GERALD W. BRACEY

ASSOCIATE,
HIGH/SCOPE EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH FOUNDATION,
YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN;
CONSULTANT, SPEAKER,
AUTHOR

Mervin K. Strickler, Jr.
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May 15, 2002

Dr. Trent E. Gabert, Chair,
Executive Committee
Brock International Prize in Education
Associate Dean, College of Liberal Studies
The University of Oklahoma
1700 Asp Avenue, Room 226
Norman, Oklahoma 73072-6400

Dear Dr. Gabert:

Many thanks for all your help, advice and patience. Enclosed is my packet of material prepared for use to share with the other Brock Prize Jurors on behalf of my nominee, Dr. Gerald W. Bracey.

You will note that some of my material must be copied - back to back. I did this to save paper and space.

I have put a reminder note indicating the number of the tab that should be placed on the six tab pages to identify what follows. I hope that this will not cause a problem for the person putting together the Juror packages.

I look forward to meeting you and your staff and the other Jurors and, of course, Mr. Brock.

I especially look forward to the process of selecting the next award winner and to hearing John Goodlad's talk.

My very best personal and professional regards.

Sincerely,

Mervin K. Strickler, Jr.

Enclosure: Brock Prize Juror Packet

DR. GERALD W. BRACEY

NOMINEE

FOR THE BROCK INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

IN EDUCATION

HORACE MANN SAID

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IS THE GREATEST

DISCOVERY

MADE BY MAN

IN FEBRUARY 2002 DR. GERALD W. BRACEY WAS PRESENTED WITH THE HORACE MANN LEAGUE OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD "FOR LEADER-SHIP IN THE STRENGTHENING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES"

Phi Delta Kappa International

THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION IN EDUCATION

February 22, 2002

Dr. Mervin K. Strickler, Jr.
P.O. Box 302
Penfield, PA 15849-0302

Dear Dr. Strickler:

I take great pleasure in offering my support for your nomination of Dr. Gerald W. Bracey for the Brock International Prize in Education. I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Dr. Bracey since 1983, when I first worked on one of his articles for the *Phi Delta Kappa n.* Since 1984, Dr. Bracey has been the Research columnist for the *Kappa n,* and the other editors and I have come to depend on his sound analysis of data and his clear understanding of the place of educational research in America. He is one of our prime resource people.

But in 1991 Dr. Bracey began what has become for him a crusade: to tell the whole unvarnished truth about education in the United States. That was the year in which the *Kappan* published "Why Can't They Be Like We Were," a data- based look at the true state of American education and a gauntlet cast down before those who were claiming that the public education system in the U.S. was in a shambles. Dr. Bracey examined the data on education --warts and all --and found the claims of these critics to be largely without merit. This 1991 article inaugurated the annual Bracey Reports, in which Dr. Bracey examines the data on American education --good and bad --as well as the way in which such data are reported. This first of the Bracey Reports provoked outrage and vociferous denials from those whom Dr. Bracey dubbed "school bashers." Every one of them was invited to debate him in the pages of the *Kappan* --all declined to do so.

Dr. Bracey was led to undertake his investigation by his reading of the once- suppressed (but now widely known) Sandia Report. But that first Bracey Report went beyond the efforts of the Sandia researchers in that Dr. Bracey looked not simply at the data but also at how they were reported by researchers and by members of the press and at how they were used by policy makers and elected officials. This second step, buttressed as it was by his sound data analysis, changed the entire conversation about education in America. Indeed, in the years "Before Bracey" it was acceptable for federal and state officials to allude to the "well-known failure" of American schools in general as justification for whatever policy mechanism they wished to endorse. In the years "After Bracey," that was

no longer the case. No longer could critics of education maintain that the system of public schooling in America was in a state of collapse, for he had demonstrated that this was clearly not so. The school reform conversation that began in earnest in 1983, with the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* changed in 1991. Today, with 12 Bracey Reports in print, the school reform conversation revolves around how to make all schools *better* and, especially, how to focus efforts on those specific areas --largely inner-city and rural schools --where conditions are dire and improvement is crucial.

Dr. Bracey has also taken his message outside the groves of academe by maintaining an extensive speaking schedule and by publishing op-ed pieces in the general press. Yet, as a trained research psychologist, he continues to rely on the hard data to support all of these efforts.

