TEACHING
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
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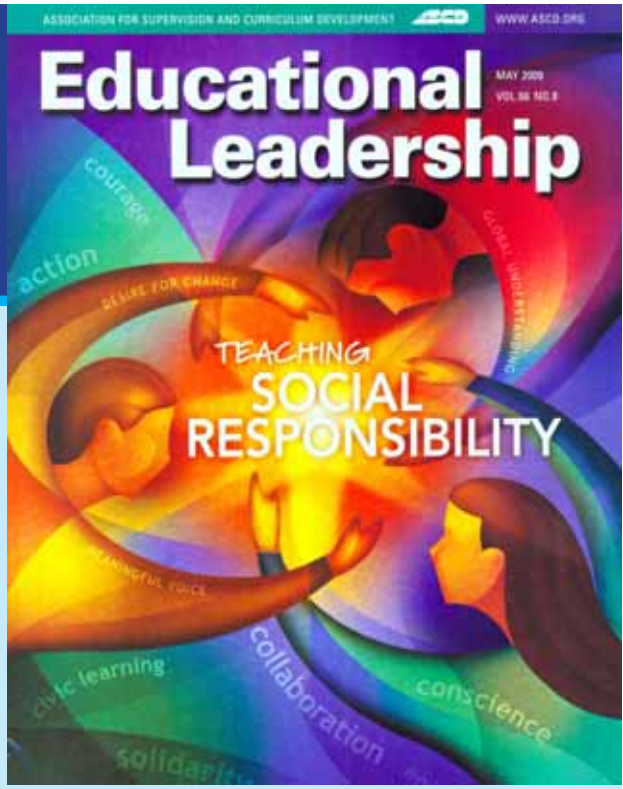
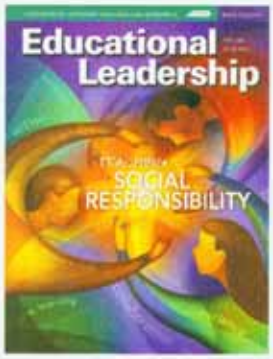


Taking Higher Ground

The lead story in my newspaper this morning features the upcoming G20 summit in London at which international leaders will discuss whether regulations, bailouts, and stimulus plans will do anything to stem the financial crisis. Another story is about North Dakota, where residents are wearily watching whether the sandbag barriers they've built will hold back the Red River. The stories have their similarities—looming disasters, overwhelming forces, demands for people to come together to solve the problem before it is too late. The flood story seems a simpler one. But perhaps it only seems easier to battle a raging river than to battle raging greed.



This issue of *Educational Leadership* is about the schools' mission to teach the practice of putting individual interests aside to work together for the common good. Social responsibility is difficult to teach because we cannot always give students clear-cut answers about how to solve social and environmental problems. In fact, because we don't know which problems our students will be called on to address in the future, the challenge of teaching what Charles Haynes calls "the moral habits of the heart" is even greater. In these confusing times, it is much easier to believe that teaching social responsibility is not the schools' job at all.

Our authors, though, make a compelling case for schools to reclaim the traditional role they have been entrusted with—guiding students to become responsible citizens. As Charles Haynes (p. 6) writes,

> World hunger and the other human tragedies—poverty, disease, tyranny, and war itself—offend a conscience shaped by concern for others. Meeting these challenges today requires more than politics and money; it requires people of conscience who are compelled to act.... Yes, reading and math are important. But what matters most is what kinds of human beings are reading the books and doing the math.

The authors in this issue believe it is necessary for all of us to learn about difficult 21st-century social issues—from genocide to global warming—but in developmentally appropriate ways. For example, the Facing History and Ourselves program (p. 59) engages students in thinking through connections between historical instances of mass violence and violent events today, but it starts with what students themselves know about conflict and prejudice. Environmental education programs like No Child Left Inside tackle such issues as global warming, species loss, and water scarcity from a scientific perspective. As Mike Weilbacher notes (p. 38), environmental education is a topic about which students have far more interest than real knowledge. It is time to correct that.

Author Laurel Schmidt (p. 32) warns that choosing to accept the challenge to teach social justice issues won't be easy. "Social justice," she writes, "is an unscripted mixture of politics, economics, laws, values, humanitarian crises, and issues that pit common sense against the common good. For every earnest cause, dozens of countervailing voices explain why the situation can't or shouldn't change."

Yet, as Schmidt says, our students are clamoring to debate these issues. From their earliest years in school, they look to their teachers to help them discover ways to respond to social problems.

"Meeting these challenges requires more than politics and money."

This generation of students is also more cognizant of world affairs than previous generations have been. As author Rahima Wade (p. 50) reminds us, "Technology has brought the injustices of the world to our students' doorsteps." It's only after being told consistently that these issues are off-limits at school that they begin to believe that certain problems are not their concern or just too hard to solve.

Idealistic and interested in action, students greet inauthentic learning with skepticism but are most willing to rise to a meaningful cause. We know that many causes await them. Our job is to make sure they have the knowledge, the courage, and the habits of heart to take them on.

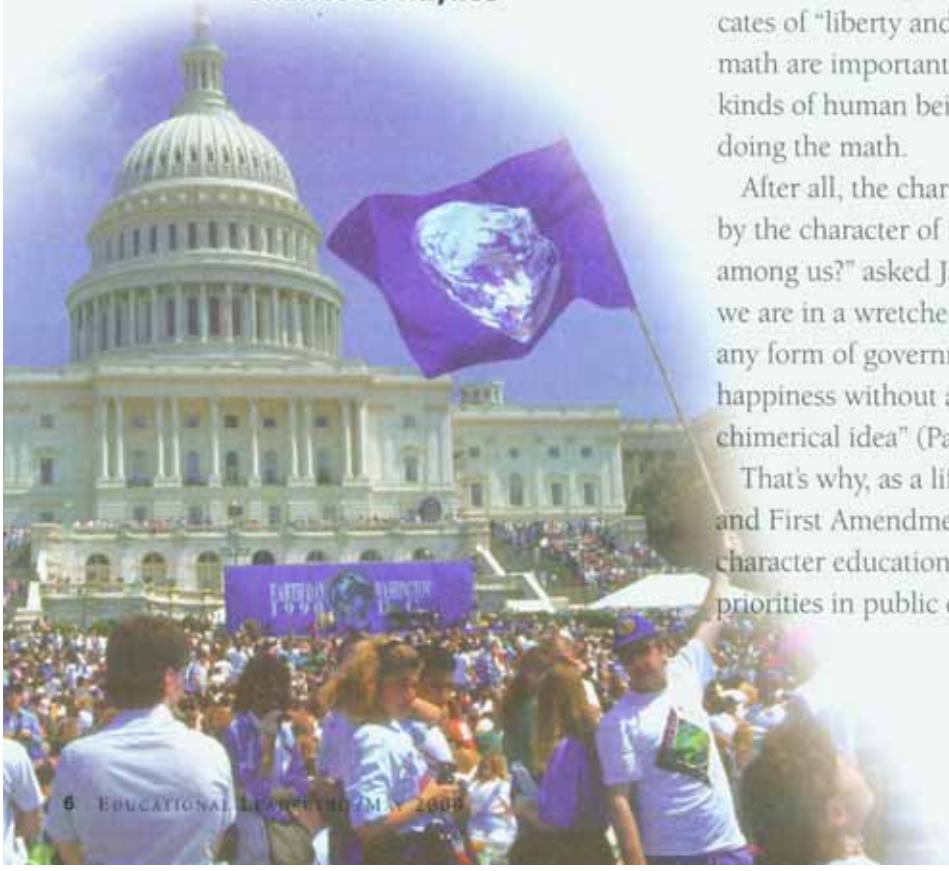
Marge Scherer

—Marge Scherer

Schools of Conscience

Education's highest aim is to create moral and civic habits of the heart.

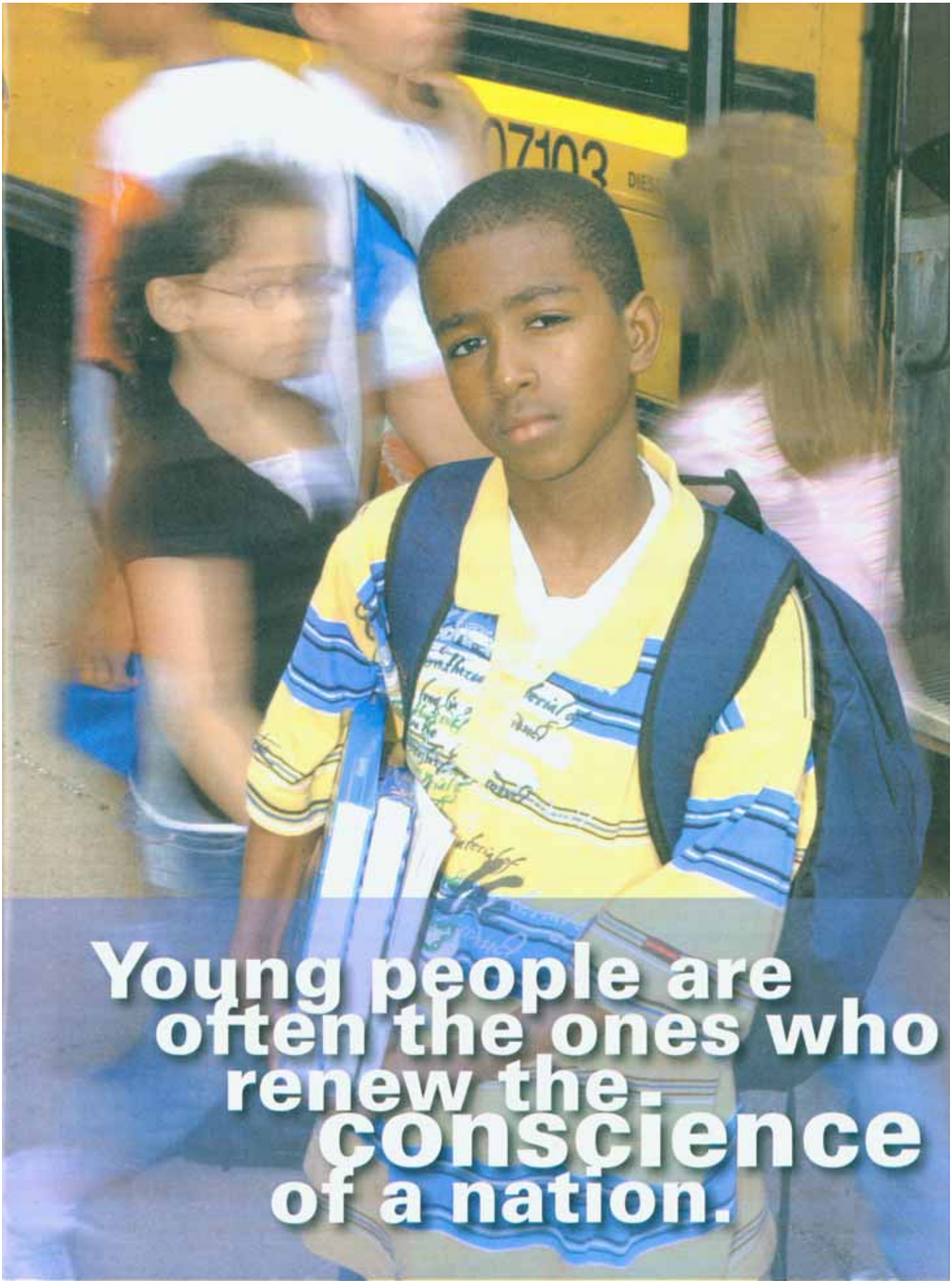
Charles C. Haynes



At a time when the United States faces unprecedented challenges at home and abroad, public schools must do far more to prepare young people to be engaged, ethical advocates of "liberty and justice for all." Yes, reading and math are important. But what matters most is what kinds of human beings are reading the books and doing the math.

After all, the character of a nation is determined by the character of its people. "Is there no virtue among us?" asked James Madison. "If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. . . . To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea" (Padover, 1953, p. 48).

That's why, as a lifelong advocate of social justice and First Amendment rights, I vigorously support character education and civic learning as high priorities in public education.


Young people are often the ones who renew the conscience of a nation.

A story I heard during a trip to Israel in August 2008 gave me a deeper appreciation for how much is at stake. I was standing in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. Our guide was relating stories of the Righteous—non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews—as we looked at the trees planted in their honor. During a pause in the narrative, one of our group, Richard Foltin of the American Jewish Committee, said almost inaudibly, "Not all of them are named." I turned and asked what he meant. He replied, "I am standing here now because of a man whose name I do not know." When pressed to explain, he told this story:

My parents are Holocaust survivors. When my father arrived at Auschwitz, they were separating those who would be killed immediately from those who would be put to work. A guard called out, "Is anyone here a welder?" and my father shouted, "I am," although he actually knew nothing about welding.

They sent my father and a few others to the welding shop and told them to make a sample of their work for inspection. My father stood there looking at the equipment, despairing over what to do. Then, almost imperceptibly, the German foreman in charge of the shop slipped a finished piece of work in front of my father. My father picked it up and took it to the guards, and he passed inspection.

Throughout the rest of his time in the camp, the foreman continued to secretly help my father—to cover for him when necessary. And my father survived. They didn't speak. We don't even know his name.

When Richard ended his story, I could not help but wonder, why did that nameless German risk his life for a Jew he did not know? More broadly, why did any of the thousands now called the Righteous respond with compassion and courage when so many others were either complicit or indifferent?

Civic Habits of the Heart

As I contemplated this question, I could not think of anything that the rescuers during the Holocaust had in common. Some were religious; others were not. Some were wealthy; others were poor. Some were highly educated; others were barely literate.

Then it struck me. We may never explain fully what combination of family, faith, education, or grace inspired them to risk everything, and in many cases to lose everything, for people they didn't know. But there's one thing most of them had in common: They did not stop to think about what they did; they simply acted. At the core of story after story we witness spontaneous courage, goodness, and compassion.

