



*This photograph of a Washington, D.C., elementary school class was taken by Francis B. Johnston, circa 1899. Between the 1899 and 1979 school years, U.S. public school enrollment grew from 15.5 million to 41.6 million.*

# Teaching in America

Since last spring, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education decried the "rising tide of mediocrity" in America's schools, a succession of blue-ribbon panels has joined in the chorus of condemnation and the search for effective reforms. Americans are again re-evaluating their expensive system of public education.

The chief problem, a by-product of America's turbulent 1960s, lies in the high school classroom. As researchers note, many, perhaps most, teachers now make a tacit deal with their restless students: "If you keep quiet, I won't make you work too hard."

The cumulative effects have been dramatic: One-third of 17-year-olds do no homework; 10 to 15 percent of high school graduates are functionally illiterate; one-fourth of *college* math courses are remedial; one-fourth of the Navy's recruits cannot read well enough to understand simple printed safety rules.

Our contributors variously summarize the latest research; Denis Doyle, looking to the future, sees a rare opportunity to upgrade teaching in the nation's schools.

## WANTING IT ALL

*by Patricia Albjerg Graham*

The central quandary facing American teachers today is the lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the schools in which they work, the nature of the larger educational system of which those schools are but a part, and the relationship between the two. If education is more than mere schooling—and it is—then we should have been asking ourselves which educational activities truly belong outside the classroom door. Yet, increasingly during this century, and particularly in the years since World War II, we seem to have had as much trouble raising that question as we have had answering it.

The New England Puritans of the 17th century had no such problem. The purpose of education, they believed, was to prepare children to lead a moral and virtuous life; that task was shared, as a matter of course, among church, family, the larger

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community, and, to a lesser degree, the schools. Because the role of schools was limited, the performance of teachers was a matter of limited concern.

Three centuries later, with formal schooling available to all and the responsibilities of each school more diverse, the old-fashioned certainties are not so obvious. Americans no longer agree on what a proper education (in a larger sense) consists of, or on what its ends should be, or on what proportion of those ends is best accomplished by the school (rather than by parents, neighbors, clergymen, and so on). Teachers, as a result, have been left adrift. They do not know whether their responsibilities are primarily cognitive or custodial or social, whether their aim is to produce good students or good citizens or both. They do not know where to focus their attention. Have they, for example, a special obligation to the bottom quartile of the class? Or to the top quartile? Or, heaven forbid, are teachers supposed to help every pupil do the best he or she can, patiently leading each along until achievement lives up to potential?

### High School for Everybody

Teachers cannot answer such questions, let alone thornier ones, by themselves, and the lack of guidance from politicians, parents, and school boards makes harder a job that is already hard enough. There are reasons why that guidance has rarely been forthcoming, reasons why the messages to teachers about what they should be doing have been garbled. The fact is that the texture of life in the United States, of life as each of us lives it both in public and in private, has changed profoundly during the past four decades. Teachers were not the chief agents of social change. But they, perhaps more than any other professional group, have had to cope with the consequences.

The first of the several trends that complicated the task of teaching, and also made it more important, was the advent of mass education, mass secondary education in particular. In

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1890, only seven percent of American youths between 14 and 17 were enrolled in school. High school, the National Education Association then observed, was reserved for the few "who show themselves able to profit by an education prolonged to the eighteenth year, and whose parents are able to support them while they remain so long at school." But an industrializing America required more of its workers. In 1945, the proportion of the 14–17 age group enrolled in high school had grown to 69 percent. By 1980, the figure was 93 percent—although only 72 percent graduated. Had all who graduated been able to perform at the 12th-grade level academically, we would have had much to be proud of. Unfortunately, that was not the case, although the certification provided by a high school diploma suggested that it was.

### Good-bye to Algebra

The effect of mass education has not been confined to the academic side of schooling. As more and more children spent more and more time in the classroom, schools assumed growing responsibility for child-rearing. Between 1950 and 1980, the proportion of all families headed by a single parent (usually the mother) grew from 7.4 to 19.5 percent. Even in two-parent families, the mother, who in times past had often served as tutor, counselor, and conscience, was spending less and less time at home. By 1982, 66 percent of mothers with school-aged children held full- or part-time jobs (versus 35 percent in 1951). This second basic trend—the post-1950s restructuring of family and job market—gave the schools a set of new burdens with which teachers had to contend.

In response, educators developed a whole new array of subjects, marginally academic or not academic at all. Courses on alcohol and drug abuse, sexual conduct, and "consumer affairs" were added to the classroom menu. Between the mid-1960s and late 1970s, the proportion of graduating high school seniors who had received academic credit for driver education grew from less than one percent to 59 percent; for courses on "marriage and adult living," the figure rose from one to 16 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion of graduating seniors who had passed chemistry dropped from 51 to 45 percent, and the number who had completed intermediate algebra and introductory Spanish also declined.

Writing in *Daedalus* in 1981, David K. Cohen and Barbara Neufeld argued that the proliferation of curricular offerings had transformed high schools, in particular, into "a sort of state-

supported social agency for adolescents at loose ends.”

While all of this was going on, a third factor expanded the schools' social role. Across the country, communities, like families, were becoming less cohesive. The U.S. economy, increasingly urban and corporate, demanded a mobile work force. The face of residential America changed accordingly. Vast housing developments, served by shopping malls, sprang up in the suburbs, providing shelter for transient families until the next job transfer took them someplace else.

### **TV As Nanny**

Suburbia had its positive side. More middle-class and blue-collar families enjoyed a convenient compromise between urban amenities and rural elbow room. The increasing disorder and crime of the cities was left behind. But gone now was the circle of lifelong neighbors who, in earlier times, had extended beyond the home the family's protection and guidance of children. Mothers could no longer assume that their youngsters were always under watchful eyes. Playmates, and their parents, came and went; housing turnover was high.

Amid the commotion, the school stood out as a pillar of relative stability. After-school sports moved from the street or the corner playground to the high school gym, which also served as the site for weekend dances. Teachers found themselves supervising elections for Homecoming Queen and scheduling exams around pep rallies.

Not long after the schools began doubling as social centers, they became social laboratories as well. President Lyndon Johnson, a former teacher, decided early in his administration that schools could help lead the nation toward the Great Society. “Onto my desk each day come the problems of 190 million men and women,” he told a group of visiting educators in 1964. “When we consider these problems, when we study them, when we analyze them, when we evaluate what can be done, the answer almost always comes down to one word: education.”

Johnson waged his wars on poverty and racial discrimination largely in the classroom. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided money to upgrade libraries, buy new textbooks, and give special instruction to children from low-income families. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 reinforced the Supreme Court's 1954 ban on segregation in schools, requiring equal access to facilities involved in federally funded programs. Desegregation was long overdue. But rapid court-ordered shifts in enrollment focused the attention of many schools, North and

*During the 1982–83 school year, New York City officials recorded 564 assaults on teachers on public school grounds.*



South, on nonacademic matters.

Finally, even as schoolfolk were assuming obligations jettisoned or imposed by home and community, they faced stiff competition from a young upstart—the electronic media. The precocious growth of television since midcentury represents the last of the major forces that have heightened the uncertainty of the teaching profession.

Parents may have wanted schools to “do more,” but they also seemed quite ready to let television play the role of nanny and friendly neighbor to their kids. The average child between the ages of six and 11 watched almost 29 hours of television per week in 1980, compared with 21 hours per week in 1966 and virtually none in 1950 (when only nine percent of American homes had TV sets). Teachers were caught in the middle, struggling for their pupils’ attention while being blamed for failure by parents who were often happy to let Donna Reed do the baby-sitting at home. Television has competed not only for students’ time, but for their psyches as well. Its messages, though incalculable in their effects, do not seem designed to shore up traditional values. An eight-year-old can learn many things from the average situation comedy. The virtues of hard work and self-discipline are not likely to be among them.

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The five major trends just cited, from mass education to mass communication, all affected the complex balance of institutional responsibility for education. And it may be that as the schools' duties increased, their effectiveness diminished. Certainly, the rising tide of criticism of teachers and their schools had coincided with an ever-expanding definition of what formal education should amount to. Historically, the two have gone hand in hand.

As Lawrence Cremin has pointed out, American schools in the early decades of the century were already on the way to becoming "legatee institutions," inheriting new obligations. In the process, teachers increasingly came under attack. The fact that they had been saddled with new responsibilities did not spare them from criticism. "Seldom is the distance between what a profession thinks it is doing and what it is actually doing so great as in the case of teachers," wrote an editorialist in the *Social Frontier* in 1935. Teachers were variously deemed too inexperienced, too stupid, too old, too boring, too strict, too lax. Some of them undoubtedly were.

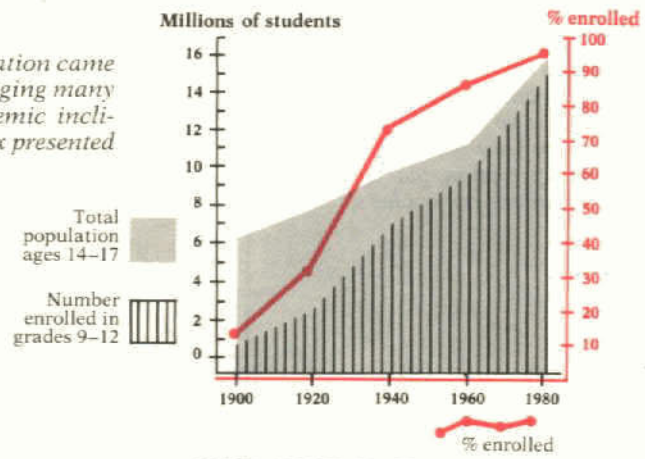
But, then as now, narrow criticisms often missed the more fundamental question, the question of function and purpose. How much, realistically, can we ask schools to do?

### Soul-Searching

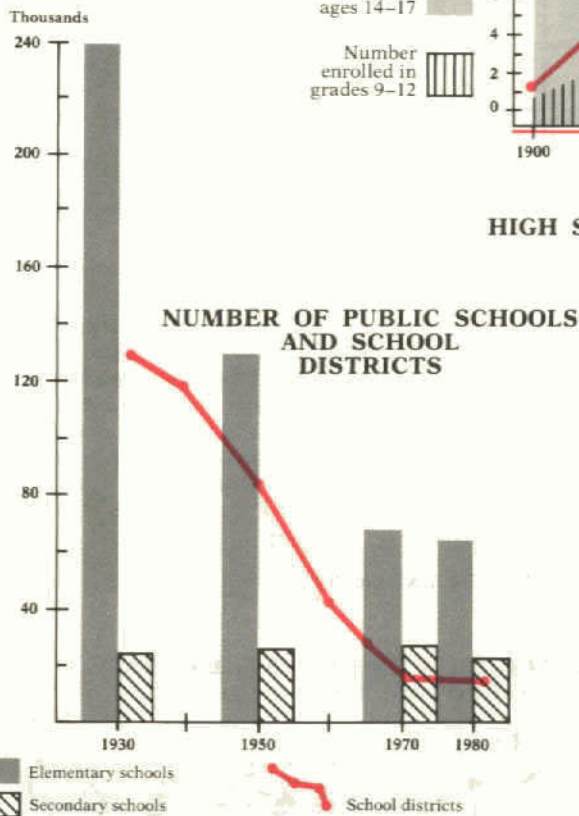
Public dissatisfaction with the public schools began to mount during the early 1950s as articulate critics, mainly from outside of education, took aim at professional educators and fired with devastating results. Teachers, they said, were neglecting the basics. They spent too much time on nonacademic subjects. They relaxed standards to enliven traditional courses. Style had won out over substance. "The issue is drawn between those who believe that good teaching should be directed to sound intellectual ends, and those who are content to dethrone intellectual values and cultivate the techniques of teaching for their own sake, in an intellectual and cultural vacuum." So wrote Arthur Bestor, whose *Educational Wastelands* (1953) and *The Restoration of Learning* (1955) ushered in a flurry of "back-to-basics" literature.

In 1957, the Soviet Union unwittingly galvanized American concern over elementary and high school academic programs. By launching Sputnik, the world's first space satellite, the Russians spread the soul-searching from the intellectuals to the people. Educational reform now had political momentum. A \$1.1-billion National Defense Education Act was passed by Con-

From 1900 to 1960, mass education came to the high schools (right), bringing many students with no strong academic inclination. For teachers, this influx presented a pedagogical challenge . . .

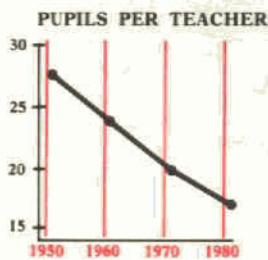


**HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**

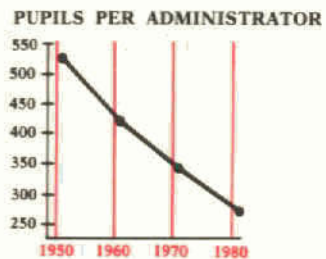


For administrators, the challenge was bureaucratic. Districts, particularly rural ones, consolidated schools and merged with other districts (left) . . .

Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

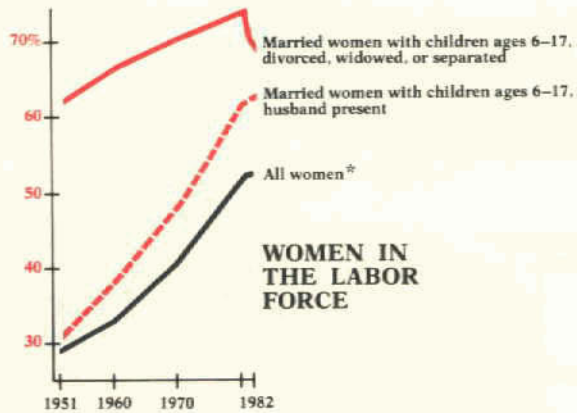


But efficiency has not increased, at least not in terms of the number of teachers and administrators required to educate a student. During the 1982-83 school year, \$117.6 billion was spent on public education.

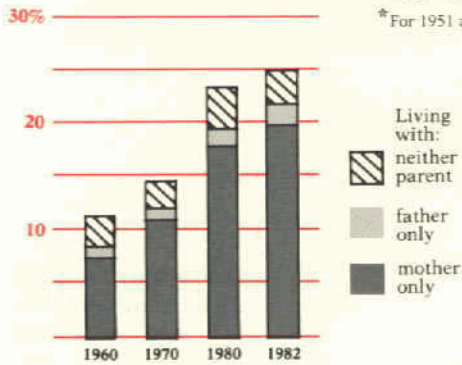




The growing percentage of women in the labor force (right) and rising family break-up rates (below) leave youths with less home supervision, placing new burdens on teachers.