Much of what is said in the arenas where public policy is made will always be "spun" for political purposes. Where education is concerned, Dr. Bracey's work has removed the spin and enabled policy makers and citizens alike to see the issues clearly. For this reason, if for no other, he is eminently deserving of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Cordially yours,

Bruce M. Smith

Bruce M. Smith
Managing Editor Phi
Delta Kappan

BMS:th

GERALD W. BRACEY Ph.D
Nominee
Brock International Prize in Education

Nationally known policy analyst, researcher, prolific writer and lecturer on American public education, Gerald W. Bracey loves to separate public education myth from reality in his lectures and writings. Bracey who is well known for his monthly educational research columns in Phi Delta Kappan, and his periodic "Bracey Report on the Condition of Education" has drawn the attention of national media. Gerald Bracey earned his Ph.D in psychology from Stanford University. His career includes posts at the Early Childhood Education Research Group of the Educational Testing Service, Institute for Child Study at Indiana University, Virginia Department of Education and Agency for Instructional Technology. For the past 18 years, he has written monthly columns on education and psychological research for Phi Delta Kappan which in 1997 published his The Truth About America's Schools: The Bracey Reports, 1991-1997. He has written annual Reports since then through 2001. Among Bracey's other books and numerous articles are: Transforming America's Schools; (1994), Final Exam:A Study of the Perpetual Scrutiny of American Education(1995); Setting the Record Straight: Responses to Misconceptions About Public Education in America(1997); Bail me Out! Handling Difficult Data and Tough Questions About Public Schools (2000); and The War Against America's Public Schools: Privatizing Schools, Commercializing Education(2002); Put to the Test: An Educator's and Consumer's Guide to Standardized Testing (1998; revised edition 2002). Gerald W. Bracey is the nation's foremost defender of public education against those who would attack it without facts but with ideological agendas or misinformation. He is quick to point out, with facts, the weaknesses of public education and suggest practical, attainable remedies. As one means of communication, Bracey maintains a web-site entitled: Education Disinformation Detection and Reporting Agency (EDDRA); it is: www.america-tomorrow.com/bracey. Bracey, a native of Williamsburg, Virginia, now lives in Alexandria, Virginia.

Phi Delta Kappa International

THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION IN EDUCATION

February 25, 2002

Mervin K. Strickler, Jr.
P.O. Box 302
Penfield, PA 15849-0302

Dear Dr. Strickler:

It is a pleasure to endorse Gerald Bracey as a candidate for the Brock International Prize in Education. No one deserves that prize more, because Dr. Bracey has changed the entire national dialogue about American public education.

In support of Dr. Bracey's candidacy, I will repeat here the words that I wrote as a Foreword to his 1997 book, *The Truth About America's Schools: The Bracey Reports, 1991-97.* They expressed my view about the importance of Dr. Bracey's work then, and they still do so today. I wrote in 1997:

> The public schools have always had their critics. But after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the critics of public education in America became more strident and more ubiquitous. Those critics eventually included three "Education Presidents," many public officials at all levels, the mass media, and even some education professionals — those who made careers of collecting grants to "fix" problems that had been magnified out of all correspondence with reality.
>
> Hammered daily by statistics presented without the context that gives them meaning, most other Americans bought into the myth that the nation's public schools were in a state of collapse. It was a disheartening decade for many teachers and school administrators, who recognized the myth for what it was but whose voices could not be heard above the cacophony of the critics.
>
> Then, in October 1991, the *Phi Delta Kappan* published Gerald Bracey's first data-based analysis of the condition of public education. Bracey's findings were in sharp conflict with the prevailing view. Instead of discovering an education system verging on total collapse, he found the schools to be about as effective as they had ever been (though the population they served had become dramatically harder to educate).
>
> Not that Bracey started out to defend the public schools. Like most Americans in 1990, he thought that the schools his own children attended were "okay" but that other public schools across the nation were in serious trouble.
>
> Indeed, as he explained in the prefatory note to *Final Exam: A Study of the Perpetual Scrutiny of American Education* (Technos Press, 1995), the first two Bracey Reports came about by accident. "Quite literally, if the *Denver Post* in late 1990 had not reprinted a Richard Cohen column that had appeared two months earlier in the *Washington Post*, 'Johnny's Miserable SATs,' the Bracey Reports would not exist," he said. Cohen's column aroused Bracey's curiosity, causing him to take a close look at SAT

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scores over the years in relation to demographic changes within the test-taking population. That analysis turned up a small drop in the verbal SAT score over time and no drop in the math score — a much healthier situation than Cohen and most other commentators had led us to believe.

Bracey published the results of his analysis in *Education Week*, and that article — "SATs: Miserable or Miraculous?" — prompted colleagues across the nation to send him other data that corroborated his findings. Those colleagues included a group of systems engineers at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, whose own conclusions regarding the condition of public education in America matched Bracey's — but whose report of those conclusions had been suppressed by "internal politics."