But people don't acquire these attributes suddenly when faced with suffering and evil. Rather, courage, goodness, and compassion are habits of the heart—shaped over a lifetime—which define individual conscience and determine how a person will respond when fellow human beings are hurt, attacked, or victimized.

John Weidner, a rescuer who organized a network in France that helped about 800 Jews escape the Nazis, explained,

> During our lives, each of us faces a choice: to think only about yourself, to get as much as you can for yourself, or to think about others, to serve, to be helpful to those who are in need. I believe that it is very important to develop your . . . heart, to have a heart open to the suffering of others. (Ritter & Myers, 1986, p. 65)

Developing students' hearts, I believe, is what educators are called to do. Each and every small act of honesty, service, responsibility, and compassion that teachers and administrators encourage daily in their students—and model consistently in their own lives—helps create moral and civic habits of the heart that instill in students the courage to care.

Schools should be the laboratories for acts of conscience.

Defining Conscience

Because *conscience* is a word that has sadly fallen into disuse in a culture preoccupied with self-interest and material gain, let me be clear what I mean by the term. Conscience is the faculty within each of us with which we search for life's ultimate meaning and distinguish right from wrong, good from evil. Conscience is informed by many sources: families and friends, communities of faith, and of course schools. Conscience inspires us to act for a higher purpose, to do what we *must* do because we believe it's right.

The freedom to follow what the framers of the U.S. Constitution described as "the dictates of conscience" is a precious, fundamental right founded on the inviolable dignity of the individual. That's why liberty of conscience is often called our "first freedom."

In recent decades, our national conscience appears to have fallen asleep. Consider that in fall 2008, when credit dried up and the stock market fell, the government declared an emergency and provided billions of dollars to rescue Wall Street. But when millions of people go to bed hungry, lack health care or employment, and live in poverty and despair, there is no declaration of national emergency, no bailout, no rescue plan, and no special session of Congress.

We must never forget the lesson taught at Yad Vashem: No matter how highly educated or sophisticated, a nation without a critical mass of citizens of conscience may become indifferent to suffering and fall prey to tyranny and intolerance.

Students of Conscience

Young people have often been the ones who renewed the conscience of the nation. Remember Barbara Johns? Only 16 years old in 1951, she understood

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the injustice of the terrible conditions in the segregated school she attended in Farmville, Virginia. If you attended the white school down the road, you actually got new textbooks and ceilings that didn't leak. So she took over the school assembly and led a student strike that changed America. She and her classmates suffered threats and intimidation; many were unable to finish their education. But their acts of conscience led to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended legal school segregation.

Our history is replete with such stories. Consider Billy Gobitis, the Jehovah's Witness 5th grader whose refusal to salute the flag on grounds of religious conscience in 1935 eventually led to a Supreme Court decision expanding liberty of conscience and free speech for all. Or Mary Beth Tinker, the high school student whose decision to wear a black armband protesting the Vietnam War in 1965 led to the landmark Supreme Court decision protecting students' right of expression in public schools. The list goes on (Haynes, Chaltain, & Glisson, 2006).

Far from being a nuisance that we need to control, students of conscience who dare to stand up for justice and freedom have always been our best hope for changing what is wrong and unjust in our society and in societies around the world. What Martin Luther King Jr. said about the students who sat in at lunch counters in 1960, helping pave the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, could also be said about Barbara, Billy, Mary Beth, and the many other young people who have had the courage to act on their convictions:

> I knew that as they were sitting in, they were really standing up for the best in the American dream. They were taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. (King, 1968)

The Problem of Moral Illiteracy

Here is our challenge: At a time when we most need to graduate people of conscience, many of our schools are prohibiting students from practicing civic habits of the heart and exercising their freedom of conscience. Growing numbers of schools are shutting down student voice, closing student newspapers, avoiding discussion of ethical issues, violating the First Amendment rights of students, excluding students and faculty from decision making, and sending dissent underground or onto the Internet (Hudson, 2003, 2005).

Even in those schools committed to developing character and conscience, much of the curriculum continues to undermine the ethical message the schools say they wish to convey. Because we are in the worst economic crisis in more than 70 years (a crisis rooted in greed and exacerbated by unethical behavior), let me single out economics education for special concern.

As Warren Nord and I (1998) have pointed out, the national content standards in economics—and most texts—never make moral judgments or discuss morality. They make no reference to the environment, materialism, poverty, justice, rights, codes of ethics, or the dignity of human beings. Why? Because the disciplinary framework that shapes the standards and the textbooks is neoclassical economic theory, according to which people are essentially self-interested utility maximizers and values are personal preferences. Economics, in other words, has nothing to do with ethics.

Shouldn't we also expose economics students to the humane, religious, and ethical ways of thinking about economics? The standards and texts ignore poverty as a moral issue, are silent about economic and social justice, fail to even mention charitable giving, say nothing about work as a calling, and avoid any mention of the

We need schools that actually practice what their civics classes are supposed to teach.

effects of economic growth on the environment (Nord & Haynes, 1998).

Given this morally impoverished view of the human enterprise, why are we surprised at the widespread corruption, greed, and just plain selfishness that contributed to the current economic crisis? Growing numbers of business schools, including George Washington University's, are now dramatically reframing their curriculums to focus on ethics. It's about time. And it's also about time to do the same at every level, in every school.

Molding Civic Conscience

Instead of presenting barriers to shaping people of conscience, schools should be the laboratories for acts of conscience. We want to inspire students to follow their conscience not *in spite* of what we teach and do in our schools, but *because* of what we teach and do.

Recently, at a superintendents' conference in Michigan, I watched as high school students participating in the Kids Against Hunger initiative stood at tables outside meeting rooms busily preparing nutritionally balanced food packages for people who are hungry. The idea was to inspire the superintendents going in and out of sessions to focus not just on budgets and test scores but also on creating school climates of compassion and service.

The students involved in this initiative do more than measure rice and fill boxes. They also learn in class why 18,000 children die every day from hunger and 850 million people go to bed every night with empty stomachs. Most important, they investigate long-term solutions to one of the world's most devastating problems.

World hunger and the other human tragedies—poverty, disease, tyranny, and war itself—offend a conscience shaped by concern for others. Meeting these challenges requires more than politics and money; it requires people of conscience who are compelled to act.

Freedom of Conscience in Action

To prepare students to be ethical, engaged citizens, we must give them (and all members of the school community) meaningful opportunities to practice freedom responsibly in a school culture that encourages shared decision making, service learning, peer mediation, ethical use of the Internet, and a free student press. In short, we need schools that actually practice what their civics classes are supposed to teach: freedom and democracy, not censorship and repression.

Schools of conscience are committed to supporting students in their personal search for meaning and truth while simultaneously teaching them the civic principles and virtues necessary for sustaining the common good in a democracy. Schools of conscience also allow students to exercise their right of conscience by giving them a meaningful voice in shaping the life of the school.

At the Character Education Partnership's annual forum in November 2008, it was inspiring to see how many of the award-winning best practices in character education focus on giving students a real voice. For example, at Valley Park Middle School in Missouri, one of 11 schools honored by the Partnership as a 2008 National School of Character, every class creates its own set of rules, and every student has the opportunity to speak at class meetings. The student-run Character Council suggests areas for improvement. Trained peer mediators help their fellow students resolve conflicts. Students frequently discuss ethical issues in

I live far from Rwanda and Sudan, but I know what can be done in my own neighborhood.

classes across the curriculum; for example, a science class may explore the importance of honesty in research.

Valley Park has discovered not only what really matters, but also what works. Five years ago, the school had many of the same academic and discipline challenges most schools face, and students lacked a sense of belonging. Today, character education has transformed the entire school culture. Suspensions are way down, grades are up, and all members of the school community—students, staff, and parents—now feel part of a caring family. (For a full description of Valley Park and the other 2008 winners, visit www.character.org/nsoc.)

César Chávez Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., is another school that is making the connection between civic conscience and democratic freedom. A Mexican immigrant, Irasema Salcido, founded the school in 1998 to give students who have been neglected and left behind the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to make a difference in their community and nation. The school, now expanded to three campuses serving more than 1,200 predominantly black and Latino students in grades 6–12, integrates public policy issues and moral questions across the curriculum. Talking to a reporter about her course in world history, one student spoke for many:

> I've learned a lot about the world in this course, and it has changed my sense of responsibility. I act more responsibly in my community. I live far from Rwanda and Sudan, but I know what can be done in my own neighborhood. Things can change. If you put your mind to it, it can be done. (Snow, 2004, p. DZ04)

At César Chávez, every student is actively engaged through projects and internships in issues of social justice and civic responsibility. For example, 10th grade students recently worked on issues ranging from adequate bus service in low-income areas to campaign finance reform. And in 11th grade, students complete a three-week academic fellowship at a wide variety of public policy organizations, from the Leadership Committee on Civil Rights to the Heritage Foundation. The school's work has been aptly described as "molding a civic conscience" (Snow, 2004, p. DZ04).

The Courage to Care

Describing schools like César Chávez and Valley Park brings me full circle, back to the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem. As I stood there contemplating the courage of the rescuers, I remembered with gratitude and admiration the many educators who strive each day to create schools of conscience, places committed to preparing students to stand up for liberty and justice for all. Their dedication to the cause of conscience inspires hope for the future of the American experiment in democratic freedom.

One of the rescuers honored in the

Support for Becoming a School of Conscience

To learn more about how your school can better support character education and civic learning, visit the Web site of First Amendment Schools (www.firstamendmentschools.org), a national initiative cosponsored by ASCD and the First Amendment Center to help schools affirm First Amendment principles and put these principles into action. Now in its fifth year, the First Amendment Schools Network consists of nearly 100 schools throughout the nation—K-12, public and private—committed to becoming laboratories of democratic freedom.

garden is Magda Trocme, who with her husband Pastor Andre Trocme helped Jews hide in and around the village of Le Chambon in central France. In an interview given just before her death, she described in a few simple sentences what it means to have the courage to care:

> None of us thought we were heroes. We were just people trying to do our best.... Remember that in your life there will be lots of circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision of your own, not about other people but about yourself. I would not say more. (Ritter & Myers, 1986, p. 107)

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Measuring Social

We can—and should—measure a far broader set of outcomes than just reading and math.

Richard Rothstein and Rebecca Jacobsen

Teaching students to read, write, and compute are important goals of public education, but near obsession with basic skills testing is crowding out other goals. Socially responsible citizenship has long been an important purpose of school, but teachers and schools have cut back on developing citizenship skills because accountability sanctions now rely solely on academic test scores.

In a 2007 survey, the Center for Education Policy found that accountability for academic achievement works in the sense that it increases instruction in the subjects for which schools are accountable. For example, because of accountability requirements, nearly two-thirds of school districts had increased reading and math time. Increases were greatest in urban districts with disadvantaged students where schools were sanctioned under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) because of low test scores. In these districts, reading and math instruction increased by more than four hours each week.

The center found, however, that to make time for these increases the districts cut instruction in social studies, science, art and music, physical education, and recess. As a result, schools serving disadvantaged students have responded to NCLB by widening the achievement gap in social responsibility and other curricular areas for which the schools are no longer held accountable (McMurrer, 2007, 2008).

A Dangerous Gap

If you doubt the seriousness of this, consider the research of James J. Heckman (Carneiro & Heckman, 2002), a Nobel prize–winning economist at the University of Chicago. From a national longitudinal survey of children and youth, Heckman and his colleagues calculated "antisocial" scores from the frequency of children's dishonest, cruel, noncooperative, violent, or disobedient behavior. The measurements were taken at age 4 and again at age 12. At both ages, children from families at the bottom of the income distribution had, on average,

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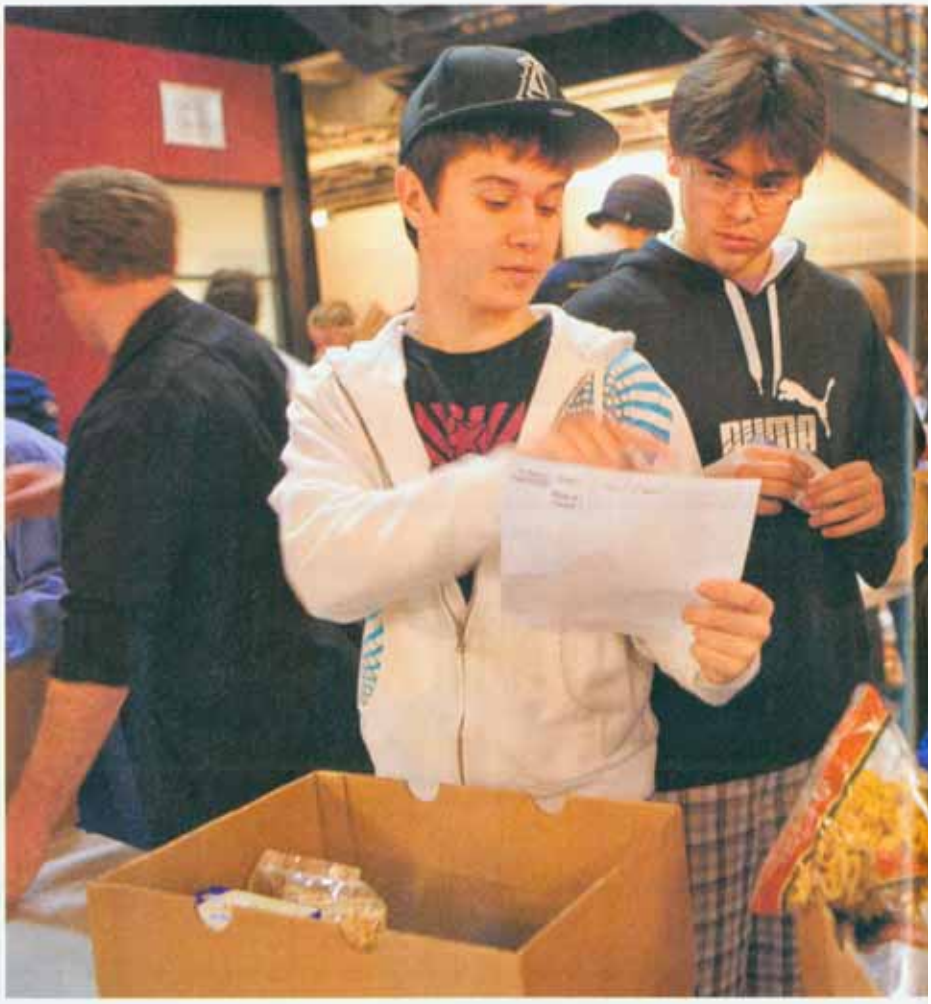
the worst antisocial scores. Those from middle-income families scored better on average; those from the highest-income families scored the best (see Rothstein, 2004).

