerate this separate tracking.

Conclusion

Changing the culture of education schools is not easy, and SUNY deserves credit for facing the task. It has embarked on a path that other institutions have not yet begun. But a culture change will certainly not happen if we maintain the fiction that all teacher preparation programs need is some fine-tuning. The Urban Teacher Center, a centerpiece of the SUNY reforms, is a brilliant idea. Real reform—the sort that will build an Urban Teacher Center on solid principles of academic excellence—will need to set and enforce quality measures that do not allow loopholes for evasive reporting and low-challenge courses. We wish SUNY's bold beginning success that will invigorate New York's schools; it will need much further effort to get there. And the best hope for reform at any college or university—SUNY included—is vigilant Trustees who will visit classrooms, study syllabi, and require systematic reporting of academic quality measures. Trustees are empowered and uniquely equipped to do this. It is simply a matter of will.

Is it necessary for students to major in education in order to be adequately trained to undertake the difficult job of teaching? A few schools have answered that question in the negative, among them Hillsdale College. The Hillsdale teacher program requires that a true academic major comprise the core of the prospective teacher's education, with only a small component of courses in education. As the Director of Hillsdale's program shows, their methods have proven to be very successful.



The Hillsdale Approach to Teacher Education

By Robert C. Hanna

Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, was founded as an independent liberal arts college in 1844. Its Mission Statement reads in part, "By training the young in the liberal arts, Hillsdale College prepares students to become leaders worthy of that legacy." Throughout the years, the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees have taken this statement one step further by preparing only the most qualified students to become leaders who teach the liberal arts within the elementary and secondary grades.

Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program is fully approved by the Michigan State Department of Education, as are thirty-one other programs throughout the State. However, many of Hillsdale College's Program requirements exceed State standards and thereby make the Program unique.

First, no students are ever permitted to major in education. Our students major among the disciplines of art, biology, chemistry, English, French, German, history, Latin, mathematics, music, physical education, physics, science, and Spanish. The choice of minors we permit is slightly expanded, to include computer science and

early childhood education, with early childhood education requiring the addition of a minimum of two liberal arts minors, one of which must be English, history, mathematics, or science. This results in our students' learning much more about what they will teach than if they took most of their college credits in education courses. At Hillsdale College, "how to teach" has never necessitated the credit hours comparable to those demanded by an academic major.

Only the most qualified students are accepted into our Teacher Education Program. Specifically, students must achieve and maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. (Students with a GPA between 2.70 and 3.00 can petition to be admitted to the Program by the College's three academic Deans, the Provost, and the Certification Officer, but such approval is by no means automatic. Students can be instructed to reapply when they meet the 3.00 requirement.) No courses which lead to or are a part of the Teacher Education Program are ever audited, so that an accurate GPA is always calculated. Students whose GPAs decline below these standards while they are in the Program are not permitted to student teach and therefore cannot become State-certified teachers.

No students are exempt from any courses on the basis of placement tests or on any other basis. This Hillsdale College standard applies equally to College core liberal arts courses, teacher education courses, and teaching major and minor total credit hour requirements. In other words, students who can demonstrate proficiency in an area of study are simultaneously demonstrating readiness for learning at a higher level of study in that area, whether for the benefit of the students they will be teaching or for the benefit of their own liberal arts education.

Our small number of education courses include: "Foundations of Education," "Explicit Phonics Reading Instruction," "The Teaching of Reading to the Exceptional and ESL (English as a Second Language) Child," and "Contemporary Problems in Education." In general, the problems we identify in the latter course are the solutions advocated by other teacher education programs.

Two other ways in which we exceed State standards involve student teaching. While all student teachers in Michigan must spend a minimum of 180 hours in a school, Hillsdale College's student teachers must spend a minimum of 180 hours teaching within their teaching majors and/or minors in a school. Then, when our students have reached the 180 hours, they continue adding on more teaching hours until the semester has ended. Our students spend an entire semester in their host schools, Monday through Friday, following their schools' hours and days of operation.

Although the State Department of Education does not designate specific books which future teachers must read and study, we do. In our education courses, students read from such great works of antiquity as *The Odyssey* by Homer, Plato's *Dialogues*, *The Aeneid* by Virgil, and *On the Good Life* by Cicero, and modern books including *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* by William James, *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler, *Why Johnny Can't Read* by Rudolf Flesch, and *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong* by William Kilpatrick.

Our education courses also include examples from the K-12 content of the College's Hillsdale Academy. Hillsdale Academy's K-12 curriculum was selected in its entirety by two of Hillsdale College's education professors, both experienced elementary and secondary school teachers and administrators. The College's Provost then employs a headmaster who is to ensure that the curriculum's scope and sequence are implemented in full. This benefits not only the county's children enrolled at Hillsdale Academy but also our

Teacher Education Program students, who are able to observe the teaching of this curriculum by Academy teachers who have already completed Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program or who are in the process of doing so. In the words of a State evaluator of our Program, "The fine cooperation between the unit [Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program] … and the Hillsdale Academy is laudable and a fine model of the type of collaboration other schools and school districts desire." This includes our placing student teachers at Hillsdale Academy every semester.