Out of all these data come the initial article, "Why Can't They Be Like We Were?" The publication of that piece in the *Kappan* brought Bracey more new data from colleagues — enough to merit a second Bracey Report (a title coined by the editors when it became clear that the reports would be an annual feature). And that second Bracey Report spawned subsequent ones. The initial Bracey Report, which footnoted the third draft of the Sandia Report, also made pirated photocopies of the Sandia Report hot items across the nation. Now the secret was out: The American system of public education was *not* in a state of collapse.

Since 1991, the national dialogue about the condition of public education has shifted — albeit glacially — from the notion of total collapse to the view that U.S. public schools will not be good enough for the 21st century. That's a position that Bracey endorses. As he noted in the Introduction to *Transforming America's Schools: An Rx for Getting Past Blame* (American Association of School Administrators, 1994), "One need not assume school failure to propose school reform."

Meanwhile, as long as the new data merit them, Bracey will continue to write his annual reports on the condition of public education for the *Kappan*. He has proven to us time and again that he is data-driven. No one "owns" him; as an independent agent, he single-mindedly pursues whatever truth can be derived from empirical evidence. When he errs in his interpretation of the data (which happens only rarely), he publicly admits his mistake and corrects it. And when others ignore or misuse data to tell a tale about American public education that simply isn't so, he doesn't pull his punches in publicly calling those individuals to task. It was Bracey, you may remember, who coined the label "data-proof ideologues."

While taping a radio show [in 1997] with John Merrow, Bracey noted that, when he embarked on his study of the condition of public education, he had "no position."

"Do you have one now?" Merrow asked.

Bracey paused, and then replied: "Yes, in the sense that I am more convinced now that my original conclusions were correct. But no, in the sense that all last year [1996] I told audiences all over the country that, if the Third International Mathematics and Science Study proved to be a credible study and showed that American kids really looked lousy when matched

The Washington Post

OUTLOOK

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2002

Commentary | **B**

Editorials
Columnists
Close to Home

Why Do We Scapegoat The Schools?

By GERALD W. BRACEY

There's no pleasing some people, even when they get what they want. So why do we keep listening to them?

For almost 20 years now, some of our most prominent business leaders and politicians have sounded the same alarm about the nation's public schools. It began in earnest with that 1983 golden treasury of selected, spun and distorted education statistics, "A Nation At Risk," whose authors wrote, "If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system. . . ." The document tightly yoked our economic position in the world to how well or poorly students bubbled in answer sheets on standardized tests.

And it continued in September 2000, when a national commission on math and science teaching headed by former Ohio senator John Glenn issued a report titled "Before It's Too Late." It asked, rhetorically, "In an integrated, global economy . . . will our children be able to compete?" The report's entirely predictable answer: Not if we don't improve schools *"before it's too late"* (emphasis in the original report).

So you might think that these Chicken Littles would

See COMPETITIVE, *B4, Col. 1*

Gerald Bracey is an educational researcher and writer in Alexandria.

Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson all took to the nation's op-ed pages in 2000 and 2001 to lament the threat that our education system poses to our competitiveness. Gerstner made an encore appearance on the Times op-ed page in March, expressing his continuing concern that our schools will "limit our competitive position in the global marketplace."

None of these fine gentlemen provided any data on the relationship between the economy's health and the performance of schools. Our long economic boom suggests there isn't one—or that our schools are better than the critics claim. But there is a broader, more objective means of looking for any relationship. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) provides test scores for 41 nations, including the United States. Thirty-eight of those countries are ranked on the World Economic Forum's CCI. It's a simple statistical matter to correlate the test scores with the CCI.

There is little correlation. The United States is 29th in mathematics, but second in competitiveness. Korea is third in mathematics, but 27th in competitiveness. And so forth. If the two lists had matched, place for place, that would produce a perfect correlation of +1.0. But because some countries are high on competitiveness and low on test scores (and vice versa), the actual correlation is +.23. In the world of statistics, this is considered quite small.

Actually, even that small correlation is misleadingly high: Seven countries are low on both variables, creating what little relationship there is. If these seven nations are removed from the calculation, the correlation between test scores and competitiveness actually becomes negative, meaning that higher test scores are slightly associated with lower competitiveness.

The education variables in the index include: the quality of schools, the TIMSS scores; the number of years of education and the proportion of the country's population attending college (these two are variables in which the United States excels); and survey rankings from executives who, the World Economic Forum claims, have "international perspectives." The WEF ranked U.S. schools 27th of the 75 nations—not exactly eye-popping, but given all of the horrible things said about American schools in the past 25 years, perhaps surprisingly high. (The United States looked particularly bad in one WEF category: the difference in quality between rich and poor schools. We finished 42nd, lower than any other developed nation. That is shameful in a country as rich as ours.)