Accountability policies that concentrate on raising math and reading scores and that create incentives for teachers to ignore issues of social responsibility cannot advance the equity goals of U.S. education. The teachers we have interviewed have confirmed this concern.

For example, Shari Adams, an art teacher in a low-income elementary school in Calvert County, Maryland, told us that her lowest-scoring students no longer study art; they are pulled out instead for math and reading remediation. Adams noted that by missing art class, the students missed out on more than just art:

> They miss out on learning about tolerance, taking turns, being responsible to clean up and help as a team. They learn as a community, they learn the give and take, the life skills, the self-expression part.



John Perry teaches 4th grade in a low-income school in Tampa, Florida. He used to take students on field trips to the state capital, to make the abstraction of government real for them. They visited the state Supreme Court, watched the House of Representatives in session, and met legislators. Perry said this was "a chance for [students] to make the connection that they might be participating citizens." But as narrow testing in basic skills has increased in importance, these experiences were cut from his school curriculum.

Casey Bilger, a 3rd grade teacher in Phoenix, Arizona, whose students are overwhelmingly low income and Hispanic, told us that because of low math and reading scores, he was required to cut back on social studies and science. According to Bilger, students

> aren't learning about government, communities, people, or places. . . . In science, they miss out on group work and hands-on learning . . . .They are not learning skills like decision making, independence, or creativity. They don't really get to do art, projects, group work over time, where they have to make decisions together about how to do it. What [school administrators] want you to do instead is cram one standard after another down their throats. [Students] don't understand the NCLB legislation obviously, so to them it's just boring. Boring curriculum becomes behavior problems.

And Missy Beach told us that for her Beaumont, Texas, 1st graders (almost all of whom were low-income minority students) she previously used a classroom management program called Workshop Way. She explained,

> It has . . . jobs or centers around the room, with certain tasks for which the children get a partner. But when Texas began its standardized test program, we started to have testing every six weeks, and everything got so rigid that we couldn't do any of the neat stuff anymore. . . . We don't have time anymore for anything that can't be tested or be put on a Scantron.

In an era of accountability, if it can't be tested, it won't be done. But accountability and teaching social responsibility need not be at odds. Although such assessment would be more expensive

than using computerized scan sheets, we *can* determine whether schools are successfully teaching social responsibility.

When NAEP Measured Character

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests samples of students in various academic subjects. NAEP tells us, for example, how the math skills of students in one state compare with the skills of students in another.

But NAEP was much broader when it was first designed 45 years ago. Early NAEP scores reported on how students were developing social responsibility and other citizenship skills and on their character development, emotional and physical health, and basic academic proficiency.

Ralph Tyler led the planning team for NAEP. Tyler had described the importance of assessing a broad range of skills in his 1949 book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. His NAEP design team included survey questions and student observations to assess social responsibility and a variety of other behaviors.

What really stops us from pursuing a balanced accountability system is cost and vision, not capability.

Teamwork and Cooperation

To see whether students were learning to cooperate effectively in small groups, NAEP sent trained observers to present a game to 9-year-olds in sampled schools. In teams of four, the 9-year-olds were offered a prize (such as crayons or yo-yos) to guess what object was hidden in a box. Students could ask yes-or-no questions; two teams competed to see who could identify the toy first. Cooperation was necessary—all team members had to agree on which question to ask, and the role of posing the questions rotated.

Trained NAEP observers rated the students on whether they suggested a new question, gave reasons for their viewpoints, sought additional information that supported the team's work, helped organize the procedure, or otherwise demonstrated cooperative problem-solving skills. Students were also rated on whether they impeded teamwork—for example, by making discouraging or irrelevant comments. NAEP then reported on the percentage of 9-year-olds who were capable of cooperative problem solving (Campbell, Nichols, Ferris, Sawyer, & Bond, 1970).

NAEP assessors also gave a cooperative exercise to 13- and 17-year-olds. Assessors presented groups of eight students with a list of issues about which teenagers typically had strong opinions. Students were asked to reach consensus on the five most important issues and then write a recommendation that the group supported on how to resolve at least two of them.

The list included, for 13-year-olds, such issues as whether they should have a set bedtime, whether they should be allowed to watch movies with adult content, and whether parents should have the right to approve their choices of friends. For 17-year-olds, the list included compulsory school attendance and military service requirements as well as the age eligibility minimums for voting, drinking, and smoking.

As they did with 9-year-olds, NAEP observers rated whether students took clear positions, gave reasons for their points of view, sought additional relevant information, helped organize internal procedures, or defended a group member's right to hold a contrary viewpoint. They also noted whether students demeaned the group's work or did something totally unrelated to the task.

The results of these assessments weren't satisfactory. NAEP's national report showed, for example, that only 4 percent of 13-year-olds defended the right of another group member to voice a different opinion, and only 6 percent were willing to defend their own viewpoints in the face of opposition.

Civil Liberties and Citizenship

In 1969, the United States was in the throes of a civil rights revolution, so NAEP assessed whether schools were preparing young people for responsible citizenship in this context. NAEP interviewers asked 13- and 17-year-olds what they believed they should do if they saw a public park attendant barring children from entering because of their race. NAEP reported that 82 percent of 13-year-olds and 90 percent of 17-year-olds knew they should do something, such as tell their parents; report it to a public authority or to a civil rights or civil liberties organization; write letters to the newspaper; or take social action, such as picketing or leafleting.

Early NAEP assessed whether 17-year-olds were able to consider alternative viewpoints by asking them to state arguments both for and against one of the most heated public issues of the time—whether students enrolled in college should be drafted. One question asked 9- and 13-year-olds if something might be false, even if it was reported as being true in the newspaper.

NAEP also attempted to determine whether students understood that individuals should be judged on their own merits and not be held responsible for others' misdeeds. Interviewers asked 9- and 13-year-olds whether, if the father of a friend was jailed for theft, they would still invite the friend to their houses to play.

To assess students' commitment to civil liberties, 13- and 17-year-olds were asked if they thought that someone should be permitted to say on television that "Russia is better than the United States," that "Some races of people are better than others," or that "It is not necessary to believe in God." (An interviewer posed these questions to the 13-year-olds, whereas the 17-year-olds answered the questions on a paper-and-pencil test.) NAEP reported that only 3 percent of 13-year-olds and 17 percent of 17-year-olds thought all three statements should be permitted.

Accountability and teaching social responsibility need not be at odds.

Ethical Questions

NAEP assessed social responsibility in more private situations as well. In 1977, 17-year-olds were asked, in a multiple-choice exercise, what they should do if they noticed that their friend's 6-month-old baby had bruises. The correct answer was "Suggest that your friend call her baby's doctor about the bruises." Incorrect choices included "Ignore the bruises because they are none of your business" and "Accuse your friend of beating her child." Follow-up prompts explained that on a subsequent visit, when the baby still appeared to be bruised, the friend said the baby had fallen out of her crib. The prompt asked what you should do next, with the correct answer being, "Call the local child health agency and report your suspicions" (NAEP, 1979).

Certainly, if we used results on questions such as these—and not only math and reading scores—to evaluate our school systems, incentives would shift. National reporting of low scores on the civil liberties questions, for example, might spur the public to demand that schools do a better job on citizenship. Such pressure might reduce the incentive to drop cooperative learning in favor of test preparation in math and reading.

A Matter of Vision

In the 1970s, Congress cut NAEP's budget in half (Vinovskis, 1998). NAEP ceased observing behavioral outcomes and, with the exception of a 1997 arts and music assessment, became exclusively a pencil-and-paper test. Yet the design of early NAEP challenges the assumption that assessing social responsibility is impossible; it demonstrates that what really stops us from pursuing a balanced accountability system is cost and vision, not capability. Sending trained observers to schools around the United States would cost more than assessments consisting only of machine-scored booklets, but the cost to student learning is far greater when we fail to invest in such a balanced accountability system.

But an accountability system for the broad goals of education could not rely solely on early NAEP-type items, no matter how sophisticated they might be. Results of observational judgments could be reliable at a state level, but most schools are too small to support such sampling. Another accountability component would need to be state-conducted school inspections, designed to determine whether the school was teaching social responsibility and the effect of this program on students.

Fortunately, here we have other precedents. In Great Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and elsewhere, school accountability systems combine testing with school visitation in which inspectors judge a broad range of outcomes.

In England, for example, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) employs a corps of professional inspectors, including an elite group called Her Majesty's Inspectors, composed mostly of retired teachers and principals. The system, which has been in place since 1839, has inspectors visit each school approximately once every three years, with schools in greater need of improvement having more frequent inspections. The inspectors examine test scores; observe student interactions (such as

their behavior in the hallways during class changes); and report on, among other student and school characteristics,

- The extent of learners' overall personal development and well-being.
- The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
- The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles.
- The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.

To pass inspection, schools must have satisfactory academic test scores, but this is not enough—they must also earn satisfactory ratings on judgments such as these.

Holding schools accountable for social responsibility as well as for academic test scores is not a foreign idea. That youth should learn to accept diversity as a goal of education, for example, did not originate with contemporary affirmative action proponents. George Washington wanted to create a national public university to bring youths of different backgrounds together to develop a common identity. And when Thomas Jefferson proposed the first universal system of public education, he set forth a few key objectives of schooling. Basic academic skills were included, as was training for citizenship, specifically the ability to make intelligent choices when electing political leaders. Holding schools accountable only for math and reading scores is a modern aberration.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon proposed the creation of a National Institute of Education (now called the Institute of Education Sciences) to help develop an accountability system. He said this system should

> pay as much heed to what are called the "immeasurables" of schooling (largely because no one has yet learned to measure them) such as responsibility, wit, and humanity as it does to verbal and mathematical achievement.

Although his call went unheeded, it's not too late to return to this vision. In the wake of widespread recognition of the distortions wrought by NCLB's narrow test-based accountability, this is a good time to insist on accountability of schools for a broad set of outcomes. We know a lot more than we think we do about how to teach and measure social responsibility. We need only apply what we know. EL

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The Schools We Mean to Be

Parents and teachers together are powerful vehicles for driving the moral growth of adults and students.

Richard Weissbourd

It is the spring of my son's sophomore year in high school, and my wife and I find ourselves hustling from classroom to classroom for our parent-teacher conferences, trying to protect our allotted 15 minutes with each of his five teachers. With three children, we are veterans of this dance, but this evening I find myself battling desolation. It's not that my son is struggling in school or suffering a serious problem; it's that the two teachers we have met thus far have taken us through the same dreary ritual. The teacher begins the session by pulling out a sheet of paper. She recites my son's test scores or grades and then makes a comment about his being distracted at times and not listening. That "not listening" hangs in the air. I find myself bristling. Is it a euphemism of some kind? Does she find my child difficult? She then tells us that he is "a good kid."

I don't sense that either of these teachers truly knows my son or wonders about what my wife and I are hoping for and fretting about or what we think will help him learn. I know that he doesn't like one of these teachers and that, in his opinion, one of these classes is "hell." Yet neither teacher seems to be aware of how he experiences her class.

Then we meet with a third teacher. She starts off the session by telling us how much she enjoys having our son in her class. She describes his willingness to risk being "dumb" by asking questions for the whole class. She tells us when and how he is confident and when and how he is tentative. She describes his easy relationships with a wide range of classmates and his desire to be helpful. She also talks about his being distracted at times. Yet one of her explanations for this behavior—that any kind of repetitive task is hard for him—helps me understand something about my son that has been opaque to me. She tells us that he never interrupts her or is rude.

She asks us how we think he is doing and if we have any concerns, and she listens carefully to our thoughts. I feel that we are in a common project together, one that is academic but also moral—the project of raising a whole person and a good person. I have to resist the temptation to envelop her in a bear hug.

Cultivating Character

U.S. public schools were originally conceived not solely as an engine of academic success. They were intended chiefly to cultivate in students a certain ideal of character (Hunter, 2000; Katz, 1995). Public schools were charged with the responsibility of taking rising

waves of poor urban and immigrant children and molding them into responsible, upright citizens.

Today, the expectation that schools will cultivate character and social responsibility is again widespread. Legions of U.S. schools have invested in packaged character-education programs of one kind or another that tout such values as discipline, self-control, responsibility for others, and fairness. Numerous programs focus specifically on generating in students a sense of social responsibility.

Students should clearly know values, and these programs can sometimes curb troubling behaviors or broaden students' sense of social responsibility. But there is another stark truth: Schools have been trying variations of these programs for decades, and rarely do these programs fundamentally change students' moral capacities.

That's because these programs typically have no effect on what matters most. What's at the heart of children's moral development is not the capacity of teachers or other adults to teach values or social responsibility; rather, it's *the nature of the relationships* that schools establish. Yet these relationships get short shrift in character-education programs.

Parents and Teachers Together

Character-education programs also rarely give any significant attention to the school relationship that can be the most important in determining students' moral prospects—the relationship between parents and teachers. Although many factors affect students' moral development—peers, genetic influences, television, and other media—there's no question that parents play the primary role in either nurturing—or undermining—children's capacities for kindness, honesty, courage, and moral reasoning as well as their notions of justice and their sense of responsibility for others. Effective efforts to instill

ethical abilities and social responsibility in students must be deeply interwoven with the work of engaging parents meaningfully.

Yet it's still the exceptional school that enables parents to feel integral to the school community and that nurtures close teacher-parent ties. Further, many schools, especially in middle- and upper-class communities, are dealing with micromanaging, aggressive parents who sometimes act selfishly and disrespectfully themselves in their interactions with school staff. Daunted by the task of influencing parents, many schools have opted instead to simply keep them at bay.