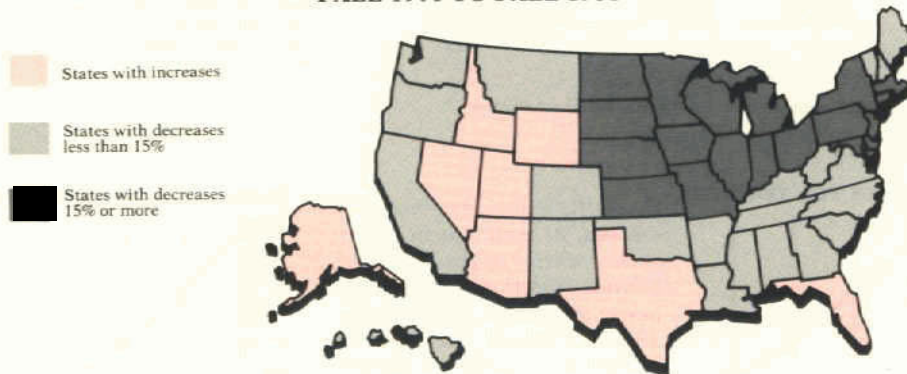
\* For 1951 and 1960, includes only women who are or have been married.



Migration from the Northeast to the South and West (as reflected below) has created temporary teacher shortages in some Sunbelt cities. School districts in Texas and California have placed ads for teachers in Boston and New York newspapers.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF CHILDREN UNDER 18

CHANGES IN PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, BY STATE: FALL 1971 TO FALL 1981



Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

gress in 1958, providing money to beef up math, science, and foreign language instruction (among other things). "We are engaged in a grim duel" for technological supremacy, warned Admiral Hyman G. Rickover.

The popular critique of public education soon evolved into an attack on teachers—and on teachers' colleges, the old normal schools. *The Education of American Teachers* (1963), by James B. Conant, former president of Harvard, and the vitriolic (and generally accurate) *The Miseducation of American Teachers* (1963), by James D. Koerner, president of the Council for Basic Education, set the tone. The theme permeating the protest literature was that teachers were incompetent, their incompetence reinforced by the professional educators they encountered in schools of education. As a result, American children were not learning as much or as well as they ought to be. Koerner's solution: "The remaining teachers' colleges of the United States should be shut down."

### Crop-Dusting

In practice, efforts at reform focused, first, on placing public education in the hands of teachers trained in subject-matter disciplines, not in the ever-changing science of pedagogy; and, second, on enticing a new breed into teaching. The latter effort was aided by administrators at Harvard, Chicago, Stanford, and other universities, who set up Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) programs. Their goal was to channel a more academically advanced cadre of recruits, drawn from prestigious liberal arts institutions, notably eastern women's colleges, into the elementary and high school classroom.

The plan worked—for a few years. But the Radcliffe, Vassar, and Smith graduates who received their master's degrees soon found that, while teacher training had been modified, teaching conditions had not. For most MAT recipients, the classroom proved to be simply the first step on a road to other careers,—in business, philanthropy, law, or homemaking. Some became administrators, in schools or in other education-related organizations. Harvard closed its MAT program in 1973.

One alternative to reforming the education profession—an alternative that was attractive to many—was turning over the job to others better equipped to educate the young. Some believed that the task was simply a matter of providing a better, more rigorous curriculum, and the National Science Foundation spent \$117 million between 1954 and 1975 on curriculum development, most of it organized by physicists, chemists, biol-

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ogists, and other scientists at major universities. There was even some money to retrain teachers so they could understand the new material.

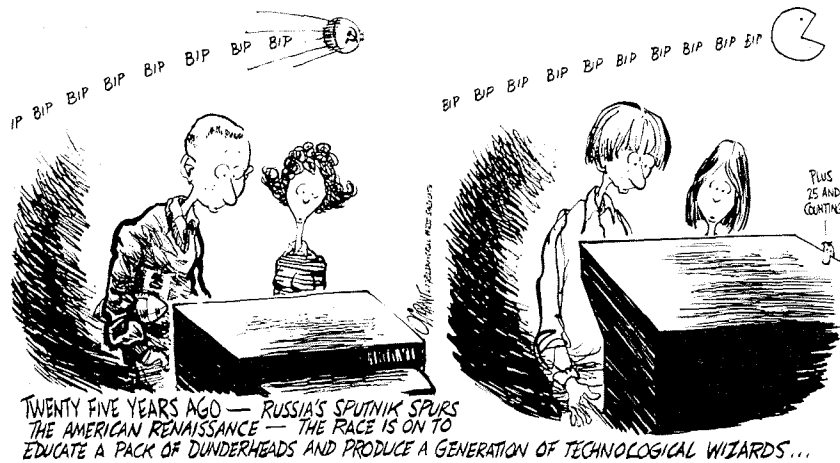
Meanwhile, private enterprise entered the arena with the "teacher-proof" curriculum, the assumption being that children would learn best if someone other than the teacher on the spot figured out just how the child should study the lesson. Intervention by the instructor was thought to be damaging—and, thanks to technology, possibly obsolete. In the Midwest during the 1950s, a four-engine airplane circled over six states, beaming prepackaged lessons onto closed-circuit television screens. In 1961, PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations)—the first of many computerized teaching systems—made its debut at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois.

Yet despite attempts at educational "crop-dusting," despite the plethora of audio-visual equipment acquired by schools (and largely locked away in school storerooms), despite the transformation of school libraries (at least in name) into media centers, the great technological revolution in education failed to occur during the 1960s and '70s. To most teachers, Plato remained a Greek of distant memory.

### O, Relevance

What is most striking about the educational climate of the past 35 years is the remarkable immunity that school people—instructors and administrators alike—felt from the criticism swirling about them, an immunity due partly to the demographic anomaly of the 1950s and '60s. With Baby-Boom enrollments rising, educators were a relatively scarce commodity. Even bad, they were often good enough. At the same time, the country's financial commitment to the schools was growing. The proportion of the gross national product spent on schools (including higher education), which had hovered around three percent from 1929 to 1959, reached 7.5 percent in 1969 and eight percent in 1975. With new schools going up and throngs of new students crowding the classrooms, teachers could afford to ignore the grumbling of the critics.

That immunity from rhetorical attack is one reason why the post-Sputnik emphasis on academic excellence failed to penetrate the schools more deeply than it did. There were other reasons, too. The 1960s brought vigorous criticism by the young of the "establishment" and the older generation. In the minds of students, teachers represented both. For many teachers, maintaining classroom order (and their own sanity) became a full-



*The launching of Sputnik in 1957 prompted politicians and educators to voice renewed concern over the schools, but only six years later the long decline in students' SAT scores began.*

time job. Academic matters took a back seat. Besides, the idea of devoting special attention to budding young scientists and engineers had an elitist ring to it. Elitism was emphatically not on the political agenda of the 1960s. Egalitarianism was. Compensatory education programs such as Head Start arrived on the scene. Teachers and supervisors embarked on a wave of experimentation. "Relevance," "open classrooms," "self-paced instruction," "affective education"—these were the watchwords of the day.

But the late 1970s and early 1980s have brought a reaction. Public discourse on education has reverted to the no-nonsense tone of the Sputnik era. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, whose widely read report was issued last year, concluded that Americans have, "in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament." Fingers are being pointed once again at teachers.

There are, however, crucial differences between the debate of 1957 and that being waged today. Now the external threat depicted is as much commercial as military—the adversary as likely to be Japan as the Soviet Union. Where post-Sputnik reformers called for cultivation of a competitive scientific and technical elite, reformers now demand *mass* improvement, contending that long-term economic health requires a more

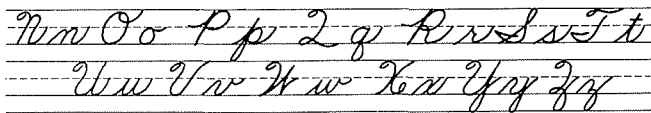
broadly based excellence than winning the space race did.

There is one more vital difference: The days of rising enrollments and ever-greater spending are gone, and gone with them is the teachers' immunity from criticism. The number of annual U.S. births peaked in 1957 at 4.3 million. By 1975, enrollment was declining, schools were shutting down, "tenured" teachers were getting pink slips, and the percentage of GNP devoted to education was beginning to drop.

American teachers today face once more the dilemma they encountered during the late 1950s: The public expects more from the schools than just "book learning" but will accept no commensurate sacrifice of academic excellence.

The conflict between these demands, however, is more glaring now than it was after Sputnik. The intervening decades have been tumultuous. As noted, the family and many communities have become less and less stable. Respect for those in authority—be it teachers, parents, or public officials—has eroded. The electronic age has given birth to a new generation of distractions with names such as "Space Invaders," "Pac Man," and "Zaxxon." But if the problems go beyond the classroom, the solutions must still be found there—that, at least, is the curious bit of popular logic with which teachers must live.

The question for educators today, teachers in particular, is how to turn public dissatisfaction to good use. For one thing, teachers should become involved in the debate over what must be done to improve our schools; they know a great deal about what is feasible and what is not, and they know first-hand how elusive "improvement" will be without a clear statement of what the schools are supposed to achieve. What, precisely, are our goals? Teachers should also recognize that public attention, even if critical, has its value. They need that stimulus to push them to do better what they already do. Above all, they need what they are now getting: the implicit recognition by other Americans that what they do is important.



## THE DEAL

by Gary Sykes

"A year or so before I began facing a classroom on a daily basis, I had the idea that teaching English would be a series of extended Socratic dialogues between me and my students. . . . I would lead forth my eager, responsive . . . idealistic students from the cave of adolescent mental wistfulness into the clear light of Truth upon the verdant and lush fields of literature."

So wrote Gary Cornog in *Don't Smile Until Christmas* (1970). Needless to say, he was mistaken.

Teachers have no monopoly on disappointment. Yet, in few professions does disillusionment come so quickly as in education. Teachers enter America's schools with uncommonly high ideals, and there, since the early 1960s, they have encountered an uncommonly harsh social reality.

Some teachers, undaunted by student apathy and disorder, merely redouble their efforts. Others, perhaps most these days, make certain adjustments. If they do not quit altogether, they slide away from the lofty goals that first drew them into teaching. They and their supervisors do not "fight the problem." Rather, in exchange for peace in the classroom, they settle for less and less from their students—and from themselves.

This widespread tacit accommodation, increasingly obvious to researchers but largely overlooked by outsiders, has helped to bring on the much-deplored "rising tide of mediocrity" in the nation's public schools.

Only by examining the average teacher's experience, from four years of formal education through four decades of school-room labors, can outsiders understand the maladies that afflict teaching, notably at the high school level, in the 1980s.

If there is one generalization that applies to virtually all 142,000 men and women who will enter teaching (in both public and private schools) for the first time this fall, it is that they are well meaning. They have chosen the job not for high pay or prestige (neither of which it now offers), but out of a sincere desire to help the young—to stir minds, to instill eternal values, even to act as surrogate mother, or father, to hundreds of youngsters. Many are driven by fond memories of a "special" teacher—someone who gave them their first solid dose of self-confidence or self-discipline, someone who showed them the beauty of art, literature, or logic.

In a typical group of beginning public school teachers, two-thirds (half of high school teachers and four-fifths of elementary

school teachers) are women. Nine percent are black—although 16 percent of schoolchildren are black.\* Fifteen percent of public school teachers come from farm families, and 39 percent are the daughters or sons of unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled workers. The profession has long provided a “social elevator” for children of blue-collar parents.

Academically, young teachers are an undistinguished lot. The average education major graduates from college with a cumulative grade point average of 2.72, or a B-. In 1976, the American College Testing (ACT) program compared test scores of students in 19 fields of study and found those majoring in education tied for 17th place in mathematics and occupying 14th place in English. Education majors' Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores have fallen faster than those of the average high school student. Even before this long decline began in the early 1960s, teachers were not known as an especially intellectual group. A study conducted during the 1920s and '30s concluded that American teachers, on the whole, “have inferior minds.”

Such perceptions by others burden aspiring teachers at many American colleges—particularly at those “elite” institutions where academic achievement is highly regarded. In *High School* (1983), Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, cites the remarks of an Ivy League student who plans to teach: “We are under tremendous pressure all around to constantly justify our choice of a career. Professors want to know why we are taking this [career] course, and most of the other students think we are crazy.”

The curriculum of the average student majoring in education does not inspire widespread admiration. Many of his courses richly deserve the scorn they receive from classmates in more taxing fields of study. Some lessons convey information better learned on the job—how to put together an attractive bulletin board, how to set up an opaque projector. Others aim

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\*These statistics describe the entire teaching force, but the population of incoming teachers differs little in terms of sex or race from the population of teachers at large. However, the percentage of black teachers—which has remained stable over the past few decades while the proportion of blacks among public school students has grown—may soon begin to decline. The increasing use of competency tests to screen incoming teachers has had a disproportionate impact on minority applicants. In Florida, for example, one-third of black applicants passed a 1982 teacher licensing exam, while 90 percent of white applicants did so.

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*This portrait of a harried schoolteacher at day's end, titled "School Ma'am," was created by a New York City schoolchild more than 40 years ago.*

higher—at techniques of teaching or the structuring of a curriculum. But too often these lessons only belabor the obvious and shroud it in the spun sugar candy of jargon. One manual on teaching in the elementary schools notes: "A unit, or a unit of work, can be defined as a purposeful learning experience focused upon some socially significant understanding that will modify the behavior of the learner and enable him to adjust to a life situation more effectively."

To be sure, some education courses are worth the time. There is a growing body of solid research, for example, on how best to teach reading and writing. But too few professors of education "keep up," and those who provide the new knowledge spend little, if any, time preparing prospective teachers for the classroom. Rare are education programs like the one at Michigan State University, which produces both good research and a good number of teachers.\*

Many education majors will never teach in the public schools. Eighty-five percent will seek such jobs, attracted in part

\*Education courses fall into two categories: "foundations" courses, which cover the legal, social, philosophical, or historical context of education, and "methods" courses. Students aiming for a high school teaching job usually satisfy degree requirements in their specialty—say, history or math—and allot many of their "elective" hours to education courses. Those headed into the elementary schools divide their "major" courses about fifty-fifty between education courses and a broad array of basic courses in math, reading, English, science, and history.



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by the traditional security and long vacations that teaching offers. Only three-fourths of those will be hired. What it takes to be hired depends on many things—whether, for example, the job is sought at one of the nation's 2,134 urban public high schools, one of its 6,200 suburban high schools, or one of its (generally smaller) 9,721 rural high schools. If the district is large and urban, the applicant may have to traverse a bureaucratic maze: an interview with a personnel officer, a battery of tests administered by a consulting firm, and then more interviews—with a principal, a school superintendent, a committee of teachers. At a suburban or rural school, a college transcript, a few written recommendations, and a chat with the principal may suffice.

Whatever the process, the candidate's academic ability is not likely to loom large in it. Most studies indicate that applicants scoring high on standardized exams are no more likely to land a job than are low scorers. And they may be *less* likely. A nationwide study found that those education majors who *did not* find teaching positions in 1976 scored higher on four of five basic skills tests than those who did.