In addition to the approval of the Michigan State Department of Education, Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program's effectiveness is recognized by other independent sources. The Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland, Michigan, writes, "[W]hile Hillsdale may be virtually alone in its diagnosis of the modern educational disease, it is confident that the future of teaching lies in the practices of the past." "The National Monitor of Education" in Alamo, California, writes, "The Hillsdale approach to teacher training is solid meat and potatoes, a practical approach opposed to theoretical, pie-in-the-sky doctrines often advocated in teacher training programs. There would be few, if any, failures of new teachers in the classroom if as student teachers they had the opportunity to participate in programs similar to Hillsdale's."

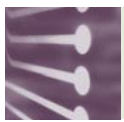
As of this writing, Hillsdale College has a six-year 100% placement rate for those students who graduate with a teaching certificate and seek to start their teaching careers the following school year. According to the College Registrar, if the students admitted to the Teacher Education Program were collectively considered as having one and the same major, the Teacher Education Program would be designated as having more students than does any other major that the College offers. Some of these students' placements are in the very schools, public and private, in which the students complete their student teaching. Will Carlton Academy, a local charter school, hires our students, as does Hillsdale Academy. This is not to suggest that all

our students teach in Michigan, for our students have been recruited from as far away as Arizona. On a related note, our education professors have advised schools from North Carolina to Nebraska to California on how to identify competent teachers and how to retrain those just out of college. Hillsdale College even operates a Center for Teacher Excellence and provides full scholarships so that other teachers can improve their classroom effectiveness. While Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program graduates tens of liberal arts teachers each year as opposed to the hundreds of education major teachers from state universities, our teachers do not need to be retrained and are effective in the classroom starting on their first day.

We welcome visitors to all our education courses on campus, and we can arrange for guest observations of our student teachers off campus. We also keep Hillsdale Academy open for tours, and we make available for consultation the education professors responsible for the Academy's curriculum.

The faculty, administrators, and Board of Trustees of Hillsdale College actively implement the College's Mission Statement. By preparing liberal arts teachers, Hillsdale College's Teacher Education Program is always providing the next two generations, that is, teachers and their students, with the wisdom and value of a liberal arts education.

Teaching and the education of teachers differ greatly between the United States and Japan. Since Japanese students (as well as students from other Asian nations) perform so much better on international exams of basic math and science knowledge than do Americans, it is worth comparing the Japanese approach with ours. The authors, UCLA psychology professor James Stigler and University of Delaware education professor James Hiebert, observe that teaching in Japan is far more of a profession than it is in the United States. Teachers spend less time in formal, classroom preparation and much more in on-the-job training. Moreover, the Japanese devote their efforts to making incremental improvements in teaching techniques known to work—particularly, lesson plans—instead of embracing new teaching theories that are not known to work, as has so often been the case in the U.S.



Beyond Reform: Japan's Approach to the Improvement of Classroom Teaching

By James Stigler and James Hiebert

We have learned that teaching is not a simple skill but rather a complex cultural activity that is highly determined by beliefs and habits that work partly outside the realm of consciousness. That teaching is largely a cultural activity helps to explain why, in the face of constant reform, so little has actually changed inside U.S. classrooms. The cultural nature of teaching might also help to explain why teaching per se has rarely been the direct focus of efforts to reform education. Teaching is so constant within our own culture that we fail even to imagine how it might be changed, much less believe that it should be changed.

On the other hand, our cross-cultural investigations have also revealed a different, yet equally important, fact about teaching: Although highly constant within a culture, variations in teaching methods across cultures are significant. This means that teaching might be an even more important influence on student learning than some studies have suggested. When studies are conducted within cultures, they might underestimate the effects of teaching because they probably are comparing methods that do not differ greatly from one another. The substantive differences in teaching that we see across cultures suggests that very different ways of teaching can be designed and implemented, and that these substantive changes might have large effects on students' learning. This bolsters our belief that efforts to directly improve classroom processes can lead to significant gains in students' learning.

In this chapter we briefly discuss the way reformers have sought to improve teaching in the United States, and we use the TIMSS [Third International Math and Science Survey] videos to assess how successful these efforts have been. Then we briefly examine Japan's very different approach to the improvement of classroom teaching. Japan's record of high student achievement, together with its contrasting methods of teaching, entreats us to examine how Japan goes about improving its practice.

Reform in the United States: Evidence from the Classroom

Although most popular U.S. reform efforts have avoided a direct focus on teaching, there are some notable exceptions. One of these has been in the domain of mathematics, where the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has made a strong effort to improve classroom mathematics teaching. The NCTM believes that teaching is of major importance in trying to explain students' learning of mathematics and has led a far-reaching campaign to move teachers in the direction of more effective practices.