In an era when schools are under the gun to improve student performance, administrators are understandably looking for quick fixes and shortcuts. Yet there are no straightforward or easy ways for schools to develop powerful moral capacities in students, and students tend to sniff out exactly how half-baked most character-education programs are.

If we are serious about promoting students' moral development in schools, it's crucial to focus both on adult development—on the mentoring and moral capacities of teachers and parents—and on how teachers and parents can work together more constructively. Why do these relationships so commonly go awry? How can schools constructively work with aggressive and demanding parents? We need to make schools places where we adults—both teachers and parents—are not simply, as educators Harvard Knowles and David Weber (1981) put it, more adept than students "at manipulating the rhetoric of morality" (p. 87). Instead, schools should encourage adults to examine their own values, moral abilities, and attitudes; reflect on the school as a moral environment; and strive together to ensure that students grow up to be good people in the world.

Moral Mentors

Parents and teachers can clearly be more effective if they agree on what values are important to promote and on how to promote them. Yet the best parent-teacher relationships are not just about promoting generic values. In the strongest relationships, parents and teachers mentor each other and achieve something wonderful—a kind of pure focus, uncluttered by their own issues and agendas, on the interests of a child, as the third teacher did at our son's parent-teacher conference.

In the best relationships, both parents and teachers can be vulnerable and self-aware, thinking together about how they might better handle a child's trouble, and pooling their knowledge to understand the many interacting factors that may undermine a child's capacity for caring or responsibility.

Seven-year-old Anna, for example,

can act arrogant and entitled with other students, partly because from an early age her parents, as they recognize, have catered to her every need. It's vital for her parents and teacher, putting together their different perspectives, to think through how they might help Anna become more attuned and attentive to other people both inside and outside of school.

Fifteen-year-old Fred acts surly and superior with his teacher: He is reeling from his parents' divorce and is ashamed of and enraged at his father, who has just left his mother for a much younger woman. According to his mother, two of his teachers, who don't know about the divorce, have simply stamped him as a "child with an attitude" and are far too quick to punish him. Fred also feels that his mother now relies on him to be a kind of partner to her, a role he resents. Whether Fred emerges from this experience more or less able to control destructive feelings and more or less respectful of adults will depend on his teachers' and parents' ability to think through the roots of his defiance, including their own roles, and develop strategies for constructively engaging him.

It's not just teacher-parent contacts that can affect students' moral growth. As I will take up later, schools can engage parents in a *moral community* that pushes parents to look beyond their own children and that bolsters parents' moral and mentoring capacities.

What Gets in the Way?

Many factors can undermine parent-teacher relationships. Many teachers fail to form real alliances with parents because they fear that getting below the surface will stir up conflict. The great educator John Dewey was a fierce enemy of the politeness and formalism (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) that can stifle the parent-teacher relationship. Some teachers, especially high school teachers, don't see it as their job to work closely with parents to understand a student, and many teachers are so stressed and overextended that they fall back on reciting test scores, as did the first two teachers at my son's parent-teacher conferences.

Other teachers worry a great deal about disappointing parents. "Parent-teacher conferences are by far the most stressful times of the year for me," a warm, intelligent teacher, who is also a parent, told me. "Parents are handing over responsibility for their child's learning to me. And it's terrifying to think that I might fail or even be perceived as failing."

Further, the reasons that parent-teacher contacts do not go well can starkly differ between poor and middle- and upper-class communities. Low-income parents are often suspicious of schools—they frequently have bad memories of their own time as students—and they commonly have little experience advocating for their children in school. The challenge in low-income communities is often to help parents overcome these suspicions and barriers, whereas the challenge in well-off communities is often to keep overbearing parents from disrupting school functioning.

High-End, High-Maintenance

I first became attuned to the pervasiveness of this problem in better-off communities talking to David, a tall, slightly mischievous man who had been a beloved teacher in a junior high school in a middle-class Boston suburb for more than 20 years. He recently decided to leave the profession because he couldn't deal with parents anymore. He told me that one parent who was upset about his daughter's grades wanted to read every student's paper in the class to see whether the teacher had fairly graded his daughter. Another parent, whose son was outright rude, encouraged his son to ignore David's attempts to discipline him. A third parent asked him to overlook her daughter's plagiarism. The worst, though, were parents who "were always seeking an advantage for their child"—parents who wanted him to give their child "extra attention" or who pushed the school to provide more enrichment classes for their intelligent child. "A lot of parents are just advocating for their kid," he said, "and they don't care about how they might be hurting other kids."

We are in a common project together, raising a whole person and a good person.

Other teachers have expressed their concern about parents who want to have their fingers in every aspect of the classroom experience. One suburban teacher told me that she will never forgive a parent who got on her knees and sniffed the classroom rug to see if it was producing odors that might bother her child. Psychologist and school consultant Michael Thompson says that sometimes what teachers want is for children to have a "parentectomy" (1996).

However, it's not just the difficult, micromanaging parents who create unreasonable burdens on teachers. Many other parents cause difficulties in subtle, unintended ways. I know I have experienced a kind of tunnel vision when it comes to my children and have lost sight of teachers' perspectives. I

recently heard a teacher complain about parents who try to talk to her when they drop off their child in the morning, a crucial period for her in preparing for class. I felt the sting of recognition—I had done this more than once. Some parents try to befriend teachers as a way of currying favor for their child or hang around the classroom, scrutinizing teachers and peppering them with suggestions.

In affluent communities especially, teachers can feel that they are under the parents' microscope. Teachers frequently believe that these adults who are judging them not only are biased toward their own child and but also are unaware of the demands and purposes of a teacher's work. It's no wonder that many schools try to keep parents at arm's length.

A Common Moral Project

Hard as it is for any teacher or administrator to deal with difficult parents, no school serious about moral development can simply keep them at bay—because the children of these parents are likely to be at greatest moral risk. Schools do not have to set out to fundamentally change these parents. But they can provide teachers with ongoing support and guidance in working with them, including helping teachers to avoid easy finger pointing and scapegoating and to manage class biases. For example, it can be helpful for teachers to see that some parents who come across as arrogant and entitled may be fearful, isolated human beings who are terrified of handing over their child to a stranger or of losing control over their child.

Schools, whether rich or poor, can engage parents in a moral community that creates moral expectations for parents and pushes them to look beyond their own children. That means, in part, finding multiple ways to engage parents—as classroom volunteers, on parent councils, as members of teams devoted to particular projects. And it means that schools need to clearly articulate their moral goals and expectations for both parents and students through moral charters—clear, visible statements of a school's values. More important, these charters cannot just collect dust or become part of the scenery, their typical fate. They need to live and breathe not only in classrooms, but also in every aspect of school life.

Students tend to sniff out exactly how half-baked most character-education programs are.

My children attended a public elementary school that brought both parents and students into a kind of moral community. Our interactions with teachers, school events, posters on walls, and communications from our principal all expressed a set of moral commitments:

- That both parents and students are members of a community and have responsibility for all members of that community.
- That every student has intellectual and personal contributions to make to the learning of the whole community.
- That the school has the responsibility to recognize and support those contributions.
- That school is preparation not only for a career, but also for many facets of citizenship.
- That diversity is of high value and that the community will engage and test diverse opinions.
- That students must learn to identify and address social inequities and injustice.

Our parent-teacher conferences often did not focus solely on our own child, but on how our child might be helpful to other children in the classroom, as well as on schoolwide concerns and the possible roles parents could play in helping deal with those concerns. Homework was often about issues of equity and fairness, and sometimes students were asked to engage their parents as part of this homework. Teachers regularly expressed their commitment to all students in the building—not just to the students in their classroom—and went out of their way both to work with students who were marginalized and struggling and to engage those students' parents.

Recently this school had to merge with another school that has large numbers of students who are academically struggling, a challenge most schools would be skittish about. This school staff openly embraced the challenge and encouraged parents to embrace it as well.

What Schools Can Do

Schools and parents can do specific, concrete things to create the conditions that make strong relationships possible. In parent-teacher conferences, for instance, parents might start the session by reporting something positive that their child has said about the teacher—something parents rarely do. When teachers, for their part, start a parent-teacher conference by identifying a distinct strength of a child—and explain how that strength expresses itself in a classroom, as that third teacher did with my wife and me—they can set a parent-teacher conference on a wholly different path than if they recite test scores or immediately zero in on problems. It also

helps if teachers use "we" with parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). In moving a child forward or responding to a child's difficulty, rather than asking "What are you going to do?" or "What am I going to do?" why not ask "What are *we* going to do?" so that you can establish a constructive alliance.

Schools also need to have students read about and interact with moral exemplars, men and women of strong conviction who are working to improve the world. Schools should not only provide community-service opportunities that enable students to work with moral leaders but also routinely invite such leaders into school to address students. In addition, students should have opportunities to reflect on values and mull over moral dilemmas and questions, especially those that emerge from their daily experiences. At Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School in Massachusetts, for example, a group of students creates dramatic presentations annually that explore community-wide social and ethical concerns, such as whether a student should snitch on a good friend who is stealing from the store where he works.

The Child Development Project, based in Oakland, California, and Open Circle, based outside of Boston, Massachusetts, also guide teachers in creating a democratic community. Students do structured exercises that help them take the perspectives of other students—in Open Circle, for example, students take others' points of view in deciding when teasing is and is not harmful—and they have opportunities to create rules for the community, solve classroom problems, and determine sanctions. Students are far more likely to embrace a rule or value when, instead of having an adult dictate that rule or value, they come to it through their most prized capacity—their ability to think. Well-structured community-service programs and opportunities for older students to

mentor younger students can also bolster key moral qualities.

It's also crucial that teachers regularly reflect and get feedback from one another about their relationships with students. Students don't absorb the values and moral commitments of teachers they don't respect, and large numbers of students don't trust and respect their teachers. Teachers need to be able to talk with other teachers and administrators about why certain students don't respect or trust them and about what they might do to repair these relationships.

At the same time, teachers, like other adults, need to work on developing their own moral and mentoring capacities. It never dawns on most teachers—or on most adults—to work on these qualities. There's a widespread belief in our culture that our moral qualities are fixed as adults. Yet research shows that some adults morally regress whereas other adults develop much stronger moral capacities. It's vital for teachers to see appreciating and caring for others, acting with fairness and integrity, and formulating mature and resilient ideals as evolving and subtle moral capacities.

Much of this work will be difficult, especially in the many schools where preparing students for high-stakes tests is gobbling up teachers' energy and time. But we know too well the dismal outcomes of the usual character-education bromides. What's more, the things that are most crucial to supporting students' moral development—developing strong connections between teachers and parents and strengthening teacher-student ties—are also crucial to students' academic development. And unlike so many other character-education efforts, this work gives students a real shot at developing the capacities they need to become kind and responsible adults. EL

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When we embrace social justice as a pillar of learning in our classrooms, we declare that we're all responsible for improving our world.

Laurel Schmidt

In an era of homogenized, shrink-wrapped, germ-free curriculum, social justice is the renegade. It doesn't just push the envelope—it's several leagues outside the box. For a start, it has few right answers. Study geography, and you know you're dealing with topography and climate. Even history has some solid content among the questions and interpretations. But social justice is amorphous. It's an unscripted mixture of politics, economics, laws, values, humanitarian crises, and issues that pit common sense against the common good.

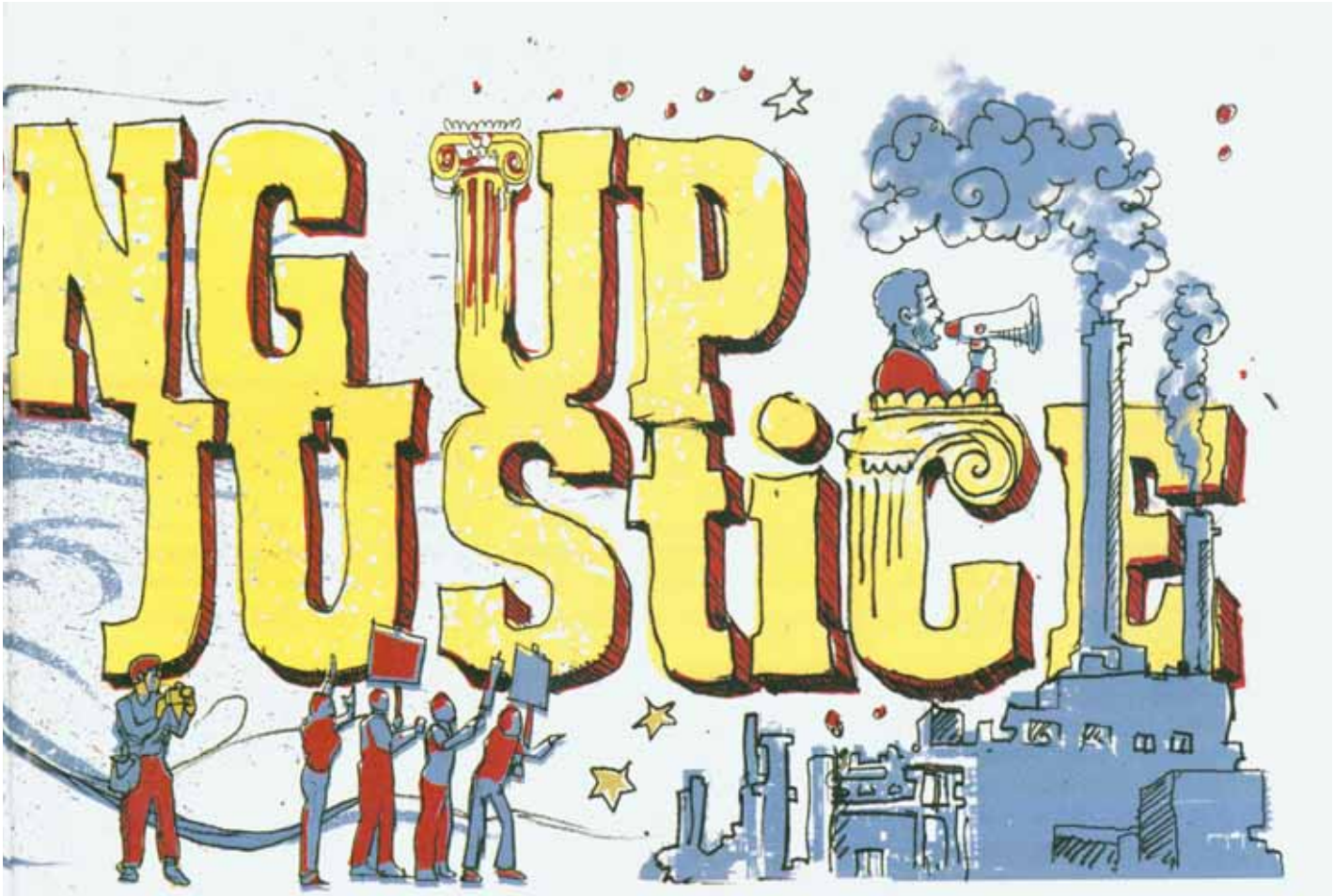
For every earnest cause, dozens of well-educated and well-funded countervailing voices explain why the situation can't or shouldn't change. So you and your students must grapple with this question: Are there some behaviors or conditions that we simply must address, no matter how difficult or unpopular our work will be?