### Waving at Passing Cars

If superior intellect does not help the candidate, then on what basis *are* teachers hired? What counts is the way they dress and talk; their sense of humor and of duty; and dozens of other unquantifiable indicators of how they will handle students, cope with daily chores, and get along with teachers and administrators. Like government bureaucrats and corporate executives, school principals, white or black, Northern or Southern, hire people they "feel good" about; they want employees who will "fit in," who will follow the rules, written or unwritten.

Even so, teaching is not a team endeavor. From his first day, the beginner is on his own.

Standing at the front of the class, concealing a bit of nervousness, he evaluates his young charges. He will likely be struck by their sheer diversity—a diversity not found in the classroom 25 years ago. In a matter of decades, we have desegregated our schools, introduced handicapped children into the classroom, and, in many districts, decided that pregnant teenagers and unwed mothers should stay in school. New immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, and East Asia have poured into the country. Roughly one-quarter of all public school students are members of minority groups. In Mississippi, Texas, and California, more than two-fifths are. Some ethnic politicians, concerned about preserving their "cultural heritage," insist that

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immigrant children be taught in their native language while learning to speak English.\*

The students are diverse in another sense as well—in terms of their eagerness to learn. A sizable number of them seem dedicated to the avoidance of work. Echoing widespread complaints, a seventh-grade teacher in Missouri last year wrote a letter to the *Joplin Globe* reporting that “children now come to school with two . . . ingrained notions: Society owes them something, and hard work plays no role in modern life.” Teachers complain about this attitude not just because “force-feeding” knowledge to restless teenagers is difficult, but also because idle students are likely to distract others who would like to learn (or, at least, would not mind doing so).

For the teacher, the first day in class is crucial. Inevitably, several youths will seek to test his tolerance of disruption. Having measured it, they will push him to the limit routinely. In *Don't Smile Until Christmas*, Wylie Crawford describes a high school class in which he began the semester overlooking the transgressions of a few youths who sat on tables instead of in chairs, and occasionally gazed out the window. Before long, some were sprawled out on tables and others were waving at passing cars. “As far as the students were concerned, the testing period was already over, and they had won the game. I was going to be a pushover. And, since the other students had been watching the events of the first month, my list of offenders got longer as my blood pressure got higher.”

### Imposing Order

In frontier days, new male teachers sometimes faced a *physical* test during the opening weeks of the school year: They had to fight the biggest boy in class to earn respect. Unhappily, today's teachers, male or female, find themselves not much better off: More than 35 percent of them report feeling *unsafe* on the job. And even when the ritual testing of a teacher's mettle is a contest of will and not of might, it is a more demanding encounter than it was 30 years ago. In both cities and suburbs, veteran educators are nearly unanimous in testifying to the erosion over the past several decades of student civility and obedience.

Students are not the only cause of classroom disruption. Loudspeaker announcements, pep rallies and assemblies, bits of administrative paperwork—such chronic interruptions wreck

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\*This insistence on bilingual education is notable among Hispanics. Asian families are more likely to accept—indeed, to insist on—“total immersion” in English. Possibly as a result, Asian immigrants, as a group, make faster economic gains than do their Hispanic counterparts.

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carefully planned lessons. One study found that 12 of the 57 minutes in the average high school classroom "hour" are taken up by administrative routine. As educational consultant Jerry Kaiser noted in his 1981 paper, "Sources of Stress in Teaching," "Teaching itself is not stressful—it's everything that gets in the way of teaching."

By the end of the first week of school, particularly high school, the beginning teacher understands the primary challenge: Impose order in the face of systematic disturbance. Then teach 20, 30, even 40 students—in spite of the fact that many of them do not want to learn.\*

### Striking a Bargain

The natural source of advice on how to perform such feats would seem to be other teachers. Here, however, the neophyte is in for a rude awakening. He rarely has a chance to talk to his colleagues; when "break" period finally comes, he finds that "shop talk" is frowned upon amid the cigarette smoke in the faculty lounge. Teachers cherish their autonomy. Each deals with classroom problems in his own way and prefers not to subject his idiosyncratic methods to discussion or inspection by others.

As time goes on, the newcomer may be lucky enough to find one or more "mentors" who will disclose the tricks of the trade. If so, he can ask them what to do about a 180-pound "boy" who not only hates to work, but ostentatiously refuses to do so; about teenagers who are afraid to display interest in a serious subject lest their peers shun them; about students who sincerely want to learn but simply cannot keep up with the class.

The old pro's answers to questions on such matters may not be inspiring. Particularly in high schools, where adolescent students are formidably strong in will and body, many teachers have resorted to what is widely known as "the deal."

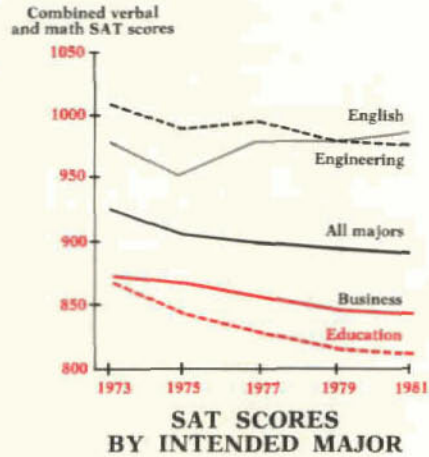
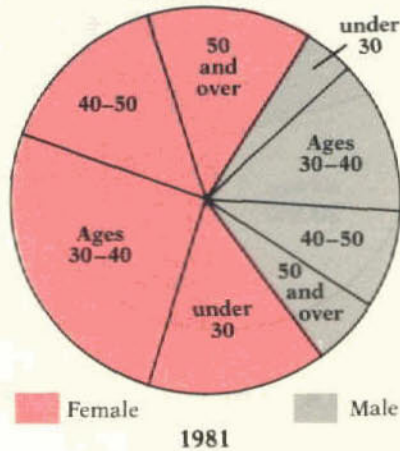
The deal comes in several forms. At one level, it is a bargain struck between a teacher and one, or a few, students with a special penchant for disruption. The essence of the pact: "You don't bother me, and I won't bother you. You can do only token work. You can spend the hour daydreaming. But do so quietly. So long as you stifle your heartfelt desire to spread disorder, I will give you a passing grade."

Sometimes the deal is struck with an entire class. Consider this first-hand account, presented in Linda M. McNeil's 1982

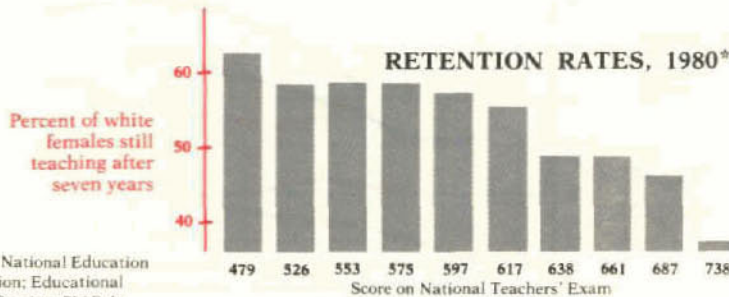
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\*Research on the effect of class size on learning has yielded differing conclusions. Administrators tend to cite studies showing little or no effect. Teachers tend to cite studies showing that student achievement drops as class size grows—although the effect becomes marginal once class size exceeds 30.

**WHO THE TEACHERS ARE**  
By sex and age



Enrollment declines have reduced demand for teachers. Only 19 percent of teachers are under 30 (above left), down from 34 percent in 1966. Partly in response, the number of prospective teachers has dropped. So have their SAT scores—even faster than the national average (above right).

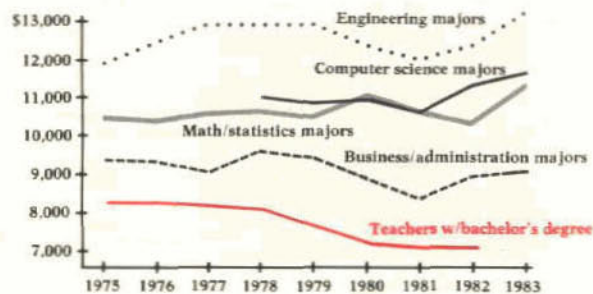


Source: National Education Association; Educational Testing Service; *Phi Delta Kappan*, Oct. 1981.

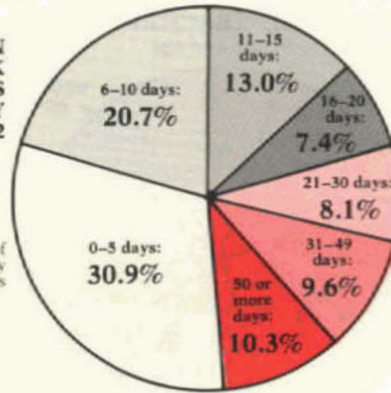
\*From a study of teachers in North Carolina

The most academically able teachers are least likely to continue teaching (above). One reason: salaries are low and have fallen in real terms (right).

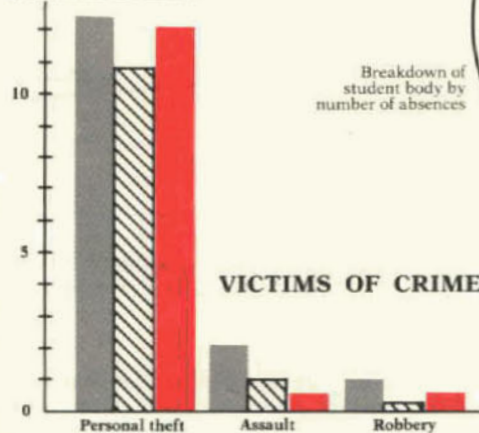
**STARTING SALARIES FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES, IN 1975 DOLLARS**



**TRUANCY IN NEW YORK HIGH SCHOOLS DURING A 90-DAY SEMESTER, 1982**

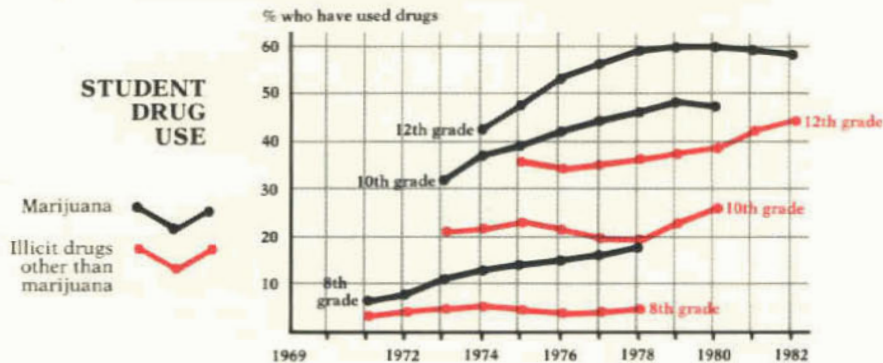


% victimized in a month

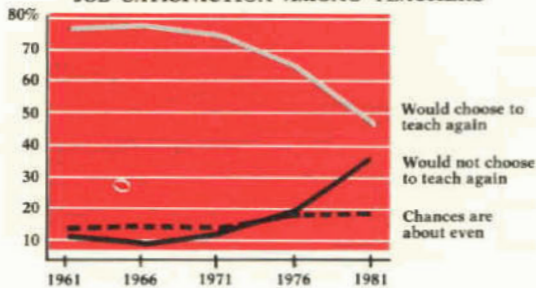


**VICTIMS OF CRIME IN U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1976**

**STUDENT DRUG USE**



**JOB SATISFACTION AMONG TEACHERS**



*Student marijuana use has leveled off, but use of harder drugs has not (above). Drug abuse—and crimes against person and property (upper left)—partly explain teacher discontent, which began rising in the late 1960s (left).*

Source: New York City Board of Education; National Institute of Education; National Education Association.

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study, *Contradictions of Control*, of how the subject of economics was introduced in a high school class: "Just announcing the topic makes students think they will have to do some work. The teacher gets them to cooperate without resisting by promising that indeed the study of this topic will require no commitment of effort, and little time on their part." McNeil calls this tactic "defensive simplification." A 1983 study cites the following remarks by teachers, overheard by researchers in various schools: "I'll write on the blackboard what you need to know"; "Helium, we won't worry about that"; and "Don't worry, we won't have any hard problems on the test."

The deal, a by-product of the tumult of the 1960s and 1970s, seems to make life simpler for all concerned. Multiple-choice tests, for example, are easier both to study for and to grade than essay exams. Thus, teachers and students alike can spend their after-school hours free from the exertion of focused thought. The average high school sophomore does 3.9 hours of homework per week—the typical senior only 3.7 hours.

### Keeping Up the ADA

In many high schools, principals and administrators reinforce dereliction of the teacher's duty by insisting on peace but not on learning. The principal's office, after all, is today deluged with paperwork—preparing reports to higher authority, keeping track of federal and state dollars, teacher assignments, pupil absences. Disciplining students is not a welcome addition to this list. In most schools, new teachers soon learn that dispatching unruly children "to the office"—a traditional threat that can be an effective peacemaker so long as it is credible—is frowned on by the administration. And if it cannot be carried out, the threat is not credible. Hence, many teachers feel that they have no choice but to seek a "negotiated order" with their students, even if it turns the classroom into a virtual day-care center. Boyer recounts the words of a teacher in a school where aspirations had fallen to a low level: "The goal, I guess, is to keep things quiet and have kids come to school and get their ADA (average daily attendance) . . . and to get through the year."

There is another reason why administrators allow learning to be sacrificed in the name of order: Some have no great reverence for intellectual pursuits. Many of them, after all, did not enter the business of education to teach *academic* subjects. One 1978 study found that 35 percent of high school principals had previously been high school athletic directors. Moreover, academic rigor often means that not all students pass muster. Even

### POWER SHIFTS

In British classrooms, corporal punishment (for boys) is an old tradition; in Sweden, it is a felony. In some French public schools, pupils must wear uniforms; in Norway, they may wear what they wish. In the United States, student councils may run the senior prom; in Denmark, they sometimes run the school.

The rights, privileges, and responsibilities of pupils, teachers, parents, and school administrators vary from country to country. But the trend in recent years throughout the industrialized West is striking: Schools are becoming more and more permissive. Administrators, in turn, are losing authority over both students and teachers.

Abroad, this trend is mainly the work of legislators and centralized ministries of education. In America, the courts are primarily responsible. Thanks to a string of civil liberties rulings since 1965, writes Columbia's Diane Ravitch, "almost no area of administrative discretion has been left untouched."

The biggest winners, at least in court, have been the young. Outside the schoolroom, children have increasingly been able to slip the leash. They have sued their parents for "divorce"—and won. They can buy birth control pills without their parents' knowledge. In most states, they can undergo an abortion without their parents' consent. And ever since *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943)—when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students could not be compelled to salute the flag—they have gradually acquired a broad array of First Amendment rights in the classroom. As Justice Abe Fortas put it in a landmark 1969 opinion (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*), students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression at the schoolhouse gate."