The strategy employed by NCTM in this crusade exemplifies a common approach to reform in the United States. Experts are convened to review the research and experience of the profession and to formulate recommendations for change. These recommendations then are put in written documents that are widely disseminated. One of these documents, the NCTM's *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics*, is quite explicit in its vision of how teaching needs to change in order to raise the level of students' learning. The changes envisioned by NCTM are substantial.

Investigating the success of these NCTM efforts, and of similar efforts, was a major goal of the TIMSS video study. The findings are quite interesting. First of all, the good news: U.S. teachers appear to be highly aware of reforms advocated by NCTM and other organizations. We asked all of the videotaped teachers, on a questionnaire, to rate their awareness of current ideas regarding the best way to teach mathematics. Almost all (95 percent) of the U.S. teachers sampled said they were "somewhat aware" or "very aware" of such ideas, with most claiming to have read documents published by NCTM or similar documents (such as California's Mathematics Framework). Not only are teachers aware of the reforms, the majority claimed to be implementing the reforms in their classrooms. When asked whether or not they implement reforms in their classrooms, and whether or not we would find evidence of such in the videotape we collected from their rooms, 70 percent of U.S. teachers we asked responded in the affirmative. The teachers even pointed us to specific places in the videos where we could see examples of their implementation of reform.

But this is where the good news ends. When we looked at the videos, we found little evidence of reform, at least as intended by those who had proposed the reforms. Looking at the situation as a whole, one might even argue that Japanese lessons better exemplify current U.S. reform ideas than do U.S. lessons. Japanese lessons, for example, emphasized student thinking and problem solving, multiple solution methods, and the

kinds of discourse described in U.S. reform documents to a greater extent than U.S. lessons did. And this is not the worst of it. When we examined the places in the video that teachers referred to as examples of reform, we saw a disturbing confirmation of the suspicion we voiced in Chapter 6—that reform teaching, as interpreted by some teachers, might actually be worse than what they were doing previously in their classrooms.

One teacher, for example, pointed to her use of calculators as an instance of reform in her classroom. True, NCTM recommends that calculators be introduced early in the curriculum, because, among other reasons, they can save computing time so students can focus their attention on problem solving and conceptual understanding. But this was not the way calculators were being used in this particular teacher's classroom. Midway through the solution of a simple problem, the class needed the answer to the problem 1 - 4. "Take out your calculators," the teacher said. "Now follow along with me. Push the one. Push the minus sign. Push the four. Now push the equals sign. What do you get?" The calculator, in this case, was a diversion, and accomplished little on behalf of students' mathematical understanding.

Examples like this one point to a problem in the U.S. approach to reform. Teachers can misinterpret reform and change surface features—for example, they include more group work; use more manipulatives, calculators, and real-world problem scenarios; or include writing in the lessons—but fail to alter their basic approach to teaching mathematics. …

… As we noted earlier, reform documents that focus teachers' attention on features of "good teaching" in the absence of supporting contexts might actually divert attention away from the more important goals of student learning. They may inadvertently cause teachers to substitute the means for the ends—to define suc-

cess in terms of specific features or activities instead of long-term improvements in learning. To the extent that this occurs, the best-laid plans of reformers will backfire. Far from being benign or simply ignored, reform recommendations might even worsen the quality of instruction. We are not the only researchers to document this phenomenon. But the TIMSS videotapes reveal that the problem is national in scope. …

Lesson Study: Japan's Alternative to Reform

Despite years of reform, research suggests that classroom teaching has changed little in the United States. In Japan, by contrast, teaching practices appear to have changed markedly over the past fifty years. What accounts for this difference? Japan, too, has sought to reform its educational practices. But the assumptions about how reform must work, and the mechanisms established to enact reform, are quite distinct from those in the United States. Whereas U.S. educators have sought major changes over relatively short time periods—indeed, the very word *reform* connotes sudden and wholesale change—Japanese educators have instituted a system that leads to gradual, incremental improvements in teaching over time. The system includes clear learning goals for students, a shared curriculum, the support of administrators, and the hard work of teachers striving to make gradual improvements in their practice.

Japan has given teachers themselves primary responsibility for the improvement of classroom practice. *Kounaikenshuu* is the word used to describe the continuous process of school-based professional development that Japanese teachers engage in once they begin their teaching careers. In the United States, teachers are assumed to be competent once they have completed their teacher-training programs. Japan makes no such assumption. Participation in school-based professional development groups is considered part of the teacher's job in Japan. These groups play a dual role: not only do they provide a context in which teachers

are mentored and trained, they also provide a laboratory for the development and testing of new teaching techniques.

Virtually every elementary and middle school in Japan is engaged in *kounaikenshuu.* Run by teachers, *kounaikenshuu* consists of a diverse set of activities that together constitute a comprehensive process of school improvement. Teachers work together in grade-level groups, in subject-matter groups (for example, math or language arts), and in special committees (the technology committee, for example). The activities of these various groups are coordinated by a school-improvement plan that sets the goals and focus for each year's efforts. A significant percentage of teachers also engage in district-wide groups that meet in the evenings, generally on a monthly basis. Teachers spend a considerable amount of time each month on *kounaikenshuu*.