There's so much to do, even in our own neighborhoods. Some projects are simple fixes, but many turn out to be a tiny first link in a long, arduous chain of effort. Think of the thousands of discrete actions required over the decades to achieve civil rights for minorities in the United States. So your students may never have the thrill of seeing a bill signed into law, a shelter renovated, or even a municipal code modified to create a publicly funded meals program for homeless people. They may solve one part of a problem, only to discover that they've uncovered a greater injustice or need. Social activists face disappointment and frustration every day, but they keep on trying.

Social activism is also potentially dangerous. A veteran educator explained how one of his students warned him, "You know, Mr. Kohl, you could get arrested for stirring up justice!" You have only to look at the history of the civil rights movement to know how right he was.

So social justice is untidy, exhausting,

ILLUSTRATION BY SHANNON BRADY



discouraging, even dangerous work—which may be the reason why it's not on the top ten list of social studies projects in many schools. Better to have kids build a model of a *rancho* (a group of huts for housing ranch workers) or recreate a *potlatch* (a festival ceremony practiced by the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest) and be done with it.

From Idea to Action

But whether you ignore or embrace the topic, the truth is that most students experience or think about social justice issues. They know instinctively when something's unfair, whether they're puzzled by the way certain kids are excluded from playground games or worried about where homeless people sleep at night. Kids rarely accept injustice as the status quo. Instead, they look to the adults in their lives—parents, teachers, coaches, and relatives—to help them decide what to do.

As educators, we hold the next generation of voters, politicians, and corporate leaders in our hands.

In the best-case scenarios, the adults encourage rather than avoid authentic conversations about our collective dilemmas—human rights, environmental protection, economic justice, violence. They embrace the inevitable question, What can we do about it? and teach students to act.

But sometimes the response from adults is less than inspiring. We squirm, change the subject, turn a blind eye. *Drop it* is the unspoken message. Children may well respond to the discovery that the topic of social justice is off limits by thinking that

- Injustice is a fact of life; there's no point in trying to change human nature.
- Injustice is unfortunate, but getting involved is too discouraging.
- Perhaps the victims brought it on themselves. They deserve it.

Even if kids never get that far in their thinking, they may be left with a vague uneasiness that if *they* were ever in dire straits, no one would come to their rescue.

Younger students may not be able to define social justice, but they can list the attributes that we value in human relationships: friendship, responsibility, equality, fairness, mutual support, collaboration, and caring. With a little prompting, older students enlarge their sphere of concern, zeroing in on injustice related to socioeconomic status, exploitation, and the abuses of power. They probably won't use those words,

but they'll recognize the issues.

They'll notice for example, that certain ethnicities seem to be overrepresented on the homeless rolls in their own town and underrepresented in the local power structure or that hotel workers risk their jobs to demonstrate for a living wage, but the subject is aggressively ignored at city council meetings. And now that classrooms have Internet access, it won't take long for students to discover sweatshops, child labor, hazardous waste, discrimination, and the devastation of the natural environment on a global scale.

Learning about all these injustices would be emotionally daunting for kids if it were just an exercise in cataloguing calamities and human indifference. But social justice education encourages students to *act*. It is based on the notion that we, the people, agree to live by a covenant that defines how we will behave toward one another in a community, whether you define community as a prairie town or the planet. If individuals, town leaders, or federal officials violate the covenant, then we attempt to restore justice through concerted action.

But kids can't do this alone. They need adult mentors to help them translate their ideas into action. With guidance, they can go from passive spectators to activists, focusing their energy on solutions that could save an ecosystem, a species, or a life. They eagerly master new skills, contact key people, and gather crucial resources—because something real and terribly important hangs in the balance.

The Social Action Autobiography

Most of us become social activists through inspiration. We meet or read about someone who puts everything on the line for a cause, and we're moved—or deeply disturbed—by the realization that we, too, possess the power to make a difference.

Some kids have already had that epiphany, even on a micro-scale, but they may not see themselves as activists yet. That's your starting point. When you decide to include social justice projects in your curriculum, you need to take the all-important first step of finding out what your students already know and what experience they've had in trying to solve problems in the community.

The social action autobiography helps all students recognize the ways they've acted for the good of others. Giving them the opportunity to share their prior knowledge lets them feel smart from the outset and enables you to gather valuable details about their individual skills and interests. For younger students, the prompt might be something like, *Think of a time when you helped someone.* This could range from taking care of a neighbor's cat to playing with a child who had no friends. The students can respond by writing, drawing a picture, or making an annotated drawing with images and words. Even kindergartners can do this reflective activity by drawing a picture or series of pictures and then dictating to a scribe, perhaps an older student, parent, instructional aide, or the teacher. If you can't arrange for scribes, ask the students to discuss their pictures in small groups.

Ask older students to think about a problem that involved other people, the community, the environment, or animals, and what they did to help. You can pose a series of questions like the following to help them remember details and analyze their actions:

- How did you find out about the problem?
- What did you think was a good solution?
- What did you need to do to make it happen?
- Did other people help you?
- What did you learn from the process?
- How did you feel about yourself?

As students share their experiences, they're building a template for how to pursue social action and starting a list of potential projects.

A Wake-Up Call

But some kids don't seem to have a clue about activism. Their idea of social justice is being first in the cafeteria line at any cost. It's not hopeless—they're probably just not paying attention. But rather than waiting around for them to "discover" social justice issues, you can jump-start the process by introducing them to some extraordinary kids—just like them—who are experts at this game.

Get Phillip Hoose's book, *It's Our World, Too: Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference* (Joy Street, 1993). It celebrates 14 heroic kids who saw problems in their world and solved them. Your students will be dazzled from the very first page. They'll meet Justin Lebo, who reconstructed nearly 200 bikes from used bicycle parts and gave them to kids who were homeless, had AIDS, or were orphans. They'll love James Ale, whose friend was struck by a car while they were playing ball in a busy street. James wondered why he and his buddies had to play in the street, when the kids in the rich part of town had parks. He transformed his anger into a campaign and eventually convinced city officials to build a park in his neighborhood.

Ask your students, Why do you think these kids were successful? What did they know or learn how to do? Have the students list the personal traits and skills that helped these young activists succeed. Post the list prominently and refer to it often as you close in on your own projects.

I've used Hoose's book dozens of times, with adults and children, and the reaction is always the same—awe and discontent. Students recognize that these kids are doing something real and important. That's the awe factor. But they're filled with questions: Could I do that? Would I? Are there problems like that in my community? How could I find them? Do I have the courage to act? A new standard of behavior replaces the status quo, and kids wonder whether they can measure up. That's what causes the discontent, and it's a perfect platform for action.

But What Does It Look Like?

The best social action projects are like an earthquake. One minute you're comfortably ensconced in your classroom, earnestly working through your curriculum, and the next minute, the ground shifts. Even before the room stops rocking, you sense that you're in new territory, face-to-face with a genuine adventure. The best projects come organically from the work and conversations you have with your students every day.

Students are filled with questions: Could I do that? Would I? Are there problems like that in my community?

Sometimes students will burst through the door on red alert and demand that their peers sit up and take notice. Here are a few examples:

- Barbara Lewis's 5th grade students waged a campaign to have a hazardous waste site near their school closed and cleaned up. Through their efforts, the toxic barrels were removed. The students won the 1989 President's Environmental Youth Award.
- Students organized a boycott of chocolate candy manufacturers at Halloween to register their support for fair trade chocolate.
- A group of 8-year-olds in Los Angeles were discouraged by the profusion of broken furniture and large appliances dumped on the sidewalks around their school. They worked their way zealously through the sanitation bureaucracy until they made contact with the large haulers responsible for removals. The debris vanished, and in a moment of jubilant inspiration, the students collected any interesting junk left behind and created a 10-foot commemorative sculpture for the school entrance.
- Canadian students helped students in Africa and Afghanistan by raising money to remove land mines from schoolyards.
- A group of 2nd and 5th graders campaigned for fellow students to boycott any ice cream trucks that sold toy guns along with their sweets. These students had decided that their community didn't need another weapon—either real or a look-alike.
- Many students have joined Amnesty International Kids (www.amnestyusa.org) and respond with letters and e-mails to monthly Urgent Action postings.

What About Standards?

When you include social justice projects in your social studies program by teaching what activists do, think, and know, your students will develop and demonstrate skills that are fundamental to a rigorous standards-based approach to social studies. In fact, teachers who are bold enough to embrace an activist approach to teaching find themselves scrambling to *add* to the standard curriculum impromptu lessons in trickle-down economics, writing a press release, making an effective speech in under three minutes, using graphic design principles for making posters, and learning the fundamentals of negotiation. Many teachers report that their students exceed expectations on dozens of standards. Moreover, students experience the thrill of road testing their courage, persistence, ingenuity, intelligence, and diplomacy—not to mention the pride of contributing to the welfare of others.

Here are just a few of the cognitive

challenges that students will face when they're immersed in the work of creating a more just society. Students will

- Examine what it means to be a citizen.
- Identify ways people can participate in their government.
- Discuss the importance of political leadership and public service.
- Locate, access, organize, and apply information about an issue of public concern.
- Use spoken, written, and visual forms of communication effectively with a variety of audiences to promote their social justice efforts.
- Use knowledge of government, law, and politics to make decisions about and take action on local, national, and international issues to further the public good.

Kids rarely accept injustice as the status quo. Instead, they look to the adults in their lives to help them decide what to do.

- Examine and develop others' ethical and moral reasoning.

Responsibility—Ours and Theirs

As educators, we hold the next generation of voters, politicians, and corporate leaders in our hands. Teaching students about interdependence and responsibility through social action is a lesson that can stick.

Active, inquisitive citizenship can begin when kids are very young. They should act out early and often, until championing worthy causes becomes a habit they can't break. You won't regret a minute you spend guiding your students to discover their roles as stewards of the environment and champions of human rights. EL

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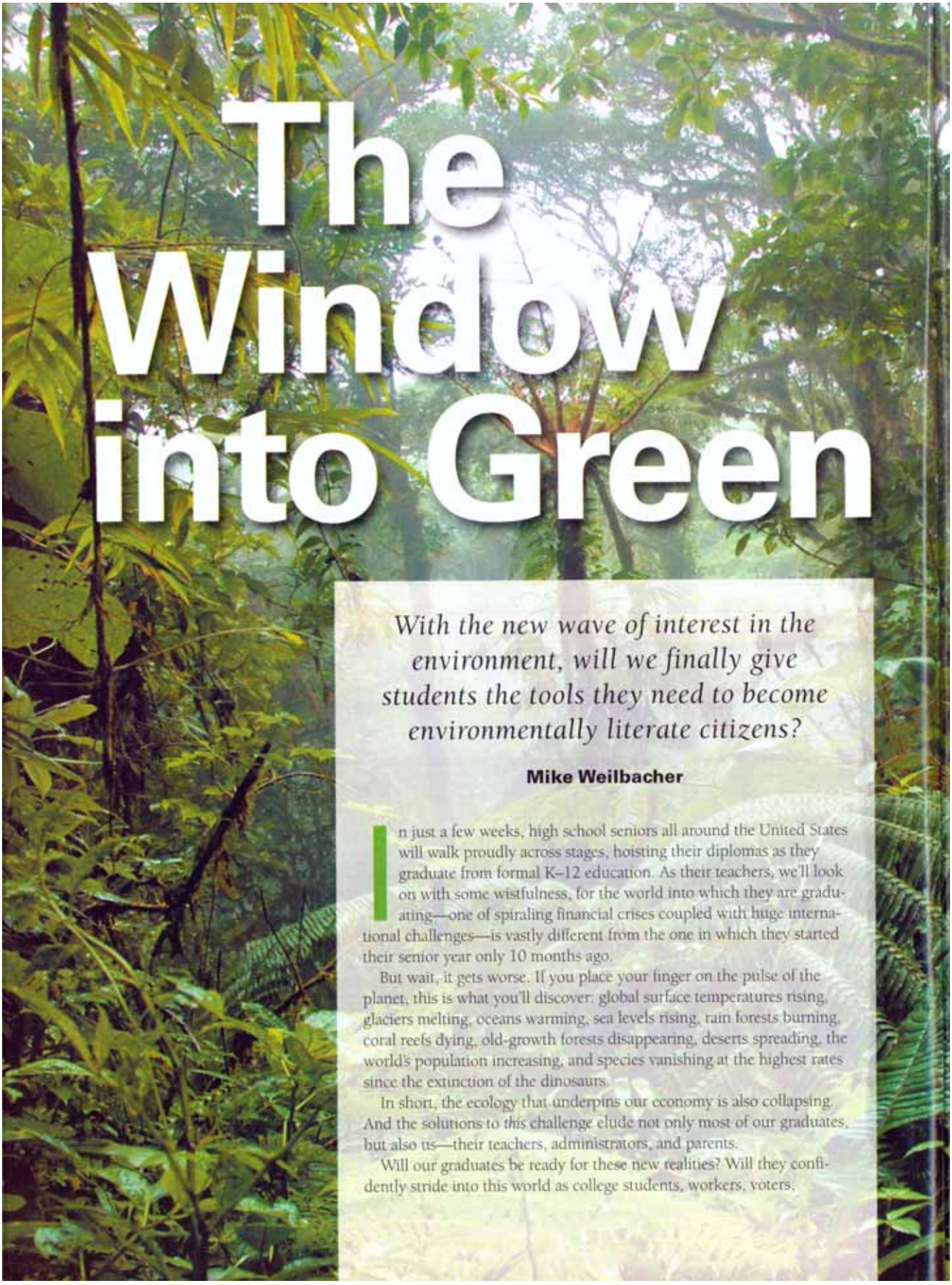

The Window into Green

With the new wave of interest in the environment, will we finally give students the tools they need to become environmentally literate citizens?