*Tinker* involved a group of students who wore black armbands in class to protest the Vietnam War. Unless behavior "materially and substantially" disrupts classroom activities, students today may also speak out against school policies, criticize teachers and principals, publish underground newspapers, and (in most states) wear their hair and clothes as they please. Adults who violate these rights, the Supreme Court has ruled, can be held liable for damages.

What students have gained at the expense of teachers, teachers have gained at the expense of principals and school boards. In *Pickering v. Board of Education* (1968), the Supreme Court ruled that an Illinois high school teacher could not be fired for writing in a local newspaper that taxpayers "were really taken to the cleaners" by the local school board. Two years later, a federal court in Alabama de-

a modest pupil failure rate does not reflect well on the principal. Perfunctory "social" promotion of students, ready or not, from one grade to the next is thus encouraged—another costly deal.

Even fellow faculty members often do not place a premium on teaching children; rather, they value *trying* to teach chil-

cided that a high school teacher could not be dismissed for requiring her students to read Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Welcome to the Monkey House*, even though the principal considered it "literary garbage." Academic freedom, wrote Judge Frank Johnson, is "fundamental to a democratic society."

Teachers today also enjoy more leeway in their private lives. They can no longer be fired for getting married or pregnant, or for being fat. They are unlikely to lose their jobs for "immoral conduct" unless it clearly relates to their professional duties. In *Morrison v. State Board of Education* (1969), for example, the California Supreme Court reinstated a teacher who had been fired for engaging in a brief homosexual affair (with another teacher).

Needless to say, school administrators no longer rule the roost. They cannot require students to participate in religious exercises or junior ROTC, lower a student's grade for misbehavior, or suspend a student from school without a hearing. Former Boston school superintendent Robert Wood observes that administrators today cannot act without "looking nervously over their shoulders and conjecturing mostly about 'what the court will do next.'"

Yet, on a few issues, the judges have held the line. They have, for example, rejected students' attempts to sue schools for "educational malpractice." The U.S. Supreme Court has also left teachers and administrators free to search students' lockers for drugs or stolen goods and to employ corporal punishment—even when parents object. Forty-six states and most local school districts still permit teachers or principals to tweak ears and rap knuckles.

Whatever the incremental gains and losses on specific issues among the parties involved, the net effect is clear: Educators have less room to exercise their judgment in day-to-day affairs. "Administration by rule," RAND social scientist Arthur Wise notes, has increasingly supplanted "administration by persons"—a bureaucratic development, he adds, that ill suits "the reality of classroom life."



dren—spending time with slow learners, sponsoring extracurricular activities, staying late grading papers. Teachers who get an "A" for effort are well thought of—by both their students and their colleagues—even if they merit a "D" for their success in imparting knowledge.



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One reason for this apparent contradiction is that it is difficult to determine when teachers are "succeeding" with children. Therein lies one of the central frustrations of the trade.\*

Of course, those few teachers who remove all doubt as to their effectiveness will not become pariahs as a result. The "hard" teacher, who piles on the homework and makes true mastery of a subject a prerequisite for a good grade, will be highly regarded by his colleagues. Yet, the earnest, if less effective, teacher is also well respected—as is the teacher who, for *whatever* reason, is popular with his students.

Why are rigor and academic excellence not the *overriding* criteria by which teachers judge one another? Nobody knows for sure. The answer may lie in the kinds of people who want to be teachers; they are generally kind-hearted, and some may simply be *too* kind-hearted. Or it may be that administrators unwittingly screen out the more scholarly or zealous among the job applicants. Perhaps the root of the problem is the general lack of respect for demanding intellectual endeavor that, if the truth be told, pervades our society, including the educators. Whatever the reason, the fact is that the social pressures surrounding teachers in the 1980s often militate against good work.

### No Excitement

As a teacher's first year in school draws to a close, the gulf between expectation and reality is all too apparent. Answering the questions of inquisitive students, mediating fervent class debates—these images lured many teachers into the profession, but for most they have remained images only.

Researchers for the 1983 study *A Place Called School* found that teachers spend less than three percent of their class time giving students "corrective feedback." They also noted a general lack of emotion in most classrooms. Laughter, enthusiasm, and such positive expressions from teachers and students as "You did a good job" or "This is interesting" were seldom heard. Even *negative* emotional expressions—"That was stupid," or "Go sit in the corner"—were rare. Whether a flat, somber atmosphere necessarily makes for bad education is debatable; but certainly many teachers entered the profession with a different vision of life in the classroom.

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\*The growing emphasis on standardized test scores has not roused the enthusiasm of teachers. While most consider the scores to be valid indicators of achievement in some areas, such as reading and mathematics, many feel that the tests do not accurately measure "higher order" skills such as interpretation and analysis. They worry that, because of the attention given to test scores by newspapers and the public, administrators will become so preoccupied with imparting basic "how-to" skills that more subtle intellectual habits will not be instilled in the young.

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“Breakthroughs”—sudden flashes of interest from students whom other teachers have failed to reach—do occur, but rarely. So it is with the “good” classes: They exist, but not in abundance. Perhaps a few graduates will someday return to express gratitude, but not many. It is these intangible rewards, which are in such short supply, that are most treasured by teachers.

Thus, between 10 and 20 percent of teachers typically call it quits after one year on the job. In one extreme case, researchers found that two-fifths of the teachers who entered St. Louis public schools during the 1968–69 school year did not return for a second year.

Most remain on the job—perhaps because the profession does make good on *some* of its promises. Yet even these rewards often turn out to be double-edged swords.

#### 46 Hours a Week

One such reward is the day-to-day freedom granted to teachers. Once they close the classroom door, how they teach is their business. They can use filmstrips, debates, or high drama to drive their lessons home. There are no superiors looking over their shoulder—and no peers, either.\*

But sometimes a bit more oversight—or at least collegiality—would be welcome. In a survey conducted for a 1982 study of teacher “burnout,” 62 percent of teachers in suburban schools said they had never or rarely received support or encouragement from their principals, and 60 percent had never or rarely felt a “sense of community” among the faculty and administration. In urban schools, the figures were 77 percent and 69 percent. In *Schoolteacher*, Dan Lortie recalls a grade school teacher’s lament: “Lots of times you wonder. The principal never comes to see you. . . . You never see some of the other teachers. And you wonder, well, what do they think of you—are you doing a good job?”

To add to the frustration, the freedom that teachers enjoy has well-defined limits. How they teach is their business. But *what* they teach is determined, at least in a broad sense, by the state and by local school boards. Teachers can choose supplementary materials, but not basic textbooks.

The work calendar that seemed to offer so much time for va-

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\*The working conditions of “autonomy and equality” developed in response to the facts of the teacher labor market: Education has long been a profession of high turnover, providing, according to the stereotype, intermittent employment for women and temporary employment for men (or, as educator Willard Waller wrote fifty years ago, “unmarriageable women and unmarketable men”). So a faculty consisting of interchangeable—and not interdependent—parts made sense from the point of view of administrators.

### TEACHERS, UNIONS, AND POLITICS

During the 1982–83 school year, under the auspices of the National Education Association or the American Federation of Teachers, 56,000 teachers went on strike in 106 school districts across the country. The education of 895,000 students was disrupted, in some cases for as long as three months. This was not an unusual year.

But the nation's two teachers' unions—to which more than 95 percent of America's 2.1 million public school teachers belong—do more than lead strikes. Both influence what is taught in the schools, and both are active in state and national politics. They lobby for and against education bills, contribute to political campaigns at every level, and marshal thousands of field workers—who have brains, energy, and spare time—to help get out the vote for favored candidates for public office. Most noticeably, the NEA, now led by high school teacher Mary Hatwood Futrell, routinely wages ideological crusades having little, if anything, to do with education.

The NEA, which now has 1.7 million members (not all of them teachers), was founded in 1857 as the National Teachers' Association, an elite fraternity of teachers and administrators devoted to bringing education to the masses. During the 1900s, it evolved into a full-fledged labor union—in fact, if not in name. As the association became more militant in the 1960s, it also expanded its agenda. In 1981, for example, the NEA co-sponsored a protest demonstration near Three Mile Island against nuclear power. Its spokesmen have opposed development of the MX missile. And some of its "education" publications have drawn fire for their strong political flavor.

An NEA curriculum guide on the Ku Klux Klan, prepared in the late 1970s, tells teachers that "the Klan is only the tip of the iceberg, the most visible and obvious manifestation of the entrenched racism in our society." An implicitly pro-nuclear freeze instructional kit ("Choices: A Unit on Conflict and Nuclear War") was labeled "political indoctrination" by the *Washington Post*.

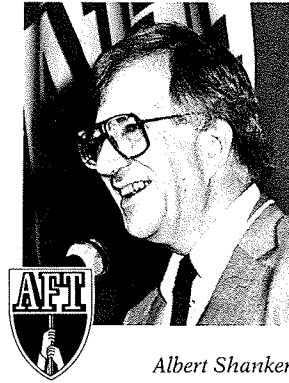


Mary Hatwood Futrell

The rival AFT, formed in 1916 by the merger of four small midwestern teachers' organizations, was a labor union from the beginning. Led today by Albert Shanker, it represents teachers in New York, Chicago, and other big cities. The AFT, a 580,000-member AFL-CIO affiliate, takes a liberal stand on many domestic issues. But, compared to the NEA, it seems staunchly middle-of-the-road, even "traditional," on many school matters.

Where the NEA supports federally-mandated bilingual education, Shanker's union believes that state and local

governments should be free to decide how to teach non-English-speaking children. The NEA opposes the "misuse" of standardized tests for students—and considers "misuse" roughly equivalent to "use." Former NEA executive director Terry Herndon compared the Princeton-based Educational Testing Service, which administers the SAT tests, to "armaments manufacturers who say, 'Guns don't kill, people do.'" The association leadership is also against minimum competency tests for teachers. The AFT sees a place for standardized exams both in evaluating students and in screening new teachers. So clear are the contrasts between the two unions that Edward B. Fiske, education editor of the *New York Times*, has suggested that the AFT "would probably consider coming out against the use of lunch boxes if the [NEA] came out for it."



*Albert Shanker*

Indeed, the AFT likes to needle the NEA on its political and educational views. It published a brochure titled "The AFT vs. the NEA," which recounts, among other things, an NEA official's remarks on theft in the schools. Testifying before a Senate committee, he observed, "Any [economic] system that perpetuates children carrying money, and places those in an awkward position who do not have it to carry, requires a hard, close look."

With its left-of-center political leanings, the NEA has in recent years been the more conspicuous force in national (Democratic) politics. It was largely responsible for the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Education, which candidate Jimmy Carter pledged to establish in return for the NEA's endorsement in 1976. After honoring his vow, Carter got vital support from NEA delegates in his 1980 nomination fight with Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. (At the Democratic convention, 310 of the 3,331 delegates belonged to the NEA.) The NEA and the AFT have already endorsed Walter Mondale for President in 1984.

Shanker believes that the NEA will soon undergo a philosophical transformation—if only for strategic reasons. The association's opposition to teacher testing, he contends, will win it few political friends during the 1980s. And its leadership is clearly more liberal than its rank-and-file. According to a 1981 NEA poll, 70 percent of public school teachers consider themselves to be either conservative or leaning in that direction. Hence, Shanker believes, the NEA must choose between moderating its stance on educational and political issues or ceding influence to the AFT. He thinks it will choose the former. Speaking of the NEA at the National Press Club last year, he predicted: "Its position will become our position."

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cationing and moonlighting is less attractive after a year on the job. True, summers are free; 29 percent of teachers spend the time traveling, 21 percent take outside jobs, and another seven percent work in summer schools. But during the school year, many holidays and some weekends are spent grading papers. The average teacher devotes 46 hours per week to instructional duties. (Nationwide, the average workweek for private, nonagricultural workers is 35 hours.) Further, 59 percent of secondary school teachers surveyed by the NEA in 1981 reported working without compensation on school-related activities for seven or more hours per week. And for many teachers, time in class is *not* spent teaching the subject they concentrated on during college.\*

### Good-bye to the PTA

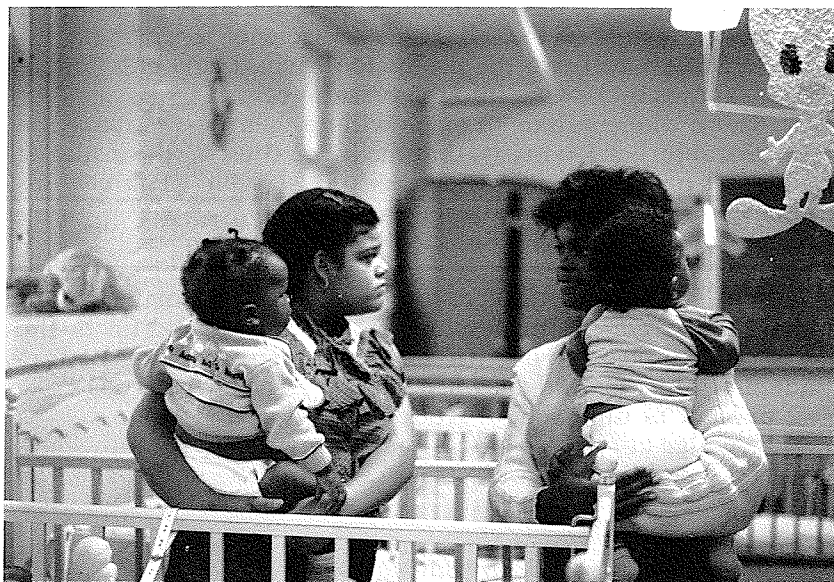
But perhaps most demoralizing to teachers is the public's opinion of them. Historically, what esteem has been tendered to teachers in America has been qualified. As Lortie observed, "Teaching . . . is . . . honored and disdained, praised as 'dedicated service,' lampooned as 'easy work' . . . Real regard shown for those who taught has never matched professed regard." Some evidence suggests that "real regard" has fallen even lower in recent years. Seventy-five percent of those citizens surveyed in 1969 said they would "like to have a child of [theirs] take up teaching in the public schools as a career." In 1972, the figure was 67 percent. By 1983, it was down to 43 percent. Parents' day-to-day support for teaching has fallen, too. PTA membership declined from 11 million in 1966 to 5.9 million in 1981 (although part of the drop was due to declining enrollment). Over that same period, the proportion of teachers belonging to a parent-teacher association dropped from 78 percent to 57 percent.

Indeed, although parents were once teachers' reliable allies in a campaign against ignorance and misbehavior, that alliance has suffered from neglect, or worse. Gerald Grant, a professor of education and sociology at Syracuse University, cites in a 1982 study the example of an elementary school teacher who sent a note to parents asking for cooperation in correcting their child's pattern of tardiness. In reply, the father told the teacher to "stop sending these notes that upset my child just because you have a middle-class hangup about time."