Lesson Study

One of the most common components of *kounaikenshuu* is lesson study … In lesson study, groups of teachers meet regularly over long periods of time (ranging from several months to a year) to work on the design, implementation, testing, and improvement of one or several "research lessons" … By all indications, lesson study is extremely popular and highly valued by Japanese teachers, especially at the elementary school level. It is the linchpin of the improvement process. One elementary school teacher interviewed by Catherine Lewis and Ineko Tsuchida, scholars of Japanese education, remarked, "You won't find a school without research lessons."

The premise behind lesson study is simple: If you want to improve teaching, the most effective place to do so is in the context of a classroom lesson. If you start with lessons, the problem of how to apply research findings in the classroom disappears. The improvements are devised within the classroom in the first place. The challenge now becomes that of identifying the kinds of changes that will improve student learning in the classroom and, once the changes are identified, of sharing this knowledge with other teachers who face similar problems, or share similar goals, in the classroom. …

Reflections on Lesson Study

From the U.S. perspective, it is difficult to believe that a process as narrowly focused as lesson study could really be the driving force behind Japan's educational success. "One year on a single lesson? We could never do that here," mused one of our colleagues. "It would take forever to make any significant improvements in teaching." Yet perhaps that is one of our problems: by being in a hurry and taking the short-term view, we undermine the kinds of gradual improvements that add up to real change.

On reflection, we can identify a number of interesting aspects of lesson study that might contribute to its success. All these aspects appear to be consistent with what we know about changing complex, cultural activities. Yet, significantly, they differ markedly from most opportunities that U.S. teachers have to improve teaching. It is worth examining some of these features.

Lesson Study Is Based on a Long-term Continuous Improvement Model

We have made this point already, but it is worth making again: Lesson study is a process of improvement

that is expected to produce small, incremental improvements in teaching over long periods of time. It is emphatically not a reformlike process.

The lesson-study process, as conducted in Japan, thus respects the fact that teaching is a cultural activity. Ronald Gallimore, who has written extensively about these issues, says, "Cultural activities are historically evolved solutions to adaptive challenges. They were constructed over time through collaborative human effort to achieve a stable daily routine. Changes in cultural activity are made slowly, gradually, and are built on existing routines." Because teaching is a cultural activity, it will not change quickly or drastically.

Lesson Study Maintains a Constant Focus on Student Learning

The lessons-study process has an unrelenting focus on student learning. All efforts to improve lessons are evaluated with respect to clearly specified learning goals, and revisions are always justified with respect to student thinking and learning.

Although this feature might seem obvious and trivial, it is not. Reforms in the United States often are tied to particular theories of teaching or to educational fads instead of to specific learning outcomes. Because of this, success often is measured by the degree to which teachers implement recommended practices. Someone is marked as a good teacher because he or she uses cooperative groups or concrete manipulatives, instead of on the basis of his or her students' successful learning.

Lesson Study Focuses on the Direct Improvement of Teaching in Context

By attending to teaching as it occurs, lesson study respects teaching's complex and systemic nature, and so generates knowledge that is immediately usable. This is in marked distinction to teacher-development programs in the United States, which seek to take knowledge gained in one context (for example, knowledge produced by educational researchers) and translate it into the messy and complex world of the classroom. As useful as educational research might be, it is notoriously difficult to bridge the gap separating researchers and practitioners. Japanese teachers function both as teachers and researchers, making it unnecessary to translate one into the other.

What keeps lesson study relevant to the improvement of classroom teaching is its focus on the *lesson* as the unit to be analyzed and improved. Some might see this focus as trivial: Are there not other, more important, issues that could organize the teachers' inquiry? But in fact, focusing on a particular lesson turns out to be a useful way of simplifying the work of the group while still preserving the complexity that characterizes life in classrooms. The challenge of choosing units for study that retain the important elements of the system one is trying to understand is a classic problem in the research literature, often referred to as the problem of ecological validity. If units that are selected do not have ecological validity, research results often cannot be generalized to actual real-world situations. Lessons, we believe, do have ecological validity. Even a single lesson retains the key complexities—curriculum, student characteristics, materials, and physical environment, among other things—that must be taken into account as we try to improve classroom learning.

The decision to focus on lessons is especially appropriate in Japan. Because Japan has a centralized educational system and a national curriculum, division of the content into lessons is done in a similar way for all

teachers of a given grade level and subject. This means that knowledge developed about a specific eighth-grade mathematics lesson or sequence of lessons, for example, is highly sharable with teachers all over Japan who must teach the same lessons. Reports published by lesson-study groups describing their work and its consequences have an instant audience among their colleagues throughout Japan. Many such reports, in fact, can be purchased in neighborhood bookstores.

Lesson Study is Collaborative

By working in groups to improve instruction, teachers are able to develop a shared language for describing and analyzing classroom teaching, and to teach each other about teaching.