Mike Weilbacher

In just a few weeks, high school seniors all around the United States will walk proudly across stages, hoisting their diplomas as they graduate from formal K–12 education. As their teachers, we'll look on with some wistfulness, for the world into which they are graduating—one of spiraling financial crises coupled with huge international challenges—is vastly different from the one in which they started their senior year only 10 months ago.

But wait, it gets worse. If you place your finger on the pulse of the planet, this is what you'll discover: global surface temperatures rising, glaciers melting, oceans warming, sea levels rising, rain forests burning, coral reefs dying, old-growth forests disappearing, deserts spreading, the world's population increasing, and species vanishing at the highest rates since the extinction of the dinosaurs.

In short, the ecology that underpins our economy is also collapsing. And the solutions to *this* challenge elude not only most of our graduates, but also us—their teachers, administrators, and parents.

Will our graduates be ready for these new realities? Will they confidently stride into this world as college students, workers, voters,

To address today's entangled world of complex eco-issues, students simply have to know more than they did 40 years ago.

consumers—in short, as competent, caring adults capable of making good decisions on the pressing issues of the day?

Environmental Ignorance

Forty years ago, in the first issue of the *Journal of Environmental Education*, William B. Stapp (1969) defined the goal of the nascent field of environmental education as producing a citizenry that "is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution" (p. 30).

Today, a new U.S. president actively seeks approval from the American people for repairing the economic collapse while preventing the ecological one. There will be fierce pressure on President Obama to forego environmental projects in lieu of economic ones. Have the past 40 years of environmental education met Stapp's challenge and created the environmentally literate citizenry we need to negotiate the coming trade-offs?

In a word, no.

A typical high school student is aware of environmental issues, has discussed and debated climate change or rain forest loss in some class sometime, and might have bumper-sticker answers to lapel-pin questions. But do our students know where the trash goes when it leaves their house? The leading source of greenhouse gas emissions? Why we recycle? (Glass and aluminum, after all, are not rare resources.) If you ask a group of students what we can do to combat the warming trend, several will chime in that we need to remove chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from hair spray. (Many high schoolers conflate global warming with ozone depletion and haven't been told that CFCs were removed from the market 20 years ago.)

My organization surveyed high school students on these questions and more and discovered that although students are overwhelmingly "pro-environment," they possess remarkably little information about breaking environmental issues. One small example: We asked them to name one bird they can identify by song. The leading answer? None. If local birds disappear from the landscape because of extinction, or arrive three weeks late because of warming climates, it's possible that no one will notice.

Oh, there are numerous bright spots in the environmental education movement, but progress is hardly keeping up with the increasingly urgent issues that face us today. When Stapp coined his definition four decades ago, the United States was riding a wave of interest in the environment triggered by the Santa Barbara oil spill, Ohio's Cuyahoga River catching fire, Lake Erie being declared biologically dead, and charismatic birds like eagles and peregrine falcons vanishing. As we addressed these issues, the wave crested, and interest in ecology quickly ebbed.

Today, even though an interest in green ideas is resurging, the issues are far more global, complex, and intertwined with politics. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels currently exceed 385 parts per million, almost 40 percent higher than

pre–Industrial Revolution levels, and they are rising every year. Consequently, the Arctic Ocean is changing dramatically as the Arctic warms more quickly than anyone expected, and our graduates may see an ice-free polar cap in the summer in their lifetimes.

An International Union for the Conservation of Nature report (2008) noted that one in four of the world's mammals are at risk of extinction from habitat loss, poaching, and climate change. Many critically important rivers—such as the Nile, the Yellow, and the Colorado—no longer empty water into the sea. Mountains of discarded cell phones and computers make their way to destitute Chinese villages, where they are picked apart for valuable metals, exposing the villagers to high concentrations of incredibly toxic materials.

To address today's geopolitically entangled world of large, complex eco-issues, students simply have to know more than they did 40 years ago.

What's the Problem?

Four issues have become huge obstacles to environmental literacy. First, students are extraordinarily disconnected from the environment. Richard Louv's revelatory 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods* called attention to a world of children rapidly retreating from outdoor play and time spent in nature. Instead, modern kids stay indoors, " 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are," as one 4th grader famously said (p. 10).

Viewing screens has become a child's full-time job. Kids are plugged in 24/7, watching an average of 25 hours of TV a week (Gentile & Walsh, 2002) and then logging additional screen time on the Internet, browsing the Web, playing video games, and engaging in whole new verbs, like IMing and Facebooking. Louv coined the phrase *nature-deficit disorder* to describe the "human costs of alienation from nature" (p. 34), including diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness. Just when students need contact with nature more than ever, they have abandoned it.

Second, ask any environmental educator and he or she will

bemoan No Child Left Behind, whose pressures have caused many schools to trade outdoor field trips for test prep. Science teachers routinely eliminate such concepts as environmental education, which do not appear to relate directly to questions on the tests. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Web site (2009) bluntly states, "No Child Left Behind is contributing to an increasing environmental literacy gap by reducing the amount of environmental education taking place in K–12 classrooms."

Third, students' exposure to environmental education depends on the luck of the draw and the amalgam of the interests of whichever teachers they happen to have throughout their school career. In my daughters' school, there were two 5th grade teachers, one contagiously obsessed with birds and bird-watching and the other in love with Broadway musicals. One class went on an all-day birding trip; the other performed a play for the entire school. Both are equally interesting and important activities, but why didn't the two cross-pollinate and give all 5th graders equal access to both? My daughters caught the birding bug, but one-half of the 5th grade never saw a nesting piping plover.

And finally, the downside of the large nonprofit universe of environmental education facilities—zoos, museums, aquariums, nature centers, parks, arboretums, children's gardens—is that schools approach environmental education like a Chinese menu. They pick a field trip from column A and a lesson plan from column B; toss in an occasional Earth Day assembly, litter pick-up, and letter to the president; and assume that their charges are now environmentally literate. And the nonprofits, wanting students to return the following year, emphasize fun over content, immersing the students in activity-based education that is designed to serve as an appetizer for environmental literacy but ends up becoming the main course.

What Every Student Should Know About the Environment

There are scores of possible models of environmental education programs, and most have many of the following large concepts in common. As students go from kindergarten through high school, they can work their way down the list.

1. Earth overflows with life.
One of science's biggest mysteries is how many species share this planet—estimates range from 5 million to 100 million species. Many environmental education programs begin with the premise that life is vanishing; young learners should first know that Earth teems with a huge number of creatures.

2. Each creature is uniquely adapted to its environment.
Every species evolved to possess a unique set of adaptations that enables it to survive and thrive in its ecosystem. Students should be on a first-name basis with many local creatures.

3. The web of life is interdependent.
Organisms evolve complex relationships, each depending on numerous other species for their survival.

4. Materials flow through ecosystems in cycles.
All creatures need water, air, and nutrients to survive. These materials cycle and recycle through ecosystems. The water we drink today is the same water we've always had, and always will.

5. The sun is the ultimate source of energy flowing through ecosystems.
Food grows from sunlight energy; our houses are heated by fossil fuels created many millennia ago from ancient sunlight.

6. There is no waste in nature; everything is recycled.
In nature, every waste product is used by other creatures. Humans have bent those circles into straight lines, where things are used once and tossed.

7. We consume resources to live.
Every student should know where the trash truck takes the trash, where water comes from, and how the nearest power plant makes electricity.

8. Conservation is the wise use of finite resources.
We are physical creatures with real needs—to eat, drink, build houses, write on paper. But how do we use these resources sustainably?

9. Humans can have a profound effect on environmental systems.
Fossil fuels pump carbon dioxide into the sky; habitat loss is causing the extinction of large numbers of species. Our actions profoundly affect the ecological systems that sustain living things—and us. Nature can often repair these systems (forests grow back, for example); but humans are changing systems faster than nature can adapt.

10. Each of us can powerfully affect the fate of the natural world.
Because each of us is directly plugged into the planet, the actions we take—or fail to take—profoundly influence earth's systems.

They often retreat from tough concepts like water shortages and stay with politically lighter ones like the water cycle.

The upshot? Even though there are more centers for environmental education and more college degree programs in environment-related fields than ever, and even though building green schools has suddenly emerged as an important idea (pre-economic meltdown), we are perhaps even farther from environmental literacy than we were in 1969.

Students are graduating from our schools thinking that green is good. But we haven't given them the tools they need to become environmentally literate citizens.

New Research May Turn the Tide

Fortunately, several important research efforts are threading their way through the education system. For example, the Children and Nature Network, a Web-based organization (www.childrenandnature.org) that reports a wide variety of data and activities related to repairing the nature deficit disorder, showcases data illuminating the educational benefits of immersing students in the outdoors and environmental education experiences. And there's tons of data.

The American Institutes for Research (2005) studied the effects of weeklong residential outdoor education programs in which most of the participants were at-risk youth. Comparing students who experienced the outdoor education program with those in a control group who had not had the experience, the researchers found a 27 percent increase in measured mastery of science concepts, plus enhanced cooperation and conflict-resolution skills, higher self-esteem, and gains in problem solving, motivation, and classroom behavior.

A Canadian study found that children whose school grounds include diverse natural settings are more physically active, more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another, and more creative (Bell & Dyment, 2006). Another study discovered that children playing in green settings have reduced symptoms of attention deficit disorder (Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2001).

The more studies are published, the more they agree: Exposure to nature raises test scores; increases creativity, cooperation, and self-confidence; reduces stress; and enhances cognitive abilities.

Promising Models

When the next wave of environmental interest washes over our schools, as it inevitably will, this body of research will support the new ideas for truly fulfilling Stapp's dream of environmental literacy. Here are a few intriguing efforts now underway.

No Child Left Inside

In response to Louv's book, more than 1,000 nonprofits with almost 50 million members have launched a variety of efforts loosely organized under the title "No Child Left Inside." For instance, the National Audubon Society has pledged to place a family-oriented nature center in every congressional district.

Connecticut governor M. Jodi Rell launched a special Web site (www.nochildleftinside.org) promoting state parks, an idea copied by many other states. And the U.S. Congress has considered a No Child Left Inside act that would provide federal funding for environmental literacy plans and for state efforts to train teachers in model environmental education programming, including outdoor learning. In the last session, the act passed the House, and supporters are eager to try again in the new Congress.

Green Charter Schools

For better or worse, the charter school movement has been sweeping across the United States in the last decade. A growing number of charter schools have been designed around the simple premise that the entire science curriculum can be taught through environmental education.

The Green Woods Charter School in Philadelphia is located on the campus of the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, a 340-acre living laboratory of forests and fields, streams and ponds. The center's naturalists are integrated into the science faculty of the school, and the students spend quality time immersed in the woods.

Wisconsin's River Crossing Environmental Charter School, located in a one-room schoolhouse, provides a hands-on curriculum with subjects integrated through environmental studies. Students in 7th and 8th grade participate weekly in field trips and real-world ecosystem restoration projects, such as restoring the prairie and building rain gardens for storm water.

Other sites include California's Environmental Charter High School, Connecticut's Common Ground High School, and Florida's Academy of Environmental Sciences. A Green Charter Schools Network (www.greencharterschools.org) has formed to assist teachers and staff. Sadly, precious few students are fortunate enough to attend these schools.

Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning

Another innovation that has grown in popularity in the last decade is the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning movement, a cumbersome name for a simple concept. In place of the rigorously scheduled school day of science, English, and gym periods, these programs use the environment and the outdoors as the centerpiece of students' curriculum. This format breaks down barriers between disciplines, stresses team building and individualized learning, and involves students in real-world community issues.

In suburban Philadelphia, for example, the pioneering Watershed program at Radnor Middle School engages students in outdoor field studies all year, including stream testing, canoeing, trout rearing and release, and more. Students in the program spend all day together, except for math and foreign language classes, in which they are integrated with the rest of the school. Students hone their communication skills at conferences and youth summits.

One analysis of 40 Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning programs (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998) discovered that students in these programs outscored their peers on standardized tests, had better grades, and acted more independently and responsibly. At one school using this approach, reports to the principal's office declined 91 percent in the three-year study period.

Wood Kindergartens

A rather radical movement has leapt across the pond from Europe and, coupled with Richard Louv's work, has begun making inroads in the United States. In the Wood School model, child care workers and youngsters ages 3–6 spend the entire day outdoors in nature. The program is held outdoors in all seasons, although the group moves indoors in extreme weather. Proponents of this process assert that playing outside for prolonged periods strengthens the students' immune systems and improves development of manual dexterity, physical coordination, tactile sensitivity, and depth perception.

Here in the United States, many nature centers, such as the Chippewa Nature Center in Midland, Michigan, have begun opening variants of Wood Kindergartens, versions that might not strictly adhere to the European's outdoor component but still allow the students full and frequent access to natural areas and nature-based play (Reynolds, 2007).

Many environmentalists worry about a vanishing window of opportunity.

Greening of the Culture

U.S. schools teach what American culture considers important. Once society decided that computer literacy was central to a solid education, computer classes invaded schools at warp speed, and the "digital divide" became an important and contentious issue.

As environmental issues heat up (pardon the pun), the culture is coming to consensus—again—on the importance of the environment. Green cable channels, green Web sites, eco-chic clothing, green roofs on green buildings, and innumerable products made from

recycled objects are beginning to infuse the culture with a newfound interest in sustainability—an interest that ideally will create a ground swell of support for environmental improvement.