The reasons for the precipitous decline of esteem for teach-

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\*The problem of "misassignment" is less severe now than it was two decades ago. In 1961, 31 percent of public school teachers reported being assigned outside their area of preparation. By 1981, the figure had dropped to 16 percent. Still, in subjects where there is a teacher shortage, such as math and science, the quality of instruction continues to suffer from misassignment.



*Students at Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C., tend their babies during lunch period. A day-care center was established at Cardozo in 1981. Pregnant teenagers are now accommodated in many schools.*

ers among lay people are many. One is that, in the wake of “women’s liberation,” teaching is now derided by some feminist writers as traditional, hence oppressive, “women’s work.” And unionization may have tarnished the profession’s image. Strikes and bitter salary negotiations, critics of unions say, have undercut the spirit of voluntarism in teaching and have eroded a long-standing source of psychic support for teachers—the sense that their profession is a noble calling, a “secular ministry.”

In some ways, the very *success* of teachers has, over the decades, undermined their social status. As they have educated more youngsters and sent more high school graduates on to higher education, a vast new generation of middle-class Americans with college degrees has formed. Years ago, many parents stood in awe of a teacher’s educational credentials. Few do so now.

It is no surprise, all things considered, that about half of all teachers leave the profession within seven years of their first day in class. The ones who remain will not be the cream of the crop. A study conducted in North Carolina found that, of those white female teachers whose scores on the National Teachers Examination ranked in the top tenth, 37 percent were still teaching

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after seven years; of those who had scored in the lowest tenth, 62 percent were still on the job. Math and science teachers are especially likely to leave the profession early: Many can double their salaries by moving into the private sector.

Those who continue to teach will do their best to make the job bearable. For too many, that means settling for the deal. For others, it means specialization. Seeking students genuinely interested in the subject matter, they create courses with alluring names such as "Personal Relations," "Man to Man," and "Troubleshooter." Through such entrepreneurship, they acquire dedicated young followers—just as coteries form around charismatic college professors. Teachers thus end up in the paradoxical position of enticing students *away* from basic academic subjects. And they are succeeding. By the late 1970s, 42 percent of high school students were in the "general" or hodgepodge curricular track—as distinguished from the "academic" and "vocational" tracks. During the late 1960s, the figure was only 12 percent.

#### From Bad to Worse

This, in a sense, is another deal cut with students, one to which the entire school system is a party. Students who have no interest in high school are given a number of concessions in exchange for their agreement to go through the motions until graduation day. They are allowed to leave school early each afternoon for part-time work, to smoke at lunchtime, to take token courses, to graduate as functional illiterates. In return, the local school system can point to a high student "retention" rate, and thus, to "progress." Few parents or civic leaders complain.

Another strategy by which teachers make their careers tolerable is relocation. Black or white, they tend to transfer from districts that serve poor children to schools serving middle-class children—leaving already turbulent inner-city schools to be staffed by a continual influx of new, inexperienced instructors. This practice is fading as enrollments decline; where demand for teachers slackens, they cannot be so choosy. Yet studies indicate that slum districts and isolated rural schools still have particular difficulty attracting and keeping qualified teachers. Across America, the distribution of talent is as serious a problem as the supply.

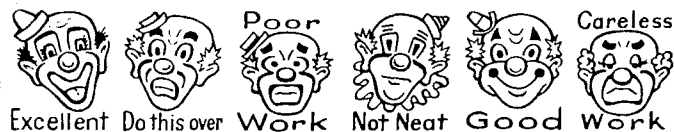
For teachers who do not find refuge in offbeat courses or suburban schools, the second decade of teaching can be frustrating. By their late thirties, most have reached the top of the salary scale. Thereafter, they observe college classmates—and former colleagues who bailed out early—continuing to advance

in pay and prestige. The only way to move up is to move out: Become a school administrator, or get out of the business altogether. But how many companies want to hire an untrained 40-year-old? Many teachers, tired of their jobs but unable to find work elsewhere, spend the last two decades of their careers in a state of resignation. The fire is gone.

They are now more likely than ever to succumb to the temptation of the deal. Cumulatively, such compromises further reduce the value of school for the young and, inevitably, undermine public esteem for teaching. This loss of respect spreads from parent to child, eroding authority in the classroom and triggering further losses of prestige for the profession. Thus, low morale among teachers leads to bad teaching, which then leads to lower morale and worse teaching.

Of course, for at least a large minority of teachers, the profession turns out to be, if not all they had hoped for, at least a reasonable facsimile. The most successful teachers have deep reserves of energy, and of patience, and support from higher-ups and community leaders. They derive satisfaction from the knowledge that they make a small contribution—even if it cannot be measured—to the intellectual growth of their students. They endure—indeed, prevail over—the many frustrations engendered by the “system” and by the larger society.

But too many teachers do not. They spend their first day on the job trying to secure order in the classroom so that learning can proceed. But by the end of the week, or the end of the year, or the end of a decade, order has become an end in itself. And learning has fallen by the wayside. The costs to the young and to America are incalculable.





## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHERS?

by Val D. Rust

America is not the only country where teaching is not what it used to be.

In the once-homogeneous West German cities of Plettenberg and Altona, teachers must overcome barriers of language and culture much like those that complicate teaching in Florida, New York, and Texas. One of every three students in these two cities, and one out of five in Hamburg, are children of blue-collar "guestworkers"—from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Italy, and Spain. Most speak little German, and their parents resist full assimilation into German culture.

American schools have no monopoly on violence or delinquency, either. The term "blackboard jungle" is used frequently by Japanese newspapers. In a nation preoccupied with scholastic achievement (see box, pp. 84–85), the pressure on teachers and pupils alike can be intense. Last year, a handicapped Japanese teacher, harassed by students, stabbed one of them with a fruit knife. In Kisarazu, near Tokyo, a 14-year-old girl was beaten with a bamboo sword for hours by a dozen classmates. Halfway around the world, West German teenagers in black leather jackets, Maltese crosses sewn on their sleeves, bully teachers and steal from classmates. A story about these *Halbstarken* ("half-crazies") appeared last year in the news weekly *Die Zeit* under the headline "Kids are Killing the Life of Teachers."

"Teacher burnout," too, appears to cross national boundaries. In France, the problem became so serious that in 1972, the government established a "National Re-Adaptation Center" where beleaguered teachers can receive free hospital care and psychotherapy. Hundreds have sought treatment. Concern for teachers' well-being has not, however, stifled criticism of their performance. Only last year, French President François Mitterrand, addressing his Council of Ministers, blamed shoddy teaching for the younger generation's "loss of a collective memory."

In England as well, public officials are demanding that teachers improve their work. Her Majesty's inspectors reported in 1982 that too many teachers "revealed insecurity in the subject they were teaching." Rather than engage their students in

thoughtful discussion, they relied on "narrow questions often requiring monosyllabic answers." The Secretary of State for Education and Science confirmed the diagnosis in a 1983 White Paper—but recommended against expensive remedies. Teachers must simply work harder, the report concluded, and their training should be tougher.

As teachers come under fire, their social status and their self-esteem inevitably suffer. A 1981 International Labor Organization study found that politicians and parents alike are losing confidence in the schools and those who staff them. The result in many countries has been a "lowering of morale and decreasing interest in teaching as a profession."

Declines in the psychic rewards of teaching help to explain the proliferation of teachers' strikes and work slowdowns. In 1979, West Germany's *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (Union of Education and Science) used both tactics in a struggle to hold the teacher's classroom time down to 25 hours per week. In Japan, teaching has long been considered a "saint's job," but teachers are seeking more than spiritual compensation. The radical Japanese Teachers' Union now takes the position that teachers are "laborers" and must resist exploitation.

### 240 Schooldays

If it is more difficult to be a teacher these days, it is also more difficult to become one. Thanks to declining birthrates, the supply of instructors continues to exceed the demand. In most Western European countries, an aspiring teacher has only a one-in-three chance of landing a job immediately after finishing college. Some 40,000 of West Germany's unemployed adults are trained teachers.

Turmoil within the classroom, criticism from without, rising militancy, and a shortage of jobs—this is the teaching environment in much of the world. And when we look beyond the headlines, at the less-publicized conditions of teaching, we find further parallels among nations. The length of the school year, for example, varies little. The average American teacher is due in class between 178 and 185 days per year. In England and Norway, 190 days per year is typical, and in other European countries, the average falls between 180 and 200. (Japan and West Germany, where teachers work as many as 240 days per year, do not fit into this pattern, but West Germany will before long. It is moving from a six-day school week to a five-day week.) And, whereas America and England were once unusual in their reliance on women for teaching, females are now well represented

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in schools throughout Europe.\*

But are the *similarities* among classrooms in the West most illuminating to Americans? Not really. William Taylor, principal of London University, recently commented, "Educational conditions in different countries are about 95 percent the same . . . but the differences are the crucial ones." Indeed, we might learn something from such contrasts. By some major measures, school systems in the United States are inferior to those in Europe and Japan. It would be useful to know why.

### Losing Ground

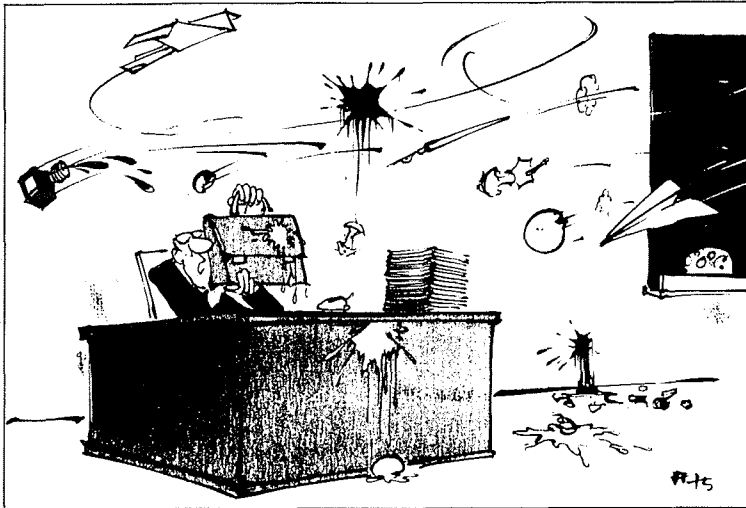
Arrayed against their peers abroad, American students have fared poorly in standard tests. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement administered exams to elementary and secondary school students in 17 developed countries, including Japan, West Germany, and Italy. Some 30,000 American pupils, ages 10 to 19, took a total of 19 exams in subjects ranging from mathematics to literature. As a group, they finished last in seven categories. On *no* test did they rank first or second. (Perhaps the most impressive performance was turned in by the Japanese, who participated in only six tests and finished first in three.) Some American scholars question the significance of these results. They note that the United States is more successful than most developed countries in keeping children on the school rolls; so perhaps the "average" American student found himself pitted against above-average students abroad. In 1980, 93 percent of American students between the ages of 14 and 17 were enrolled in school. In 1983, the estimated proportion of 14-17-year-old children enrolled in school was 95 percent in Japan, 85 percent in France and Britain, 79 percent in Australia, and 55 percent in Italy. But differences in teacher training and

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\*Japan and West Germany long excluded women from the classroom, but the two world wars ended this custom. Last year, 51 percent of the teachers in West Germany were women, compared with 40 percent in Japan, 61 percent in France, and 60 percent in Britain. Today, the "feminization" of teaching at all levels of schooling worries educators in some European countries, largely because of a sad but true fact: As the proportion of women in a given profession exceeds some critical level, the profession's status declines.

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*"Today we're discussing . . . splat . . . in social studies . . . pow . . . the topic . . ." was the caption of this cartoon, which appeared in the West German newsmagazine Der Spiegel in 1979.*

ability may also account, at least in part, for the relatively poor showing of American youngsters.

In this regard, there is a key difference between the teaching professions in America and in Europe—what, in shorthand, we might call "dualism." The term refers to the separate and unequal treatment most European countries give primary school teachers, on the one hand, and secondary school teachers on the other. American teachers, grades one through 12, are remarkably similar in terms of education, pay, and ability. In Europe, grade school teachers are second-class citizens compared to their high school colleagues—who undergo far more rigorous training and reap the higher salaries and prestige awarded to respected academic professionals.

The roots of "dualism" go back 500 years—back to the separate historical meanings, in Europe, of terms that have become synonymous in America: grammar school and elementary school. "Grammar schools," the precursors of the modern European high schools, emerged during the Renaissance and played an important role in the popular revival of Greek and Roman learning. In the grammar schools, students as young as seven and as old as 20 acquired the linguistic and analytical skills needed to appreciate classical literature and philosophy. Upon

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graduation, they typically pursued a university degree, which provided entry to the community of scholars and, hence, access to the fields of medicine, law, or teaching.

Grammar school teachers, like their students, were drawn primarily from the upper classes. They had attended elite schools themselves—the great “public” boarding schools in England, the *lycées* in France, and the *Gymnasien* in Germany. Like college professors, they belonged to academic societies, conducted arcane research, and read scholarly papers to assemblies of their peers. Philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, for example, wrote and published both volumes of his *Science of Logic* (1812 and 1816) during his eight-year tenure as headmaster of a Nuremberg grammar school.

### Aping the Prussians

Elementary school students—and their teachers—were a different breed altogether. Lower schools did not appear in Europe on a large scale until the Protestant Reformation, as church-sponsored Bible-study classes. They eventually fell under control of local and then national governments, and their function changed accordingly. In a mercantile, hierarchical, religious society, they now imparted literacy, a common set of values, and devotion to God and country—in short, the ingredients of order in the emerging nation-state.

For such purposes, poor but literate laborers and housewives would do as teachers. Sometimes classes were held in church buildings, and gravediggers or sextons doubled as instructors. In 19th-century England, the task often fell to educated poor women—like Biddy in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861), who keeps school for Mr. Wopsle’s great aunt in “a little general shop.”

Even during the mid-19th century, when primary school teachers in some countries were given education beyond elementary school, they did not partake of the rich diet given to the high school teacher; they attended not universities but special two-year teacher training academies, where subjects such as science, mathematics, and language took a back seat to religion, civics, and the rudiments of pedagogy.

In America, as the public schools developed, some educators set out to copy the Europeans. In 1836, Calvin E. Stowe, a classics scholar from Dartmouth and a proponent of universal education, declared the Prussian system of education “as nearly complete as human ingenuity and skill can make it,” and challenged Ohio legislators to copy it. To a certain extent, they did.

So did lawmakers in other states. The disciplined atmosphere of the late 19th-century American classroom, where silence was rarely broken except by teachers' instructions or mass recitation, was Prussian in inspiration.

Yet this was only one-half of the Prussian system—the bottom half, designed to turn the masses into reliable followers. The “grammar school,” where Europe's leaders and professionals were trained, was not replicated, at least not on a large scale. To be sure, well-to-do New Englanders sent their sons to Protestant boarding schools—Exeter, Andover, Deerfield, and Choate. And some students took practical courses at other private “academies” en route to jobs as technicians or businessmen. (The first of these, the Academy of Philadelphia, was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1751 and evolved into the University of Pennsylvania.) But such schools affected few Americans.