The often-described isolation of U.S. teachers has greatly hindered our discussions about teaching and hence our ability to improve it. U.S. teachers rarely have the opportunity to observe other teachers in action and are rarely observed by other teachers. For whatever reason, teaching in the United States is considered a private, not a public, activity. The consequences of this isolation are severe. Teachers might agree in discussion, for example, that "problem solving" should be a central focus of the mathematics classroom. But in practice, different teachers might have completely different understandings of what "problem solving" entails. The term is the same, but the referent of the term is private and varies from person to person.

All of this might sound abstract and academic, but it is not. Several years ago one of us was invited to a school by the principal to observe one of the school's star math teachers. As we walked into her room, we saw that the third-grade children were in groups, and the teacher was working with one of the groups. "Imagine," said the teacher, "that eight kitten ears were visible over the top of a fence, and a whole bunch of

kitten feet were visible below the fence. How many kittens are behind the fence?" Within ten seconds every one of the children's hands shot up. One child, after being called on by the teacher, responded, "Four," to which the teacher responded, "Correct." The process was repeated twelve more times with different problems.

At this point the teacher walked over and said, "Isn't it amazing the kinds of problems these kids are solving?" We were stunned. Why did she call this problem solving? Can a problem that is solvable within ten seconds really be considered a problem? How could she possibly define problem solving with respect to the problem but without reference to the students' level of knowledge and skill relevant to the problem? Clearly, we had no shared understanding of what problem solving is all about.

Another important benefit of the collaborative nature of lesson study is that it provides a benchmarking process that teachers can use to gauge their own skills. Collaboration includes continuing interactions about effective teaching methods plus observations of one another's classrooms. These activities help teachers reflect on their own practice and identify things that can be improved. As researcher Catherine Lewis found, teacher collaboration can create a profound motivation to improve. A young teacher she interviewed recalled that after watching a lesson by her fellow first-grade teacher, she burst into tears: "I felt so sorry for my own students. I thought their lives would have been so much better if they'd been in the other teacher's class."

At the same time, the collaborative nature of lesson study balances the self-critiquing of individual teachers with the idea that improved teaching is a joint process, not the province or responsibility of any individual. This idea is embodied in the fact that when Japanese teachers plan a lesson collaboratively, they treat the result as a joint product whose ownership is shared by all in the group. When one teacher teaches the lesson and the others observe, problems that emerge are generally attributed to the lesson as designed by the

group, not to the teacher who implemented the lesson. It thus becomes possible for teachers to be critical without offending their colleague. The discussion can focus more pointedly and deeply on the merits and deficiencies of the lesson, and on the process of revising and improving it. This leads us to our final point.

Teachers Who Participate in Lesson Study See Themselves as Contributing to the Development of Knowledge About Teaching as Well as to Their Own Professional Development

Teachers in Japan see themselves as developing the profession as well as themselves. Few U.S. teachers would feel this way. When U.S. teachers go to workshops and training seminars, they go to learn about a new activity or technique; most wouldn't conceive it possible that they might be making a contribution to the knowledge base of the teaching profession. The reason they feel this way is that, given our current system, they are right—they are not making such a contribution. In the U.S. system, it is researchers who are supposed to discover and recommend new teaching practices. Teachers are supposed to implement these practices in their classrooms, but alas, they usually fail to do so, much to the chagrin and disappointment of the educational research community. This predictably sets the stage for talk of how the teaching profession attracts a less-than-able subset of the U.S. workforce, and how, apparently, U.S. teachers are just not smart enough to do what researchers tell them to do.

But there is another possibility: Perhaps what teachers are told by researchers to do makes little sense in the context of an actual classroom. Researchers might be very smart. But they do not have access to the same information that teachers have as they confront real students in the context of real lessons with real learning goals. For researchers to improve teaching, they must guess at many of the things that are readily perceivable by teachers. And they probably guess wrong a good deal of the time.

Japan has succeeded in developing a system that not only develops teachers but also develops knowledge about teaching that is relevant to classrooms and sharable among the members of the teaching profession. Not only do lesson-study groups operate in individual schools, but the process of designing and critiquing research lessons is an integral part of the larger professional activity of both teachers and researchers. Professional conferences include sessions in which participants observe research lessons in local schools and then return to the conference meeting center for panel discussions of the lessons. Although some education conferences in the United States include fields trips to special demonstration schools for a small number of interested participants, the kind of broad-based intensive examination of individual lessons common in Japan is almost unknown in this country.

Through the process of improving lessons and sharing with colleagues the knowledge they acquire, something remarkable happens to teachers: They begin viewing themselves as true professionals. They see themselves as contributing to the knowledge base that defines the profession. And they see this as an integral part of what it means to be a teacher. As one Japanese teacher said, when asked why she invests so much effort in trying to improve lessons, "Why do we do research lessons? I don't think there are any laws. But if we didn't do research lessons, we wouldn't be teachers."

Conclusions

Through the gradual improvement of individual lessons, and through the knowledge developed and shared during this process, the Japanese system enables the steady improvement of teachers and teaching. In Japan, educators can look back over the past fifty years and believe that teaching has improved. In the United States, we cannot do this. We can see fashions and trends, ups and downs. But we cannot see the kind of gradual improvement that marks true professions.