But the four horsemen of the global apocalypse—warming, species loss, water scarcity, and population growth—are bearing down on us, and many environmentalists worry about a vanishing window of opportunity for addressing these issues. Science fiction writer H. G. Wells was prophetic when he wrote in 1920 that "human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."

Environmental literacy is one race that education must win.

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Lighting the Moral Imagination

Through the Facing History and Ourselves approach, students learn not only history, but also the skills needed for citizenship in a democracy.

Molly Schen and Barry Gilmore

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEBRA JACKSON

Students at Lausanne Collegiate School ponder their moral responsibilities.

Many high school students say that history is nonessential. The past seems distant, disconnected from the present. Students often picture headline-making events and the actions of world leaders from past centuries vaguely, as through a blurry telescope.

In the case-study approach to teaching history developed by Facing History and Ourselves, however, teachers urge students to reflect on connections between periods in history characterized by violent repression and the times students are living in now—and the choices students face. Class activities raise questions about human behavior, morality, and ethics. Explorations of decades-old atrocities become as relevant as the nightly news report on genocide in Africa—or the offensive joke overheard in the hallway.

"This is a far cry from the average history class most of our students have experienced," says Sheila Jacobson, a teacher at Lausanne Collegiate School in Memphis, Tennessee, which offers a course centered on Facing History curriculum materials. "Students don't just look at history from an external lens—they question their own part in creating that history."

The Facing History Journey

The approach that Facing History and Ourselves has developed is now used by 25,000 teachers around the United States and in more than a dozen other countries to engage students in both the content and questions of social responsibility (Sleeper & Strom, 2006). The interdisciplinary instructional materials connected to this approach build on the methods of the humanities—inquiry, analysis, interpretation, and judgment (see "About Facing History and Ourselves" on p. 61 for more information on Facing History resources).

Our materials follow a sequence of study—what we call the Facing History Journey (see fig. 1)—that begins by urging learners to explore questions of

PHOTO COURTESY OF LORNE JACKSON

Exploring personal identity is a key part of Facing History's approach.

identity and group membership. These lessons provide a framework for studying the breakdown of democracy in 20th-century Germany and other historical instances of mass violence and genocide (Strom, 1994). Students examine choices individuals and groups made in a particular time period and ponder connections to the present and future. The journey culminates with each student reflecting on how responsible civic participation can help preserve democracy.

Units of study offered through Facing History typically last from four weeks to a semester. Many teachers weave resources and themes from Facing History's professional development into their teaching throughout the year. To see this rigorous approach in action, let's look at how teachers incorporate Facing History's resources into their social studies and humanities classes.

Starting with Identity—One's Own

In middle and high school classrooms that use the Facing History approach, students explore individual decision making and practice making moral judgments. The pedagogy speaks to the

"This is a far cry from the average history class most of our students have experienced."

concepts—newly discovered for most adolescents—of subjectivity and competing truths, along with adolescents' growing capacity to think hypothetically and their inclination to find personal meaning in events. Many young adults come to school already struggling with questions of obedience, loyalty, fairness, difference, and acceptance. Using a historical case study to explore such questions as why some people conform to the norms of a group—even when those norms encourage wrongdoing—whereas others resist helps students explore these issues in depth.

The journey starts with the question of how identity influences behavior and shapes the way we see ourselves and others. These are relevant questions for students at Lausanne Collegiate School. Lausanne has a diverse student body—one-third of its students come from ethnic minority backgrounds and another 17 percent from immigrant families—but its students rarely discuss that diversity directly.

On the first day of the Facing History class, teacher Sheila Jacobson tells students that daily journal assignments will ask them to reflect on issues of race and membership in society and how those issues affect their own lives. (Facing History and Ourselves, 2002). Jacobson and the other teachers mentioned in this article have been trained by Facing History to lead these kinds of activities.

During an initial activity, Michael, a 10th grader, draws an outline of his hand on a sheet of paper and peppers the fingers with adjectives that describe how others label him—privileged, tall, goofy—and the palm with ways he sees himself—considerate, musical, hard-working. During discussion following this activity, another student, Tina, asks, "Why didn't you put *white* on your hand? I have *black* on mine."

"I guess I don't think of myself by skin color," Michael answers. "Is *black* on your fingers or your palm?"

"Both," Tina answers, "but not for the same reason."

Jacobson joins the conversation. "What do you mean, Tina?"

Tina thinks for a moment, then answers, "I see myself as black in a good way. But in the cafeteria, when I'm sitting at a table with my black friends, I don't know if that's how others look at the color of my skin."

In his journal reflection, Michael considers Tina's comment:

> I've never had to think about who I sit with in the cafeteria. But I've asked my friends why the black kids all sit together. Maybe I should have been asking a different question, like why I was sitting with who I was or why I wasn't sitting with [the black students].

About Facing History and Ourselves

Since 1976, Facing History and Ourselves has provided materials, professional development, and a model of teaching that helps teachers and students connect history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives, mainly through studying the Holocaust and other cases of genocide. More than 25,000 educators around the world have participated in Facing History seminars and more than 50,000 are part of Facing History's educator network.

Facing History has developed hundreds of lesson plans, teaching units, and resources (including books, study guides, curriculum outlines, videos, and interactive online learning modules). All are available for purchase, many are free online, and others can be borrowed from Facing History's large lending library.

Topics range from the Holocaust to the eugenics movement to how countries heal after periods of violence. Facing History's resource librarians guide educators in selecting resources.

To learn more about Facing History's work, visit www.facinghistory.org. To join the Educator Network, click "subscribe." Teachers who attend one or more seminars receive online resources as well as borrowing privileges.

Such conversations and reflections are not digressions in this class. This kind of discussion is intended to move students like Michael and Tina toward considering their own "universe of obligation," a Facing History and Ourselves term meaning a person's ethical responsibility to those beyond his or her immediate circle of acquaintance.

The next day, Jacobson engages the class in an activity-based discussion of moral responsibility. As students enter the class, they see a large grid taped to the floor with one of these phrases written in each of the quadrants: (1) *I have no objection to or responsibility for this*; (2) *I object, but I'm not responsible*; (3) *I object, and I am responsible for voicing disapproval*; and (4) *I am responsible for stopping this*. As Jacobson suggests the following social practices, students move to the quadrant that represents the position they would take on each practice:

- Eating at a self-segregated table in the school cafeteria.
- Seeing a classmate cheat on a test.
- Hearing a racist joke told by another student.
- Watching a younger student be physically bullied.

And, ultimately:

- Hiding a political fugitive in your home despite imminent danger to yourself and your family.

As students move from one space to another, each student begins to feel more comfortable defending his or her own position and asking others why they have chosen theirs. The grid enables Jacobson to balance the viewpoints. This activity links what students think about naturally—their personal decision making and agency—to historical inquiry.

Questioning Membership: "We and They"

These first steps lead Jacobson's students toward discussion of how the positive nature of identity can lead to the divisive practices of labeling or segregating others. Facing History materials help ground this discussion in historical events, leading to such questions as, On what basis did the Nazis—or the Hutu in Rwanda—separate and label groups? What role do propaganda, government, and citizen awareness play in the exacerbation of tensions between groups? How does this play out today? What has changed over the decades, and what has not?

Middle school students explore similar questions in the predominantly black public schools of Memphis—in which all 8th graders study a unit on the U.S. civil rights movement through a Facing History lens (Facing History and Ourselves, 2005). Eighth grade students in Sara Beth Gregory's class at White Station Middle School in Tennessee, for example, ponder the development of "we and they" groups after watching a video about Elizabeth Eckford's experience as one of the first black students to attend an all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. What, they ask, caused U.S. citizens to turn racial identity into hatred of those whose skin color looked different? How is historical context important in understanding the groups that form during such conflicts?

Engaging with Historical Content

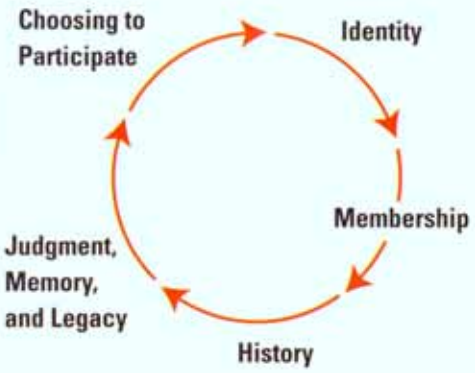
Lessons like these segue into in-depth study of conditions, characters, and events in historical periods, keeping questions about what it means to act responsibly in a democracy in the forefront. Students in Sheila Jacobson's class, for example, learn about the collapse of democracy in Weimar Germany, the rise of the Nazis, the curtailments of citizens' freedoms, and the beginnings of World War II. They study the lives of historical figures, including people who showed courage and compassion in resistance.

The approach leads students to connect imaginatively with historical material. Jacobson gives each student the name and short biography of a figure from the Holocaust: a Jew who hid in a

barn, a German citizen who sheltered a family; a soldier who forced Jews onto transports to concentration camps. The prompts students respond to as they write reflections on their assigned figures force them to consider aspects of such stories they might not previously have contemplated, such as how individuals might rationalize their own actions in a letter home or what fears such people might have harbored besides the obvious fear of physical danger.

Facing History has also created resources about the U.S. civil rights movement, the Armenian genocide during World War I, Chinese immigration to the United States, the debate on Muslim head scarves in France, and other topics connected to world history.

FIGURE 1. The Facing History Journey



Considering the Legacy

As students immerse themselves in particular historical case studies, they consider the legacy connected to that period. Facing History guides students to debate questions of fairness and judgment, but only after they learn about historical events, the actors' choices, and the implications of those choices.

The question of who's responsible troubles many teenagers. The study of historical atrocities adds depth and urgency to this question, as Adrianne Bock, who taught social studies to juniors and seniors at Lexington High School in Massachusetts, found. After a semester studying the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide, one of Bock's students struggled to decide whether nonresisters in Nazi Germany were culpable:

> I find it extremely difficult to assign levels of blame because the combination of all of the roles is what caused the Holocaust. Had one perpetrator not chosen to kill one or maybe 100 Jews, others may have followed. On some level I want to put everyone who didn't resist or rescue on a single level accepting total responsibility. . . . I hesitate to do this though because it would put Hitler on the same level as a bystander who simply took the Nazi oath, and I feel that there is a huge gap between the actual damage they caused.

Choosing to Participate

Classroom discussions and activities engage students' emotions, challenge their intellects, and promote ethical reflection. A goal of the Facing History approach is to let these three challenges lead naturally into students making decisions about individual civic participation. Students complete the journey by reflecting on the implications for their lives of what they've learned about the role of people's choices in a democracy. They talk openly about how they might participate in a democratic society as they face choices throughout their lives.

As the culmination of their Facing History semester, Bock has each student create a "toolbox" containing symbols of what that student will do to make a difference in the world. Items and responses found in each toolbox vary widely, reflecting each student's interests and ways of encountering the world. One student, Brian, includes his skateboard in his collection, writing that his board represents the "platform" he stands on as a privileged suburbanite and pledging to "spread education about racism." Some students display interest in psychology and sociology, pledging to explore what motivates one group of people to remain bystanders in the face of injustice while others resist. The inclusion of newspaper articles signals many students' commitment to keep learning about the world. The range of responses reassures Bock that students are truly confronting a range of choices and thinking about how they can make a difference.

Some students report on steps they've already taken toward social responsibility. One high school senior wrote in her journal:

> For a long time, the girls on my soccer team used the phrase "That's so gay" to talk about anything they didn't like. One day it would be the refs who were "gay," the next a missed goal. By the end of this course, I had the courage to say something about it to one girl on the team. It wasn't much, but it was a start.

Facing the Overwhelming

Facing History's resources may be especially useful to social studies and language arts teachers. They offer a framework for discussing texts and events that include difficult and potentially overwhelming historical subject matter with a continual focus on the connection to the present. Rather than a formulaic method of approaching a subject, the approach is a way to orchestrate discussion and activities.

Discussion is at the heart of a Facing History and Ourselves course, but it is not the only goal. A course or lesson using this approach should (1) create a classroom culture of deep reflection in which students construct their own learning, (2) pose questions and urge students to pose their own questions, (3) promote a climate of respect and nurture student voice, and (4) honor

Facing History guides students to debate questions of fairness and judgment.

different learning styles (Miller, 2005).

Students are growing up in a world rife with conflict and extremism. It's our responsibility to give youth the tools to think critically, understand the connection between history and ethics, and grasp how the lessons of history help guide moral choices. At a time when some people feel powerless to do anything about the spread of religious and ethnic hatred in the world, Facing History students discover ways to link the past to the present, link themselves to others, and think about their role in creating a just world. EL

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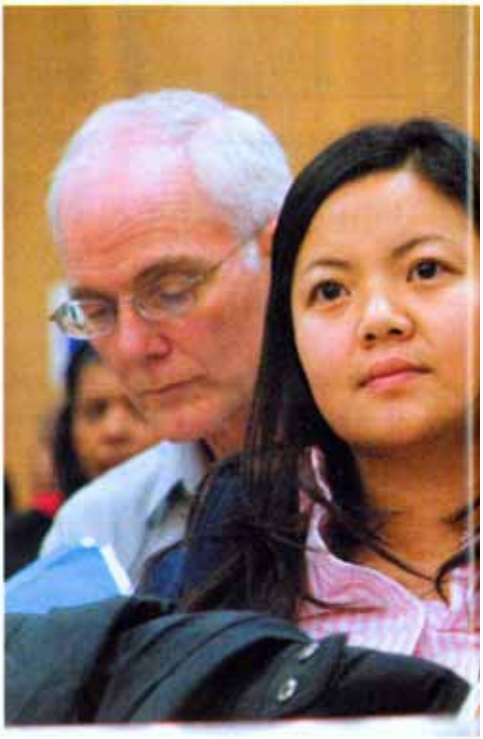
Challenging the

When some school and community members looked at what the textbooks taught, they didn't like what they saw.