The American high school, which took form after the middle of the 19th century, had different roots. These schools grew incrementally, almost spontaneously, out of the grade school: “Advanced” courses, held for inquisitive teenagers, gradually gained the blessings of local school boards. During the last half of the century, state legislatures endorsed the idea of a separate school for “graduate” students. As the idea caught on, many educators, intent on building a system that would cut across class lines, shied away from the intensive academic focus found in Europe. In 1908, the National Education Association resolved that “the public high schools should not be chiefly [preparatory] schools for higher institutions, but should be adapted to the general needs, both intellectual and industrial, of their students and communities.”

### Separate and Unequal

If high school is merely an extension of grade school, why should the training of high school teachers differ much from the training of grade school teachers? The answer seemed obvious during the mid-19th century, and to some—including, it seems, the people who educate our teachers—it still does. Many of today's high school teachers, like elementary school teachers, qualified for their jobs by obtaining a bachelor's degree in education. True, their studies may not have been confined to child psychology and curriculum planning; many satisfied degree requirements in the subjects they teach. But is that enough? These days, a handful of college-level courses in math hardly qualifies one to teach an advanced placement course in Calculus II.

In Europe, educators seem to recognize this. There, mass

### JAPAN: THE EXTREME CASE

In many countries, teachers are confused about what the public really expects of them. Not so in Japan. There, the teacher's job is well defined: to prepare students for standardized tests.

Performance on exams largely determines what kind of high school (vocational or academic) a teenager will attend—and whether it will be a first-rate school. In the last year of high school, a second round of testing channels the highest achievers into prestigious universities. One's alma mater, in turn, helps to shape the rest of one's social and economic life.

For young Japanese (and their parents), the result is an obsession with learning: hard work, high pressure, strict discipline, and conformity. Students wear uniforms in class, rarely ask questions or express opinions, and heed the old Japanese proverb, "The nail that protrudes will be hammered down." Pupils typically spend four or more hours a night on homework, often in addition to private lessons at "cram schools." (These *jukus* and other preparatory services gross an estimated \$10 billion annually—one of every seven dollars spent on education.)

In class, teachers rattle off dates and names, facts and figures, uninterrupted; some prepare lectures by combing past university exams for questions often asked. "Information loading is the central



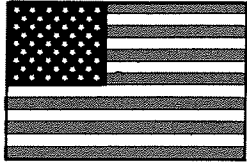
goal," observes Thomas P. Rohlen, in *Japan's High Schools* (1983).

Teachers (mostly men) enjoy high status and relatively high pay. They are addressed by the honorific title *sensei* ("the one who has gone before") and earn more than the average government worker.

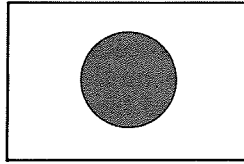
The price of status is hard work. School is in session Monday through Saturday, and teachers must report to work even during six of the 10 weeks of yearly vacation that students enjoy. In America, teachers send unruly charges to the principal's office; in Japan, they handle all discipline themselves.

The student-teacher ratio is higher in Japan than in any other major country. Yet instructors are expected to take a personal interest in each pupil's development. High school teachers sometimes make house calls to visit their *homurūmu* (homeroom) students.

Whatever its impact on creative thought, the school system in Japan succeeds in sharpening intellects. Over the last generation, the average Japanese IQ has risen seven points—and is now nine points higher than the average American IQ.



**TWO  
HIGH SCHOOL  
TEACHERS\***



Stan Jackson	NAME	Suzuki Tatsuya
Garfield High	SCHOOL	Nishi High
Belmont, Iowa	DISTRICT	Shizuoka Prefecture (south of Tokyo)
37	AGE	35
male (like 51% of his colleagues)	SEX	male (like 85% of his colleagues)
B.A. in English	EDUCATION	B.A. in Japanese
\$19,712	SALARY	¥4,250,000 (\$17,000)
(2% of salary) x (number of years served).	RETIREMENT	100% of salary for 49.5 months; 70% thereafter.
\$1,200 for coaching drama club.	EXTRACURRICULAR	¥14,500 (\$60) per year for supervising archery club.
National Education Association. Dues: \$57/year.	AFFILIATION	Japanese Teachers Union. Dues: \$180/year.
7:45 A.M.	FIRST CLASS BEGINS	9:20 A.M.
2:15 P.M.	LAST CLASS ENDS	3:10 P.M.
50 min.	LENGTH OF CLASS	55 min.
22 min.	LUNCH TIME	60 min.
5 classes English	SUBJECTS TAUGHT	2 classes Modern Japanese; Japanese Classics I; Photography
25 classes in 5 days	CLASSES TAUGHT/WEEK	16 classes in 6 days
25-30	CLASS SIZE	40-45
First week in September—second week in June.	SCHOOL YEAR	First week in April—third week in March.
180	DAYS TEACHING	240
189	DAYS WORKING	268

\*Information on this table represents a composite. Names are fictitious.



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secondary education did not come until after World War II. In class-bound England, schools such as Eton, Harrow, and Winchester, hospitable to the sons of the powerful for centuries, became the models for schools that bright children from the middle and lower classes could attend for free. The teachers at these new high schools, like those at Eton, attended universities, not specialized training institutions. The same was true across Europe: High school teachers followed in the footsteps of grammar school teachers. The training of elementary school instructors remained separate.

Today, that division persists. European primary school teachers (like primary *and* secondary school teachers in America) spend a great deal of their time in college learning how, in theory, to teach. In England, for example, a first-year education degree candidate who hopes to teach third grade may take "Curriculum and Classroom Organization," "The Psychology of Play," and "Exceptional Children."

But European (and Japanese) secondary school teachers still learn *what* to teach. They immerse themselves in history, science, math, or language, just as an aspiring university historian, scientist, mathematician, or linguist would do. The European "bachelor's" degree is roughly equivalent to an American master's degree. In Norway or Germany, for example, university studies may last six years; often students have been concentrating on their specialty since the final years of secondary school. By the time European high school teachers enter the classroom, they are truly competent in their fields.

### Weeding Out

"Methodology" is secondary. It is acquired on the job, as in West Germany, or in concentrated postgraduate courses, as in England and Norway.

Of course, one reason that a European teacher of science and math can—and must—acquire genuine competence in his subject is that the children he will be teaching are uncommonly bright and industrious. Most European countries have a system of student assignment, or "tracking," far more pervasive than that found in the United States. In some American high schools, children may still be put in either "accelerated" or "regular" biology courses, depending on their ability. In Europe and Japan, however, a child's ability may determine not only which biology class he takes, but whether he will even study biology. A student's entire course of study, not to mention which high school he attends—or whether he will attend high school at all, and

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for how long—may hinge on his past grades, his performance on nationwide examinations, or some combination of these and other factors.

In West Germany, for example, children who seem bound for college are put into academic middle schools after fourth grade; those cut out to be engineers or mid-level managers are put on the “technical” school track; the “general” secondary school is populated mainly by those destined for blue-collar jobs. (In the end, only 21 percent of West Germany’s college-age population enrolls in a university.) Thus, chemistry teachers in Hamburg or Bonn do not need to know enough about developmental psychology to cope with a disruptive student who has no interest in chemistry and no aptitude for it. They do, however, need to know enough about chemistry to stir the curiosity of potential future chemists.

### **Victims and Beneficiaries**

The number of “tracks” and the means of dividing students among them differ from country to country. In Britain during the 1960s, Harold Wilson’s Labor governments abandoned the two-track system of “academic” and “general” secondary schools in favor of the theoretically more egalitarian “comprehensive” secondary school. But Britain’s comprehensive schools may have as many as 16 discrete tracks, into which students are channeled on the basis of their academic records. In West Germany, parents’ preferences are weighed along with grades and test scores to decide what kind of secondary school a child attends. In Japan, students’ test scores and academic records determine their secondary school. In Norway, tracking is based mainly on past performance.

Although the sorting of pupils in Europe is still quite extensive by American standards, a number of European nations have joined Britain in moderating the tracking system in recent decades. That partly explains an important trend: The gap between secondary and primary school teachers is narrowing; as high school students become a less elite corps, teaching them becomes a less elite profession. Another reason is that the education of elementary school teachers has been enriched. These days, one must pass the stringent “secondary leaving exam” after high school to be eligible for admission to a teacher training institution, and hence for subsequent employment in primary school. (The leaving examination has long been required in Europe for university enrollment. A sorting-out device, it tests general knowledge—history, the sciences, and mathema-

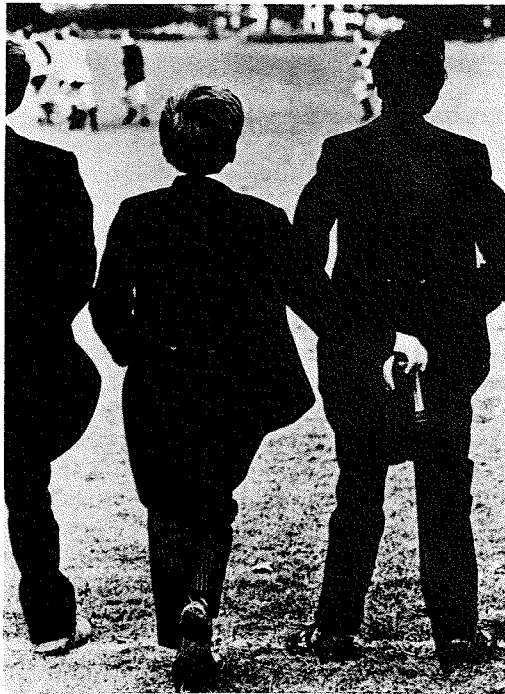
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tics—in West Germany and Norway, and more specialized knowledge in Britain. In 1970, only eight percent of West German, nine percent of English, and 22 percent of Norwegian “secondary school leavers” passed these exams.) So elementary school teachers are now better qualified.

In spite of these developments, the profession has not become homogenized. In Goettingen, West Germany, where the elementary school teachers’ training center is now part of Georg August University, the teachers’ campus remains an island unto itself, socially and academically. In Japan, aspiring primary school teachers now attend national universities, but they still take almost no classes in common with the student body at large.

The persistence of Europe’s dualism can also be seen in teachers’ salaries. In West Germany, starting secondary school teachers make 13 percent more than first-year primary school teachers; by retirement, the differential is 18 percent. In England, the gap is 34 percent at the beginning of the teacher’s career and 18 percent at the end. In the United States, by contrast,

*At Eton, Britain’s elite 543-year-old boarding school, pin-striped trousers and cutaway jackets are mandatory.*



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the average secondary school instructor earns about \$950 more per year than the average elementary school teacher—a five percent difference.

European governments have acknowledged what most American school systems have not: Rare goods fetch high prices. Since fewer people can teach calculus than can teach long division, the former cost more.

The result of the special status bestowed upon secondary school instructors in Europe is excellence. Consistently, prospective high school teachers are among the universities' brightest students. By graduation, they clearly outshine their primary school colleagues and their American counterparts. The ultimate beneficiaries are the students. The West German high school student encounters teachers, teaching methods, and assignments comparable to those he will encounter in college; the American public high school student does not.

### The Weakest Link

Clearly, American educators could learn much from high schools across the Atlantic. But for all the apparent advantages of the European approach to education, we should be careful about copying it.

Any extreme form of tracking, for example, runs up against the egalitarian premises that are deeply ingrained in America's character. West Germany's system—three kinds of high schools for three kinds of students—would not be warmly received in most U.S. communities. Still, it is true that a small fraction of U.S. high school students—perhaps 10 percent—get virtually nothing out of their academic courses and contribute even less, judging by most reputable studies. An entirely vocational curriculum for such teenagers might make life easier for them, their fellow students, and their teachers.\*

In seeking to emulate European dualism, American school boards should not devalue their elementary school teachers. By some indices, these instructors do a better job than their colleagues in the high schools. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the reading and reasoning abilities of American nine-year-olds have risen since 1975.

But 17-year-olds have shown declines in those categories,

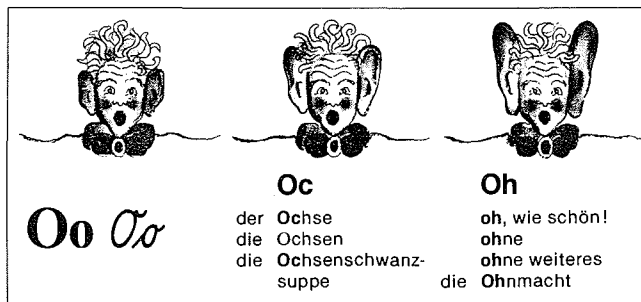
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\*America's closest approximations of the European academic high schools are found among its private schools. But, whereas the European academic high schools select students by ability, the five million students attending America's 21,000 private schools are selected mainly by family income; particularly in urban areas, those who can afford to send their children to private schools do so. Researchers have found private schools to be generally safer, more orderly, and more conducive to learning than the nation's 86,000 public schools.

further confirming the widespread suspicion that high school teaching is the weak link in U.S. public education and could be vastly improved. Here is where we could draw a very simple lesson from the European example: In recruiting and training high school teachers, keep in mind that one of their main functions is preparing young adults for a college education.

In other words, hire brighter people and make sure they know their subjects. These two goals mesh nicely. If preparing to teach high school meant studying one's chosen field of expertise deeply—rather than studying it superficially while expending precious hours on “how-to-teach” courses—intelligent students would not be scared away from the profession. Of course, upgrading the training of high school teachers is not the only way to recruit more able applicants. As the European experience suggests, more money brings more status to any field.

Together, measures such as these can help teachers gain the respect of college professors, which now is often lacking. As more and more aspiring teachers graduate from college with honors, a long overdue rapport will develop between academics and schoolteachers. And such rapport is the first step toward bridging the gap between the American high school and the American college—and upgrading both of them.



## WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

by Denis P. Doyle

America's occasional, often alarmist reassessments of the public school system usually leave something constructive in their wake. Sometimes the benefits are concrete, such as the subsidies for science and language instruction under the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Sometimes they are psychological—merely a residue of healthy nationwide anxiety. There are already signs that the current wave of soul-searching will follow this pattern; that America is, once again, summoning the resolve to turn adversity into advantage.

Moreover, this effort will coincide with a rare demographic opportunity to overhaul the teacher force. And the teachers are the most important single factor in the schools. But before looking at that opportunity, let us consider several recent developments which, together, give cause for optimism.

The first is perhaps the most promising. Academic specialists are at last reaching agreement on what "works" in the classroom. After years of doubting whether *anything* done by teachers could overcome the ill effects of parental neglect, broken homes, or poverty, they have concluded, happily, that a child's socioeconomic background does not necessarily predetermine his performance in Algebra II; that schools do, indeed, *matter*.