What kind of education would be best for teachers in America? Most of the schools of education concentrate on pedagogical training that is rooted in shallow and intellectually suspect research. Ed school students learn slogans and inflated jargon, but their courses do very little to give them the broad and deep minds that teachers should possess. In this essay, written for Educating Teachers: The Best Minds Speak Out*, Professor Edwin Delattre contends that teacher education ought to concentrate on ensuring that teachers are themselves highly educated individuals with a love of learning.*

Better Teacher Preparation

By Edwin J. Delattre

In September 1865, during a scientific expedition to the Amazon with the great naturalist Louis Agassiz, William James wrote to his father, "No one sees farther into a generalization than his own knowledge of details extends...."[1] Poorly educated and ideologically oriented education school faculty members have ruined much of teacher preparation by ignorance of or disdain for this fundamental epistemological truth.

Many schools of education give prospective teachers—many of them well-intentioned and eager to do children good, but intellectually inexperienced and therefore gullible—a diet consisting mainly of generalizations in textbooks, journals, research studies, and advocacy and polemical literature, beginning with such vacuous phrases as "Research shows...." It is not difficult to find "research studies" that "show" whatever the professor, or the reader, happens to favor.

Conflicts of interest, pursuit of funding, and incompetence skew a substantial portion of education research. Currently, controversy rages over whether "research shows" that establishing state licensure (certification) of teachers provides public school students with better teachers. Hundreds of "studies" have been conducted, entire careers are at stake, education school and state bureaucratic budgets are on the line. Trustworthy research could be designed, with clear criteria for good teaching and lucid standards for student achievement in class and on homework and examination assignments, and conducted with precision appropriate to the topic.

But available "research" is not so designed and conducted. Definitions are vague, criteria are simplistic or beside the point, and logical fallacies produce unwarranted conclusions. Some of the research is circular—and abets practices that are harmful to the public interest: Many education schools prepare teachers to implement fashionable innovations in classrooms, even though the innovations are demonstrably ineffective. Education journals and book companies publish "research" on the innovations without regard for the standards of scholarly and scientific review and criticism that govern refereed publications in the liberal arts and the natural sciences. State agencies agreeably base licensure on teacher candidates' ability to show that they know how to use those innovations.

A classic and persistent case is that of professors who debunk both phonics and direct instruction, and then tell prospective teachers to rely entirely on "whole language" practices for teaching children to read. These practices simply do not work. They do, however, indulge the destructive ideology that children left to their own devices, children who never acquire any sense of error or failure, will become "creative" and enjoy "high self-esteem." In this, and countless other instances, there are education schools that lead, education journals and book publishers that cooperate, and state agencies that design licensure to fit.

Despite the proliferation of "research" that cannot be trusted, state departments of education routinely identify knowledge and application of "current research" as an essential mark of the good teacher. It is impossible, therefore, to design a trustworthy curriculum for prospective teachers from education research and state licensure "standards."

There are popular slogans in education that feature a vocabulary of idioms dripping with contempt for knowledge of details: dismissal of "rote memorization"; ridicule of the study of "dead facts"; rejection of "lecture" and "direct instruction" as mere instruments of "student passivity"; advocacy of "student-centered" rather than "teacher-centered" classrooms and educational policies. Reliance on such slogans without regard for the distinctions between sound and unsound memorization exercises, factual knowledge and trivial pursuits, good and bad lectures, direct instruction and the elimination of teacher discretion, and listening and hearing thwarts the learning of serious academic subject matter and blunts the formation of the intellectual and moral capacities of the exemplary teacher.

The language of fashionable generalizations in education further militates against attention to details by reducing nouns to adjectives and substituting jargon that has no real meaning: for teaching, "the teaching process"; for learning, "the learning process" and "the learning experience"; for evaluation, "the evaluation process" and "the authentic assessment process"; for writing, "the writing process"; for learning to type, "the word processing process"; for suffering heartache and grief, "the grieving process"; for imagination, "the creative process"; for logic and reasoning, "the critical thinking process"; for conversation, dialogue, correspondence, listening, self-expression, "the communication process." Prospective teachers usually imitate the jargon of their professors, with the result that they never learn the details of teaching, learning, writing,

imagining, musing, reflecting, conversing, listening, suffering, and so forth, which much of the time are not—and could not possibly be—sufficiently systematic to be called processes at all.

Without better examples of speaking and writing to imitate, prospective teachers do not come to love language. They do not become lucid, let alone eloquent, speakers and writers and judges of writing; and so they do not become qualified to design the syllabi for school courses or to choose the materials to include in a curriculum.