Gloria T. Alter



What would you do if you discovered that your district's textbooks were miseducating your students and failing to teach social responsibility? The Milwaukee Public Schools recently faced this question head-on when the district's social studies textbook adoption committee selected a traditional, standardized textbook series—and a group of educators and community members actively opposed the decision.

One District's Struggle

Fifth grade teacher Bob Peterson reviewed the 2008 5th grade social studies textbooks that were up for adoption in his district. Peterson, who is cofounder of the organization Rethinking Schools, works in La Escuela Fratney, a K–5 two-way bilingual school in the Milwaukee Public School District.

When the textbook adoption committee announced its selection of a textbook company, Peterson and others analyzed the entire series. They distributed their findings to local and national social justice organizations through the electronic mailing list of the Educators' Network for Social Justice and the publication *Rethinking Schools*. They also made the findings available to the community through the local newspaper and school district board meetings.

The Findings—and the Response

The review noted that the 5th grade textbook did not mention racism or anti-Semitism, barely mentioned discrimination, and didn't point out that any of the U.S. presidents had been slave owners. Further, the social movements that addressed injustices—such as the labor movement, the women's movement, the peace movement, and the environmental movement—were largely invisible in the text. Rather, the textbook credited individuals with these achievements (see Peterson, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).[1]

The response to the critique was encouraging; people contacted Peterson and their school board members, and the school district administration became involved. Board approval of the textbook recommendation was postponed several times as concerned parties reviewed the textbooks and took a closer look at the district's approach to teaching social studies.

In June, a number of groups who opposed the textbook adoption decided to gather at the local office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for further discussion. This group—the Social Studies Task Force—has continued to meet monthly, with as many as 45 people in attendance. Co-chaired by Wendell Harris from the NAACP and Bob Peterson, the task force included a broad coalition of groups: the NAACP; the Milwaukee American Jewish Committee; the YWCA; the American Arab Anti-Discrimination

Textbook

Members of the Social Studies Task Force attend a Milwaukee Public Schools school board meeting to express their concerns.

Committee; the Milwaukee Ethnic Council; the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association; the American Civil Liberties Union; a student chapter of the Voces de la Frontera; the Wisconsin Labor History Society; the Educators' Network for Social Justice; the Peace Learning Center; Rethinking Schools; faculty from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Marquette University, and the National Louis University; and representatives from more than two dozen schools.

In August, the school district set up a meeting between the task force and the textbook publisher to address these issues. The publisher's reaction to participants' concerns was unsettling. When asked why the company hadn't included racism in the textbooks, one representative said that the teachers they surveyed did not want to teach about racism, so the publisher didn't put it in. Another company representative stated that inner-city kids already knew about racism from their life experience, and therefore, they didn't need it in their textbooks.

"Teachers can challenge the text, demand alternatives from the school district, and be part of creating alternatives."

Teacher members of the task force knew that when this same issue had come up previously in Philadelphia schools, the publisher provided a supplemental module to more adequately address African American history. They prevailed on the publisher to create a module to address the 5th grade textbook's weaknesses for the Milwaukee schools as well. The publisher agreed, although the supplemental material would ultimately prove to be inadequate and too costly.

Reaching a Compromise

That fall, everyone reached a compromise for district adoption of the publisher's grade 6–8 social studies textbooks. Although these texts dealt more explicitly with racism than this publishers' texts in lower grade levels, they failed to address colonialism and other issues. In light of this, the district agreed to provide supplementary professional development on "antiracist, multicultural understandings and teaching strategies."

To move the textbook adoption forward with grades K–3, the district agreed to conduct a study regarding the resources needed to teach about the family, neighborhood, and community. A brief survey of K–3 teachers revealed a mix of opinions about the usefulness of the proposed textbooks at this level.

Discussion participants noted substantive problems, such as shallow, inaccurate, and biased treatment of content; inadequate representation of diversity; lack of inclusion of the local community and state as topics of study; and failure to provide engaging instructional methodologies that encouraged students to take part in constructing knowledge as opposed to passively

receiving decontextualized bits of information. They also pointed out several valued features of the textbooks: their incorporation of other subjects; use of children's literature; and inclusion of videos, technology, and assessment tools. As a result, the discussions among the Social Studies Task Force, the superintendent, and the administration began to encompass not only questionable textbook content, but also instructional methodologies.

The district faced some difficult decisions. The textbook characteristics conflicted with district expectations for learning as detailed in Milwaukee Public Schools' *Characteristics of a High Performing Urban Classroom*, which lists eight characteristics: active engagement of student learners; cultural responsiveness; high expectations based on learning targets; strategic instructional choices; routine use of a variety of assessments; partnerships with families and the community; collaboration with colleagues; and impassioned, engaged adult learners in the school.

Text content and instructional strategies did not reflect the "active engagement of student learners" or "cultural responsiveness." The textbooks were also problematic with regard to the general textbook evaluation criteria the district used, which included the promotion of critical thinking, accuracy, absence of sexism, freedom from bias, and so on.

The district and the Social Studies Task Force ultimately decided on three courses of action concerning textbooks for grades K–5: (1) Instead of adopting K–3 textbooks, the district would secure high-quality resources and promote best practices in instruction; (2) the district would adopt the state historical society's 4th grade textbook and, provide a supplement to address race and labor issues; and (3) the district would adopt the publisher's 5th grade textbook if the publisher supplied a district-approved supplement to address its weaknesses.

When the publisher suddenly increased the price of the 5th grade textbooks by 60 percent and charged for the supplemental module as well, the district decided not to adopt any additional textbooks from the company at that time but to proceed with the two other recommendations—seeking its own K–3 resources, which the district is currently in the process of doing, and approving the 4th grade text with supplemental materials.

Educators often support the use of standardized textbooks because they believe they have no other choice.

The Milwaukee K–8 social studies textbook adoption was not a small decision for the district of 80,000; the budget for the social studies textbooks was $4 million. But more important, attention from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and a local television news station had alerted the community to the issues and helped to start a critical conversation about race and multicultural education among community members, teachers and administrators, and various organizations.

Another Choice

Educators often support the use of standardized textbooks because they believe they have no other choice. The publishers, after all, have a monopoly on textbooks, and educators make adoption decisions on the basis of a limited selection of materials. So even when teachers and administrators are aware of a textbook's limitations, they may select a series they consider the best among several bad choices.

Sometimes educators do not have the content knowledge or pedagogical expertise necessary to evaluate social studies textbooks, or they may not have time to do a careful review. Moreover, publishers sometimes highlight education consultants in their textbooks, giving the impression of expert approval, when they clearly ignored the consultants' advice.

Challenging textbooks goes against tradition. The instructional approaches modeled in textbooks socialize teachers—just as they socialize students—into narrow modes of learning and acceptable views of society and social change. The deliberation of the Milwaukee Public Schools textbook adoption committee demonstrated this dilemma. The teachers on the committee, who had originally reviewed a number of books, were hesitant to select a textbook that promoted new, engaging strategies that nevertheless appealed to many teachers and were consistent with such district goals as experiential learning, writing for understanding, and group problem solving.

Curriculum transformation is difficult. The dominant pattern of instruction persists because it is easier to plan for direct instruction, transmission of information, content coverage, and a traditional social vision than to incorporate new visions of learning and society that address social problems and provide a substantive critique of racism, gender inequities, and unfair cultural dominance in society. The political nature of the standard curriculum is

hidden from view; it's too familiar and comfortable to be considered dangerous or ineffective.

But perhaps the biggest obstacle to change is the textbook publishers themselves, whose decisions about what to produce are typically based not on educational quality, but on what sells.

Members of the task force testify at a school board meeting.

The Change We Need

Social studies teachers and their students need textbooks that are grounded in both the changing realities of our world and the responsibilities of its citizens. We cannot develop social responsibility without accurate and adequate content, diverse and global perspectives, relevance to students' lives, and the opportunity to study and act on crucial issues through caring and effective citizenship. Our moral responsibility "to respect and support the dignity of the individual, the health of the community, and the common good of all" (Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies, 1994, p. 6) underlies these aspects of the curriculum.

The change we need is coming. Milwaukee, where school superintendent William Andrekopoulos modeled shared leadership that encouraged multiple perspectives, is a good example. In a school board meeting, board member Jennifer Morales pointed out that communities need to tell textbook publishers to "get real":

> We need to be able to talk about this nation's struggle with racial discrimination, sexism, and other forms of oppression, and our kids need to be shown examples of people who have participated in struggles to right those injustices.

According to Bill Bigelow, curriculum editor for *Rethinking Schools*, teachers need to make themselves heard:

> Teachers in collaboration with community organizations can look at what's in the text, can challenge the text, can demand alternatives from the school district, and be part of creating alternatives. Teachers need to find each other, [and] districts need to support that kind of creativity and collaboration and collegiality.

The textbook characteristics conflicted with district expectations for learning.

Teachers often just assume that they have to teach the textbook. Bigelow reminds us that this is simply "a failure of imagination" and points out the dangers of an overreliance on textbooks. In addition to the fact that students rarely find them engaging or relevant to their lives, textbooks typically fail to adequately explain events and social phenomena, and they don't look deeply into issues or encourage students to ask why. They also tell students whose voices matter—and whose don't.

Social studies should be about making the world a better place. By creating more meaningful alternatives to textbooks, educators can hone students' sense of efficacy and impress on them that they matter, that their choices and actions can make a difference in the world. EL

[1]For additional information about social studies textbook analyses and the issues they highlight, see Alter, G. (2009). *Social studies textbooks, K–8 (2008): How well do they prepare students for critical democratic/global citizenship?* Paper accepted for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA; and Ross, E. W. (Ed.). (2006). *The social studies curriculum: Purposes, problems, and possibilities* (3rd ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Author's note: Bob Peterson, Wendell Harris, Bill Bigelow, Kathy Williams, and Tina Flood contributed valuable information to this article.

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W. James Popham

Assessing Student Affect

Student affect—the attitudes, interests, and values that students exhibit and acquire in school—can play a profoundly important role in students' postschool lives, possibly an even more significant role than that played by students' cognitive achievements.

But if student affect is so crucial, then why don't we assess it? One deterrent is that few teachers know how to do it. Yet assessing affect is relatively straightforward.

Teachers need to understand that they are not trying to get a fix on an individual student's affect. Instead, classroom affective assessments enable teachers to arrive at *group-focused inferences*, that is, inferences about the affective dispositions of an entire class. These inferences can be truly useful as teachers plan their instruction. For example, if a mathematics teacher learns that her students are, as a group, becoming negatively disposed toward mathematics, she can implement classroom activities intended to promote more positive attitudes toward math.

The evidence of students' affect will almost always be supplied in the form of students' responses to self-report affective inventories. Moreover, to promote honesty in student responses, students must respond to those inventories with total anonymity. This means that students must complete the assessment using only checkmarks, *X*s, or circles. They cannot provide their names, and the assessment should not solicit any "additional comments." After all, teachers can often identify students from their handwriting.

What's an Affect Inventory?

Affect inventories are typically patterned after the attitudinal inventories that organizational psychologist Rensis Likert devised almost 80 years ago. An inventory presents a series of statements with which students are asked to agree or disagree. For older students, a teacher might use the five response options that Likert originally employed—Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. For younger students, two or three response options might suffice.

The teacher begins by identifying several affective variables that he or she thinks are important enough to spend instructional time on in class. For instance, an elementary teacher might want to promote his students' positive dispositions toward free-time reading; he might designate "interest in reading" as one of the variables to assess in an affective inventory. The same teacher might also choose "oral presentation confidence" as another affective variable.

If student affect is so crucial, then why don't we assess it?

The teacher then crafts a pair of statements for each affective variable, one stated positively and one stated negatively. For instance, for a variable dealing with students' oral presentation confidence, a positive statement might be, "If asked to make an oral report in class, I know I can do it well." A negative statement for the same variable might be, "I'm not very good at giving oral presentations to my classmates." For each of the statements, which are scattered randomly throughout the inventory, students must indicate their degree of agreement. An affective inventory can contain two or four statements for each variable; half of the statements must be positive and half, negative. Thus, a typical affective inventory might measure four affective variables, with two or four items for each variable, resulting in either an 8-item or a 16-item self-report inventory.

How Do You Score It?

To score the inventory, points are awarded for *agreement with positive statements* as well as for *disagreement with negative statements*. So let's say you were measuring two affective variables in an affective inventory for 5th graders: interest in reading and oral presentation confidence. Four statements would deal with each variable—two of them positive and two negative. Let's assume there are three response options for each statement: Agree, Not Sure, and Disagree.

If a student agrees with both positive statements and disagrees with both negative statements for a particular variable, his or her score would be the highest possible; in this assessment, for this variable, that score would be 12 points (3 points awarded for each of the two positive statements with which the student agreed and 3 points awarded for each of the two negative statements with which the student disagreed). *Disagreeing with the positive statements*, however, and *agreeing with the negative statements* garners only 1 point per statement, so students in this category would receive the lowest number of points; in this assessment, for this variable, that score would be 4 points.

The time has come to do more than merely talk about desirable outcomes. It's time to measure them.

The teacher would then consider the entire class's responses to the statements for each of the two affective variables measured, arriving at an inference regarding the affective dispositions of the class. For example, if the average score of a teacher's class was 9.8 (out of a possible 12 points) for interest in reading but only 4.6 (out of a possible 12 points) for oral presentation confidence, this suggests that the teacher needs to undertake some instructional activities that are apt to promote greater confidence in oral presentation skills. Students' interest in reading appears to be quite high, so no adjustments in instruction regarding that affective variable seem warranted.

Checks and Balances

Some students, fearing to offend the teacher even though their responses are cloaked in anonymity, will supply "socially desirable" responses (what students think the teacher wants) to certain statements. Other students, sensing this as an opportunity to "get even" with the teacher, may select the response they think the teacher *doesn't want* to certain statements. So to some extent, these two types of responses will cancel each other out. This often leads to a less-than-perfect, but sufficiently serviceable, estimate of a group's affective dispositions.

For important affective outcomes we wish to promote in our schools—for example, students' sense of social responsibility—the time has come to do more than merely talk about these desirable outcomes. It's time to measure them.

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