Given the right supervisory back-up, teachers who cherish their subject, scorn sloth, reward effort, punish indiscipline, work their students to the bone, and assign lots of homework (and take the time to correct it) can raise the achievement of any student from any neighborhood, even in schools that lack computer terminals, large libraries, and unscarred furniture (see box, pp. 96–97). This common-sense perception may come as no surprise to most Americans, but it has taken researchers and educators several decades of debate, often clouded by ideology, to reach the same conclusion.

That is why a second development—the decline of the "expert," and the emergence of the layman, as the prime mover in educational affairs—deserves at least two cheers. Over the next decade, such reforms as may be introduced in local school districts will not trickle down from the ivory tower or from Washington, D.C. They will instead be pressed by taxpayers and grassroots groups. Those reforms will be based less on regression analysis and theories of neurophysiological development

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than on intuition and community values. Increasingly, these values will be traditional ones.

It is through state government that the man in the street is making his voice heard. During the 1960s and '70s, while Washington was preoccupied with egalitarian pursuits, more than two-thirds of the state legislatures passed laws requiring minimum competency tests for teachers or students. They did so in the face of apathy in Washington and concerted opposition from graduate schools of education and the teachers' unions. "There is no test conceived that would be helpful in determining whether teachers should continue to teach," asserted John Sullivan, a National Education Association spokesman, in 1979.

### **Paying the Piper**

Taxpayers did not agree. Having been told for years that more money would mean better schools, parents and state legislators watched aghast as every new round of increased spending—per-student outlays more than doubled in real dollars between 1958 and 1982—was followed by lower achievement test scores. As the Baby-Boom generation passed through the schools and each class did worse than its predecessor, perplexity gave way to outright suspicion.

Suspicion alone might not have produced state intervention. But it happened that, at the same time, the state's role in financing education was growing by leaps and bounds. Historically, American public education had been a *community* concern, funded primarily by local property taxes. In 1920, local levies paid for more than 80 percent of the cost of public education. Even as late as 1945, the figure was still 64 percent. By the late 1970s, however, the statehouse had become the main source of money for most public schools. The federal government chips in about 10 percent, mostly for special programs such as bilingual education, compensatory education for underprivileged children, and aid to handicapped students. Whether this shift in financial responsibility caused or merely reflected state legislators' heightened interest in schools is not altogether clear. Suffice it to say that state officials are increasingly both paying the

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piiper and calling the tune.\*

Buoyed by citizen support, and sometimes by help from the business community, many states are even continuing to increase school budgets, despite declining enrollment and economic uncertainty. Two years ago, Charles Benson, one of California's leading authorities on public finance, was skeptical about the possibility of more state school aid. It would come, he said, "only if the citizens of California march on Sacramento and demand a tax increase." The citizens did not march. But the California Business Roundtable did endorse a one-year, \$800-million increase in school expenditures—one-third of it to be raised through new business taxes. The bill passed.

Similar resolve is evident elsewhere. Democratic Gov. Bob Graham of Florida last summer signed into law a \$228 million bill that includes \$80 million for a lengthened school day and \$10 million for a merit pay plan for teachers. In Mississippi, long an educational backwater, where to this day 42 percent of public school students drop out before high school graduation, Democratic Gov. William F. Winter in 1982 pushed through a package of school reforms that will cost an estimated \$86 million per year through 1985. Among them: state-supported kindergarten, \$1,000-per-teacher pay boosts, and a law requiring children to stay in school until age 14.

### More Protein

From the point of view of professional educators, the growing participation of citizens and politicians in the education debate may seem intrusive. It is. It is also long overdue.

The nation's colleges and universities for years abdicated their responsibilities toward public education. But there is evidence of a turnaround here, too. This change is a third force impelling the public schools toward higher quality. After lowering standards for both matriculation and graduation during the tumultuous 1960s and '70s—between 1967 and 1974, an estimated 80 percent of America's four-year colleges relaxed their course requirements—state universities from Oregon to Massachusetts are atoning for their sins and tightening up.

At the University of California, for example, a high school

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\*Most of the legal power over education has always resided in America's statehouses, not in Washington, D.C.—thanks largely to the U.S. Constitution's failure to mention "education," much less locate it in the federal domain. The length of the school day and school year, conditions of teacher tenure, the rules of collective bargaining, the manner of textbook adoption, and the depth and breadth of the curriculum—all are state prerogatives. Local school districts, which manage affairs on a day-to-day basis, do so at the sufferance of (and as agents of) the state.



senior once had to pass 11 yearlong courses in basic subjects—English, algebra, history, and the like—to attract the attention of the admissions office; now the threshold has been raised to 16. And the state Board of Regents has asked that the new rules take effect as soon as possible in order to “transmit to the public high schools of California a sense of urgency” about the need for more rigor. As the regents noted, stiffer entrance standards in academe will ripple back into the high schools, forcing teachers and administrators to put more protein into their curricula and toughen examinations to prepare students for what lies ahead.

In view of the shrinking pool of college students—enrollment will drop by an estimated five percent by 1989—the new regimen in public colleges and universities seems audacious. How can admissions officers be choosy in lean times? The answer may be as simple as this: Those in charge are ashamed of themselves. “The general lack of concern on the part of higher education for elementary and secondary education is at the heart of the nationwide educational crisis,” Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University, has written. “We can do much to help, and we should.” It also seems, here and there, that state universities, like the public schools, are encountering a new quid pro quo—more public money in exchange for higher standards. Legislators and taxpayers alike, conscious of how little return on investment they have gotten in the past, are guarding the pursestrings more carefully now.

All in all, the signs are propitious—an indignant citizenry, insisting on reform; responsive state legislatures, committing fresh funds to the cause; and responsible colleges and universities, righting their past wrongs. But such trends can only come to fruition if America’s schoolteachers do their job well. And here we have a real problem.

As numerous studies have shown, the average American



*Analysts of higher education now report a reversal of the trend toward watered-down college curricula, which began during the 1960s.*

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teacher is not an intellectual. The learning impediment posed by teachers who are duller than their students has been compounded in many schools by one of the great egalitarian shifts, prodded by court action, of the past two decades: eliminating "tracking"—the segregation of students by ability in various courses of study. When students are "tracked," teachers are too. And when the fast and slow lanes are merged, mismatches can arise. Imagine one of the nation's 15,000 National Merit semifinalists, with combined SAT scores of about 1,450, seeking clarification on a nuance of inductive logic or non-Euclidean geometry from the nation's "average teacher"—who chalked up an 813.\*

### **Bargain-Baseament Teachers**

In view of what teachers are paid, it is unsurprising that they do not constitute, overall, as illustrious a group as we might like. In 1982, their average starting pay (for less than ten months' work) was about \$13,000. This compared with a \$22,000 annual salary for a computer specialist with the same amount of schooling and \$24,000 for a physics major. Mathematics majors leaving college could expect to make \$21,000 (so long as they did not intend to teach math). Raises come with time, but only a handful of teachers ever go beyond the \$20,000–\$30,000 pay range. Last year, the 10 percent of teachers who fell into the highest income bracket had an average salary of \$31,500.

Two historical "flukes" explain why Americans expect competent teachers at bargain-basement prices. The first is discrimination. Before World War II, teaching was one of the few white-collar professions that college-educated women could enter in large numbers without arousing resentment from men (and other women); teaching also conflicted with family responsibilities less than did other jobs. Similarly, teaching was long one of the more prestigious career avenues open to racial minorities, especially in the segregated South. Despite the low pay, the classroom attracted blacks, Hispanics, and intelligent women whose ambitions went beyond the home. A certain amount of status and authority came with the job, as did a (nominally) short workweek and long vacations.

The second factor was the Great Depression of the 1930s. By closing off many more lucrative job opportunities, the moribund economy induced a teacher "bonus" of historic proportions. Would-be businessmen, bankers, doctors, and lawyers—among the brightest men of their generation—gladly settled

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\*That was the mean score in 1982 for college-bound high school students declaring education as their intended major field of study.

### A MATTER OF ETHOS

*Equality of Educational Opportunity*, sociologist James S. Coleman's landmark study, was commissioned by Congress under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. President Lyndon Johnson's campaign against poverty—especially the disproportionate poverty among blacks—relied heavily on federal aid to the public schools. Coleman, among others, thought his research would vindicate Johnson's faith in the ability of education to lift up the disadvantaged. When published in 1966, however, his report not only failed to do that; it raised doubts about the value of schools in general.

Coleman documented the disparity between white and black students' achievement test scores. At first he sought to explain the difference in terms of school facilities. However, in this regard, mostly black and mostly white schools proved surprisingly similar. It was not the quality of libraries, laboratories, or teaching materials that accounted for most of the "achievement gap," Coleman concluded. Rather, what mattered were the habits and values picked up from family, friends, and schoolmates. As oversimplified in press accounts, his verdict was clear-cut: "Schools don't matter."

Since the publication of *Equality*, Coleman and other researchers have been busy dispelling simplistic interpretations of it. By focusing less on schools' tangible assets and more on "intangibles," they have shown that applying sound principles of education can help students of any race or family background learn faster.

One key intangible is "ethos." The term gained currency among educators after publication in 1979 of Michael Rutter's *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, a study of 12 inner-London schools. Rutter used "ethos," a Greek term, to refer broadly to a school's sense of purpose and commitment—and, specifically, to a spectrum of 39 measurable characteristics found in particularly successful secondary schools. These schools had better records for attendance, orderliness, and scholastic achievement than analysts would have predicted on the basis of the incoming students' disciplinary and academic histories, which varied greatly.

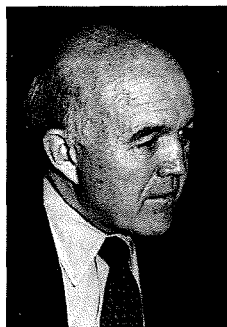
Principals in these schools laid down clear guidelines and monitored teachers closely for compliance—checking, for example, to ensure that they assigned ample amounts of homework. Teachers expected high performance from their students and rewarded them

for the regular, if meager, paycheck that teaching offered.

But the instructors who signed on during the 1930s have since retired. Teachers hired at age 22 during 1940, the last year of the Depression, retired in June of last year. Most men of comparable caliber today enter more lucrative white-collar professions. And ambitious women are now free to seek careers in computer programming, law, medicine, and academe. Indeed,

in return. One of the few "tangibles" found to be significant—well-decorated halls and classrooms—turned out to reflect an intangible: Instructors gave praise when it was due, posting students' exemplary work on walls and bulletin boards.

A 1982 study by Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore indirectly supported Rutter's findings. In *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic and Private Schools Compared*, Coleman et al. concluded that the heavy homework assignments, ambitious goals, and strict discipline found in parochial schools accounted, at least in part, for their relative effectiveness. In Catholic high schools, between the sophomore and senior years, the difference in the test scores of blacks and whites narrows; it *widens* in public high schools.



James S. Coleman

Teachers, as well as academic researchers, are rediscovering ethos. In Washington, D.C., where pupils had long ranked well below the national average in standardized test scores, school superintendent Vincent Reed implemented a rigorous back-to-basics program in 1976. Teachers started monitoring students' progress more closely and providing intensive remedial tutoring in the Three Rs. In some schools, even gym teachers found themselves passing out homework—as many as nine essays a year.

By 1983, Reed's successor, Floretta D. McKenzie, could point to improved scores at both the elementary and secondary levels. And, for the first time, the District's third-grade and sixth-grade students *exceeded* national norms in math, language, science, and reading.

Washington's school system is 94 percent black. But reforms in districts such as Charlotte, N.C., which is two-thirds white, have also proved successful.

In 1973, the average Charlotte sixth-grade student read at a fifth-grade level and had the mathematical ability of a fourth-grader. School officials raised their expectations and made sure students got the message: Anyone falling short of the new standards would attend summer school and, if that failed, would repeat a grade. Attendance policies were toughened, too. The result: In 1983, Charlotte's sixth-grade students read at a seventh-grade level and handled math problems with the skill of eighth-graders.

between 1955 and 1980, the number of women receiving bachelor's degrees each year in engineering, once a male preserve, rose from 177 to 7,669. The net result is no surprise. Between 1966 and 1982, the percentage of college freshmen, male or female, planning to become teachers dropped from 21.7 to 4.7. This group includes too many who are not the best or the brightest.

Going to the bottom to recruit our teachers is bad enough.

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The nature of most local public school systems makes the problem worse. School boards or school principals can exert little leverage over teachers once they are hired. Because of union contracts and uniform salary schedules, every instructor—eager or lethargic, bright or dim, strict or lax—receives roughly the same pay (seniority being equal). Not much can be done by way of financial incentives to reward dedication and skill; or, by way of penalties, to show incompetents to the door.\*

Thanks to President Reagan's endorsement, the notion of merit pay has become a topic of heated discussion (see box, opposite). It is a wonderful, impractical idea.

### Seizing the Moment

In my view, merit pay does not fit the culture of teaching. But less material forms of reinforcement may. Endowed chairs, university-style, can be used to attract eminent teachers. And sabbaticals for research or curriculum design can be granted to reward excellence—or merely to stimulate thinking. The National Endowment for the Humanities sponsors six- to eight-week summer seminars for hundreds of selected high school and primary school teachers on subjects ranging from "The Literature of Friendship" to "Documents of Slavery and Anti-Slavery" at college campuses across the country. By all accounts, the program has been a strong morale booster.

In the end, though, the only sure long-term solution to the problems of teacher incompetence, mediocrity, and apathy is to hire able, energetic instructors in the first place. That is why the remainder of this decade will be a critical period. For we are about to see a "window of opportunity," a chance to alter for decades the quality of public school instruction. Thanks largely to the "graying" of the teacher force—the fact that the once-young teaching population has developed a middle-age bulge—about half of the nation's 2.1 million public school teachers will have to be replaced by 1991, according to estimates by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Enrollments, meanwhile, will begin to rise again in the mid-1980s as children of Baby-Boom children—the Baby Boom's "echo"—start school. Between 1985 and 2000, the school-age population is expected to increase by anywhere from 12 to 18 percent. The demand for

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\*Tenured teachers can be dismissed for causes specified by state law. In Illinois, a school board can fire teachers for "incompetency, cruelty, negligence, immorality . . . or whenever, in its opinion, he is not qualified to teach." But the courts have placed the burden of proof on the school board, and have generally ruled that only misconduct substantially and specifically related to on-the-job performance is grounds for firing.

### MERIT PAY?

Almost all of the \$40.7 billion paid annually to American public school teachers is disbursed to individuals without regard to on-the-job performance. Last spring, however, President Reagan endorsed "merit pay," and the term has been in the headlines ever since. "If we want to achieve excellence we must reward it," Reagan said in June. "It's the American way."

Of the Democratic presidential candidates, only Reuben Askew of Florida has endorsed merit pay. Most others, while not embracing the idea, have refrained from denouncing it. And with good reason: A June 1983 *Newsweek* survey of the general public found that 80 percent of those polled were in favor of merit pay.