Envisioning better preparation for prospective teachers is not difficult: teach them what they need to know to be invulnerable to all this babble. Don't waste their time on dumbed-down textbooks, inaccurate and imprecise textbook summaries of original works, and sloppy "research" that rests on ambiguous definitions, inadequate samples, imprecise data, dubious interpretations of supposed evidence, and illogical inferences. Design the curriculum so that prospective teachers and administrators learn to read, write about, and discuss real books and intellectually reliable textbooks; learn to conduct, recreate, and explain scientific experiments; learn to construct and analyze mathematical and logical proofs; learn to study and translate foreign languages; learn to memorize poetry and elegant prose, so as to understand that not all memorization is rote; learn to use competently all the resources of libraries; learn to "read" and describe works of art in museum exhibitions and other collections; and learn to observe with discernment both outstanding and deficient teaching in schools and preschools. Give students in schools of education reading and writing assignments by which they can become sufficiently able learners to benefit from the study of learning itself and thus begin to form competence in their practice assignments as schoolteachers. Appoint as faculty members in schools of education only people who are qualified as scholars, scientists, mathematicians, artists, writers, and teachers to instruct and advise students in such a demanding program of study.

Design curriculum and instruction on the principle that anything worthy of inclusion is worth studying *in detail*—sufficient detail for the student to see far enough into any generalization to perceive six things: whether corrupt jargon makes the generalization either unintelligible or so vague or ambiguous as to be useless; whether, if the generalization is intelligible, it is plausible; the means by which the generalization's truth can be tested and confirmed, challenged or refuted; the limits to his or her own understanding; whether the generalization, or the subject of it, is important enough to merit further inquiry; and, if so, the directions that further study could profitably take—including what to read next. Narrow the curriculum so as to escape superficiality, and strip it of courses devoted to political advocacy.

Every student beginning to prepare to become a teacher should study basic deductive and inductive logic, probability theory, reasoning by analogy, and formal and informal fallacies in argumentation. In learning to define and identify fallacies of inconsistency, fallacies of question begging and insufficient options, fallacies of equivocation and amphiboly and ambiguity, and a comprehensive range of fallacies of irrelevance, students should study the distinctions between truth and validity, knowledge and opinion, logical argumentation and illogical reasoning, dialogue and debate.

Simultaneously, the prospective teacher should study grammar, expository writing, and public speaking while learning the substantive and rhetorical elements of exemplary lectures, addresses, essays, and memorable conversations, interviews, and dialogues. Lectures, addresses, and essays might be drawn from *The Columbian Orator: containing A Variety of Original and Selected Pieces together with Rules Calculated to Improve Youth and Others in the Ornamental and Useful Art of Eloquence*, first edited for publication by Caleb Bingham in 1797 and edited for publication by Val J. Halamandaris with many new speeches exactly two hundred years later; William James's *Talks to Teachers* and his dedication address for the unveiling of the Robert

Gould Shaw Memorial; selected letters by Flannery O'Connor and Helen Keller, plus Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*; John Silber's "The Gods of the Copybook Headings"; Jacques Barzun's *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning* or *The Culture We Deserve*, and "Plain Words: The War on Jargon and Cliches"; C.S. Lewis's "Why I Am Not A Pacifist" and "Men Without Chests"; George Steiner's "The Uncommon Reader" and "After the Book"; Martin Gardner's "Truth: Why I Am Not A Pragmatist"; Ralph Ellison's "The Shadow and the Act"; Mary Midgley's "Fates, Causes, and Free Will"; Jeanne Chall's "Restoring Dignity and Self-Worth to the Teacher"; William Arrowsmith's "The Future of Teaching"; Roger Scruton's "On Humane Education"; Robert Louis Stevenson's "*Virginibus Puerisque*"; Frederick Douglass's "The Education of Frederick Douglass"; Abraham Lincoln's "Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions" delivered in Jacksonville, Illinois, on February 11, 1859; and selected *Federalist Papers* read in conjunction with study of the Founding Documents of the United States and selections from Joseph Story's 1840 text (republished in 1986) written for students in their mid-teens, *A Familiar Exposition of the Constitution of the United States*.

Interviews, conversations, and dialogues might include Ellison's "That Same Pain, That Same Pleasure, *An Interview*"; and Plato's *Meno*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. These might be supplemented by poems such as Robert Browning's "Development" and James Dickey's "The Bee." Prospective teachers should write essays and dialogues and prepare and deliver lectures while studying writing and public speaking. Every education student without exception should read—should study in detail, with the diligence required for remembering in detail—such books as Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools* (either the 1953 or 1985 edition); John Passmore's *The Philosophy of Teaching*; Roger Shattuck's *The Forbidden Experiment*; and the lectures that comprise Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. When studying Passmore and Aristotle, who have much to say about how children learn and what is worth learning, prospective teachers—no matter the grade levels or subjects they expect to teach—should also study chil-

dren's fables, stories, and films as diverse as Aesop's *Fables*, C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, and Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

All of these writings, except a few of the children's fables, demand of the reader extended concentration, patience, and thought. None of them can be read competently without the capacity to analyze and evaluate reasoning—inferences drawn from evidence gathered. A prospective teacher who can read, write, speak, and listen with comprehension at this level is not likely ever again to be satisfied with indefensible generalizations that ignore details in or about education, sloppy thinking, desultory speaking and writing, repetitive and crude jargon and idiom, teaching methods that ignore or belie personal intellectual experience and achievement, or the intellectually bankrupt and vacuous textbooks in history, civics, "social studies" and other fields to which students in America are routinely subjected.