Yet the idea may work better in theory than in practice, many educators say. By what yardstick, for example, does one measure quality? And who will do the measuring? Willard H. McGuire, former president of the National Education Association, has argued that when principals and superintendents do the measuring, "personal relationships or subservient behavior [by teachers] is too often equated with 'merit.'" Even if the system rewards only the worthy, a question remains: Will the overall benefits outweigh any damage done to the morale of perennial also-rans?

These questions are now being confronted. The Educational Research Service estimates that "performance-based" pay schemes are either in effect or under active consideration in 21 states.

Thus, in Dallas, computers are being used to remove the "subjective" element from the selection process. When a school's pupils do better on standardized tests than their prior performance would suggest, the principal, teachers, and other staff receive bonuses. But critics contend that such a preoccupation with test scores is excessive.

In Tennessee, Gov. Lamar Alexander is pushing a "master teacher" program that not only rewards the "best" but enhances their influence. Under the plan, teachers who qualified to move up the pay scale—from "apprentice" to "professional" to "senior" to "master"—would spend some of their time teaching other teachers and designing curricula. Committees of teachers and administrators from one school district would evaluate teachers in another—thus (in theory) "depoliticizing" the selection process.

The jury is still out on merit pay. A task force commissioned by the House Education and Labor Committee last year warned that it is no panacea, but supported further experimentation. More pilot programs seem likely. Under taxpayer pressure, leaders of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association have muted their longtime opposition to all "performance-based" pay schemes. (Not surprisingly, they seem most receptive to merit pay accompanied by some sort of across-the-board salary hike.) According to a 1983 poll, 63 percent of U.S. teachers support the idea that "more effective" teachers should receive more pay.

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teachers will then rise. Altogether, government statisticians predict, we will need nearly 1.3 million new teachers by 1990.

They can be 1.3 million *good* teachers if we are willing to pay the price. But the price will be high. Quality costs.

This is not a novel point. Spokesmen for teachers' unions trot it out every year when salary negotiations roll around. But they usually fail to make their case persuasively, in part because they reject any notions of quality control. The result is often ugly—strikes, accusations, lingering bitterness—and, from the teachers' point of view, seldom productive; teachers' salaries fell by 12.2 percent in real terms between 1972 and 1983. Taxpayers always prefer something for nothing, and school board members listen to taxpayers. But, whether teachers know it or not, they have at their disposal a possible means of short-circuiting the resistance to higher pay.

### Supply-Side Education

The key may lie in teacher licensing. A license is simply state approval to do something that is otherwise prohibited. A truck driver is someone with a truck driver's license, and a teacher is someone with a teacher's license. Licensing helps define the supply of workers, which, in turn, helps determine their pay. Require truck drivers to take three years of driver safety courses and there will be fewer truck drivers—and higher wages. Require prospective high school teachers to score above a certain daunting threshold on standardized exams and to hold a bachelor's—or master's—degree in the subject they will teach and the resulting scarcity will drive salaries higher.

For elementary school teachers, of course, licensing requirements should be different. The "how-to-teach" courses that clutter the curricula of our teacher colleges have *some* value to those who instruct the very young. But such training should be "hands-on" whenever possible. And the elementary school teacher must have a solid, balanced academic background. A licensing exam testing general knowledge would help keep those who overdose on pedagogy out of the classroom.

Bricklayers, lawyers, accountants, and embalmers have had no trouble grasping the basic relationship between supply and demand. The European craftsmen of the Middle Ages also understood it. By restricting entry into their crafts, they increased both their status and their earnings.

"Teachers Demand Tighter Standards" is a headline that reads much better to taxpayers than "Teachers Ask More Pay, Shorter Hours." And it is as good for their pocketbooks as it is

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for their public image. Once any state significantly tightens its licensing requirements, school boards (and taxpayers) will have to put their money where their mouth is. Within a few years of doing so, they will have an abundance of qualified teaching candidates to choose from; the pool of prospective instructors is market-sensitive.

Higher pay might mean, at least for a while, that school districts could afford to hire fewer teachers. But the threat of teacher layoffs usually arouses public resistance. Fresh—and, probably, creative—scrutiny of the entire school budget, and of the school's academic menu, is a more likely long-run result.

Toughening up licensing rules is not the only way to put some quality into lackluster school faculties. If teachers do not seize the opportunity, the citizenry will no doubt find an alternative method—perhaps one that tenured instructors will find a bit more threatening. Teachers' unions would be wise to act soon if they want a hand in shaping the fate of their profession.

Imagine, for a moment, that American teachers, backed perhaps by the NEA and the AFT, finally drew a line in the sand. Only trained mathematicians could teach mathematics; no more retooled football coaches. Only scientists could teach advanced placement physics; no more part-time guidance counselors. Only English teachers with superb credentials could mark up the essays of juniors and seniors; no more earnest art majors.

Three things would happen: Teachers' salaries would start to climb. Teachers' status would rise with them.

And children would begin to learn again.





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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### TEACHING IN AMERICA

In 1776, a ship from Belfast docked in Baltimore and offered for sale "various Irish commodities, among which are schoolmasters, beef, pork, and potatoes." Such was the ignoble status of teachers in colonial America, notes Willard S. Elsbree, in **The American Teacher** (American, 1939; Greenwood, 1970), an account of the profession's slow climb to respectability.

The Puritans, and later the Founding Fathers, held the *idea* of education in high regard. Nonetheless, in **The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education** (Harvard, 1974, cloth & paper), David Tyack observes that salaries for teachers in many colonial villages were "below the earnings of scrub-women and day laborers."

Teaching was often a last resort for misfits and outcasts, and the typical one-room schoolhouse was cramped and ill-equipped. But at least the teaching process was uncomplicated, as Carl F. Kaestle notes in **Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860** (Hill & Wang, 1983). Teaching consisted largely of "repetition, drilling . . . with here and there a little of the birch."

Even as the new Republic prospered, teachers did not. In **Anti-Intellectualism in American Life** (Knopf, 1979, cloth; Random, 1966, paper), Richard Hofstadter argues that Americans never really respected schoolteachers as a group. Paradoxically, Americans stubbornly retained a "touching faith in the efficacy of popular education."

This faith inspired reformers, among them Horace Mann (1796-1859). His glowing reports on the school system in Prussia, where the

teaching profession was so highly esteemed that only the best and the brightest entered its ranks, are included in the **Life and Works of Horace Mann** (Walker, Fuller, & Co., 1865; Norwood, 1979), edited by Mary Tyler Peabody Mann. With Prussia's vigor in mind, Mann in 1830 founded the Massachusetts Normal School, the nation's first teacher training institution. He later served as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, the first such state board in America.

The movement to provide free common schools soon spread beyond Massachusetts. By 1860, most states could boast a (fledgling) public school system. One result: increased demand for trained instructors. Twelve new normal schools opened before the onset of the Civil War.

To be sure, many towns, particularly outside New England, ignored new state requirements for mandatory elementary education. And towns offering schooling beyond the sixth grade were almost unheard of. Public high schools nationwide numbered only 200 in 1870. But the trend toward universal public education and the resulting "professionalization" of teaching were both well underway by 1900.

Some of the most persistent ideas in American teaching have stemmed from the turn-of-the-century Progressive movement, partly a reaction against traditional learning by rote. Lawrence A. Cremin, in his definitive history, **The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957** (Knopf, 1961, cloth, out of print; Vintage, 1964, paper), describes the movement as "a many-sided effort to use the schools

to improve the lives of individuals."

John Dewey (1859–1952) was its chief architect. In **The School and Society** (Univ. of Chicago, 1899; rev. ed., 1956, cloth & paper), he advocates the teaching of mathematics and other subjects "not as isolated things . . . but in their reference to [the student's] social environment." The schools, Dewey and his followers asserted, should foster not just "book learning," but moral, emotional, and vocational development. The teacher should be the student's guide rather than his taskmaster.

Variouly interpreted, Progressive ideas blossomed for several decades, faded during the 1950s, and bloomed again during the 1960s, when many writers decried what they saw as a stultifying atmosphere in the classroom. One of the most prominent was John Holt, who in **How Children Fail** (Pitman, 1964, cloth, out of print; Dell, 1970, paper) laments the lack of "joy" in the schools. In **Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools** (Houghton, 1967, cloth, out of print; Bantam, 1970, paper), Jonathan Kozol, a young teacher at an inner-city elementary school, asserts that the Boston school system was designed to "pulverize any sparks of humanity or independence or originality in teachers."

A new blueprint, calling for "open classrooms" with teachers acting as "learning facilitators" rather than as transmitters of knowledge, was provided by Charles E. Silberman in **Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education** (Random, 1970, cloth, out of print; Vintage, 1971, paper). The prestigious Carnegie Foundation had commissioned the book, an endorsement that contributed to its widespread, if

short-lived, acclaim among teachers and administrators.

The "facilitators" of the future would be computers, George Leonard predicted in 1968. Dismissing the "simplistic prescription that, to improve education, teachers merely needed to know their subjects and 'get tough,'" he contended that students could (with a little help from technology) rediscover the "ecstatic moment" that had been stripped from the learning process by autocratic educators. Looking ahead to the year 2001 in **Education and Ecstasy** (Delacorte, 1968, cloth, out of print; Dell, 1969, paper), Leonard saw six-year-olds in geodesic domes entranced by machines that converted calculus lessons into psychedelic displays of "spinning wheels . . . slender and glistening like the spokes of a bicycle wheel."

Other critics of education, beginning after World War II, were worried not so much about the loss of ecstasy as about steady declines in student performance.

One of these "traditionalists" was Mortimer Smith, author of **The Diminished Mind: A Study of Planned Mediocrity in Our Public Schools** (Regnery, 1954; Greenwood, 1969). Though Progressives claimed success in teaching students to adjust to "real life problems," Smith notes that a 1951 survey of Los Angeles high school juniors revealed that 18 percent did not know there were 12 months in a year. Smith blames their ignorance on the Progressives' deliberate de-emphasis of "learning, in the traditional sense of disciplined knowledge."

In **The Restoration of Learning: A Program for Redeeming the Unfulfilled Promise of American Education** (Knopf, 1955, out of print), Arthur Bestor argues that the "fun-

damentals"—reading, writing, and arithmetic—constitute a pillar of democracy; Orwell's *Big Brother* in 1984 enslaves men's minds by undermining the disciplines of language and mathematics to the point where two plus two equals five.

Quite plainly, teaching the "basics" soon took a back seat to other concerns despite all the early warnings. In her highly readable **The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945–1980** (Basic, 1983), Columbia's Diane Ravitch points out that the postwar "crusade against ignorance was understood to mean a crusade for equal educational opportunity." Especially since 1960, the emphasis on worthy social goals, in Ravitch's view, has often bewildered teachers and distorted the fundamental task of the schools, that is,

the transmission of knowledge.

The overall effect has been devastating, according to much data and many critics. Paul Cooperman in **The Literacy Hoax: The Decline of Reading, Writing, and Learning in the Public Schools and What We Can Do About It** (Morrow, 1978, cloth & paper) notes that in college admissions tests, only one-fourth of current high school graduates attain the score that would have been considered average in the early 1960s. Ten to 15 percent of all graduates are functionally illiterate, unequipped to hold skilled jobs or to complete basic training in the military. Even Ivy League colleges have been forced to create remedial courses in writing and math for bright but ill-prepared freshmen.

Not surprisingly, the "traditionalist" view has gained ground since the

#### TEN BLUE-RIBBON STUDIES, 1982–84

1. **Academic Preparation for College**, Educational Equality Project; The College Board, New York, N.Y., May 1983. Free. Urges high schools to focus more on "adequate" college preparation, which it defines in detail.
2. **America's Competitive Challenge: The Need for a National Response**; The Business-Higher Education Forum, Washington, D.C., April 1983. \$17.50. Calls for presidential advisers on education and industrial policy, private-sector financial support for teacher training in high school science and math, development of skills for "high-tech" economy.
3. **Educating Americans for the 21st Century**, Commission on Pre-Collegiate Education in Math, Science, and Technology; National Science Board, Washington, D.C., Sept. 1983. Free. Recommends tighter teacher certification and high school graduation requirements, higher salaries for science and math teachers.
4. **High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America**, Ernest L. Boyer; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Harper and Row, New York, N.Y., 1983. \$15. Contends that public schools are improving, but recommends reforms: gradual 25 percent teacher pay hike, tighter curriculum, mandatory community service for students.
5. **Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School**, Theodore R.Sizer; National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Independent Schools, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, Mass.,

mid-1970s, even among those writers who, like the Progressives, prize a "nurturing and caring environment" in the schools.

One of them is Sara Lawrence Lightfoot. In **The Good High School** (Basic, 1983), she profiles six successful schools, ranging from Atlanta's all-black George Washington Carver High School to the elite St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire.

In all these institutions, Lightfoot finds that "ideology, authority, and order combine to produce a coherent institution that supports human interaction and growth." Students at Carver sometimes chafe under their

school's rigid rules, Lightfoot observes, but more often they are comforted by the assurance "that they will be protected, that people care."

The effects of the law-and-order regime at Carver, imposed three years ago by a new principal, have so far been cleaner halls and better attendance records, not vastly improved test scores. But "institutional invigoration and restoration is a slow, cumbersome process," Lightfoot says. She concludes: "These . . . minimal standards . . . [constitute] a first stage of movement towards higher goals"—notably, a solid education for all.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers may wish to consult previous WQ Background Books essays on *The Changing American Campus* (Autumn 1978), *The Public Schools* (Autumn 1979), *The Changing Family* (Summer 1980), and *Children in America* (Autumn 1982).

March 1984. \$16.95. Three-volume study (of which this book is the first) finds local school systems' bureaucracy stifling, urges greater control by teachers and principals over curriculum and teaching methods.

6. **Making the Grade**, Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy; Twentieth Century Fund, New York, N.Y., 1983. \$6. Advocates "master teacher" programs, federal leadership in making literacy in English and science chief goals, more federally funded education research.

7. **A Nation at Risk**, National Commission on Excellence in Education; U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., April 1983. \$4.50. Documents "rising tide of mediocrity" in schools, urges lengthening school year or day, re-emphasizing "basics," imparting computer literacy.

8. **The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto**, Mortimer Adler; The Paideia Group, New York, N.Y., Sept. 1982. \$2.95. Recommends rigorous uniform nationwide curriculum as means to an educationally classless society.

9. **A Place Called School**, John I. Goodlad; Institute for the Development of Educational Activities, McGraw-Hill, New York, N.Y., 1983. \$18.95. A first-hand study of more than 1,000 classrooms; recommends schooling from age four to 16, elimination of tracking, creation of a "head teacher" program.

10. **Successful Schools for Young Adolescents**, Joan Lipsitz; National Institute of Education, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, N.J., Nov. 1983. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$9.95. Analyzes four exemplary intermediate schools; isolates ingredients of success.