In such a curriculum, prospective teachers will learn from Passmore, if they do not figure out for themselves, that every teacher is trying to teach something to someone and that all teaching is therefore necessarily a triadic relation that embraces teacher, student, and subject matter.[2] Once prospective teachers understand this, they will waste no time on education writings that commit the fallacy of insufficient options in insisting that education must be either "student-centered" or "teacher-centered." These prospective teachers will learn what good lectures, conversations, and dialogues require, so they will not be susceptible to the educationist prejudice that listening intently to a lecture or a conversation is "passive." They will gain intellectual and moral perspective by the study of history, and thus learn the folly of replacing history with social studies classes limited to current events. They will see for themselves what C.S. Lewis also observed: "A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village; the scholar has

lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age."[3]

These prospective teachers will acquire immunity from at least some of the fashions and ways of thinking that poison teacher preparation, because they will experience for themselves the epiphany of serious reading. They will therefore prize intellectual self-reliance and solitude and resist the fashion that schools should focus overwhelmingly on "cooperative learning" and team projects that sometimes undercut educational opportunity by minimizing individual study and accountability.

Obviously, materials other than those I have suggested can be used effectively in teacher preparation, provided they have comparable intellectual power and similarly straightforward as well as subtle and nuanced application to education in general and to teaching and learning in particular. In the Boston University School of Education, students have the opportunity to study with highly qualified faculty members some of the readings I have emphasized above, and other readings that are equally deserving of the investment of student and faculty time and effort.

Not all prospective or practicing teachers in schools, and not all higher education faculty members in education and other professional fields, are capable of this level of work. A curriculum of this nature can therefore serve as an excellent guide to the elevation of admissions and graduation standards for schools of education and other teacher preparation programs, as well as a guide to the appointment, reappointment, and tenure of school of education faculty members. This high level of expectation applies irrespective of faculty members' specific fields within education—early childhood, elementary, middle school, secondary, or higher education; reading and literacy instruction; teaching of English as a second language; special education; school

counseling; academic and scientific subjects and mathematics; educational and cultural foundations, history and philosophy of education; educational media and technology; health and physical education; school and higher education administration. The program of study specific to each specialization in education should resemble in quality and levels of expectation the studies for all students I have described.

Faculty members who can design and bring to life such a curriculum should be teaching every prospective teacher in America. Only such faculty are fully qualified to decide responsibly which literature and research studies to include in preparing teachers to contend with the difficulties of classroom management, prevention of and response to violence among students, and kindred facts of life that face practicing teachers and administrators. Far less able faculty members now fill education school curricula with pedagogically indefensible "teaching strategies," morally indefensible conflict resolution and violence prevention programs, and intellectually indefensible and diversionary special interest agendas and priorities.

Can education schools and teacher preparation programs in general be transformed along the lines I have described? No. Resistance is too great, faculty vested interests too powerful, alliances with publishers and unions and state and federal agencies and funding sources too firmly settled. Not enough altogether qualified people exist to staff fully the 1,300 schools of education in the United States. Can teacher preparation be rescued by requiring an undergraduate liberal arts degree for every certified teacher? Probably not. Intellectual conditions in many liberal arts colleges and university colleges of arts and sciences are little or no better than in juxtaposed schools of education, and many faculty in arts and sciences programs are not good enough teachers to prepare or serve as exemplars for other teachers. We may be unable as a nation to attract enough sufficiently talented and disciplined people to teaching and school administration, even with alternative certification programs, to staff every school entirely with qualified personnel.

Still, with ample pressure for better curricula and instruction, and for alternative routes to teacher certification, teacher preparation in general can be made a great deal better than it is now. Pressure from whom? From parents. From hard-working students who expect greater depth of study than their teachers and professors currently offer them. From the best faculty members in schools of education and arts and sciences colleges and in preschools and schools. From courageous administrators at all levels with authority in personnel and curriculum decisions who are intellectual leaders and not mere functionaries. From intelligent and well-educated university alumni who understand the needs of schools and their students. From school committees that do not panic over teacher shortages and will not hire incompetents. From wise and informed college and university trustees who are willing to risk the budgetary consequences of raising admissions and graduation standards in schools of education. From foundation officials who know what they are doing. From all of us whose knowledge of the details of teacher preparation and the details of bad education policies and practices extends far enough to make us implacable.

1. *The Letters of William James, edited by his son Henry James* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), p. 65.
2. See John Passmore, *The Philosophy of Teaching* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1980), pp. 22-24.
3. C.S. Lewis, "Learning in War-Time," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001), pp. 58, 59.

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-467-6787; 1-888-ALUMNI-8
Facsimile: 202-467-6784
Email: info@goacta.org
Website: www.goacta.org