So, if 26 nations have better schools, how did we earn our No. 2 overall competitiveness ranking? The WEF uses dozens of variables from many sectors, and the United States rates well across the board. One important consideration is the "brain drain" factor. Our scientists and engineers stay here, earning us a top ranking in this category. No other country, not even Finland, came close on this measurement.

But what really caught my eye were the top U.S. scores on a set of variables that make up what the WEF calls "National Innovation Capacity." Innovation variables are critical to competitiveness, according to the WEF. Ten years ago, the competitive edge was gained by nations that could lower costs and raise quality. Virtually all developed countries have accomplished this, the WEF report asserts, and thus "competitive advantage must come from the ability to create and then commercialize new products and processes, shifting the technology frontier as fast as rivals can catch up."

Innovation is itself a complicated affair, but my guess is that it is not linked to test scores. If anything, too much testing discourages innovative thinking.

American schools, believe it or not, have developed a culture that encourages innovative thinking. How many other cultures do that? A 2001 op-ed in The Washington Post was titled "At Least Our Kids Ask Questions." In the essay, author Amy Biancolli described her travails in trying to get Scottish students to discuss Shakespeare. She found that they weren't used to being allowed to express their opinions or having them valued. I had the same experience when I taught college students in Hong Kong. Years later, I mentioned this to a professor in Taiwan who said that even today, "professors' questions are often met with stony silence."

We take our questioning culture so much for granted that we don't even notice it until we encounter another country that doesn't have it. A 2001 New York Times article discussed, in the words of Japanese scientists, why Americans win so many Nobel prizes while the Japanese win so few. The Japanese scientists provided a number of reasons, but the one they cited as most important was peer review. Before American scientists publish their research, they submit it to the scrutiny—questioning—of other researchers. Japanese culture discourages this kind of direct confrontation; one Japanese scientist recalled his days in the United States, when he would watch scholars—good friends—engage in furious battles, challenging and testing each other's assumptions and logic. That would never happen in Japan, he told the Times reporter.

Japan's culture of cooperation and consensus makes for a more civil society than we find here, but our combative culture leaves us with an edge in creativity. We should think more than twice before we tinker too much with an educational system that encourages questioning. We won't benefit from one that idolizes high test scores.

It could put our very competitiveness as a nation at risk.

against their peers in other countries, then that is what the next Bracey Report would say."

Trained as a developmental and cognitive psychologist, Bracey remains true to the principles of his profession. He is not an "apologist" for the public schools. He is not a "revisionist" of education history. He is a truth-teller.

And, when the history of my editorship of the *Kappan* is written, I believe that the journal's role in bringing Bracey's views to public attention will be perceived as one of the *Kappan*'s proudest accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Pauline B. Gough

Pauline B. Gough
Editor
Phi Delta Kappan

PBG:th

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University of Missouri-Columbia

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March 27, 2002

Mervin K. Strickler, Jr.
P.O. Box 302
Pentfield, PA 15849-0302

Dear Dr. Strickler,

With this letter I join others in supporting the nomination of DR. GERALD BRACEY for the 2002 Brock International Prize in Education.

As you are surely aware, Jerry Bracey performs a unique and badly-needed role for American education. Over the years, affluent, self-centered, and politically conservative Americans have been suspicious of public education, and beginning in 1980, with the election of President Ronald Reagan, they began an energetic campaign designed to weaken public support for that institution and to persuade Americans that public schools should be "reformed" in destructive ways and that tax support for those schools should be reduced or diverted to private schools. And since their campaign has been financed by powerful, right-wing foundations and has often been echoed by prominent political leaders, their arguments have had great impact on recent American debates and decisions about educational policy.

In their enthusiasm, conservative forces have also created an astounding number of speeches, articles, op-ed pieces, books, and other materials in which the findings of educational research are misrepresented so as to provide apparent support for their arguments. These misrepresentations have involved a large panoply of techniques through which research techniques, evidence, conclusions, and implications are distorted or lied about, and (again) these forces have had considerable success selling their misrepresentations to opinion leaders and the American public.

This does not mean that such efforts are always successful. Jerry Bracey, in particular, has emerged as a champion of sanity and truth-telling when it comes to the findings of educational research and what they actually imply about useful ways to improve America's public schools. Through his annual reports, published in Educational Leadership, his well-written and scholarly reviews, his op-ed pieces, and his unique books focused on the detection and prevention of fraud in reports of educational research, Jerry has become a vigorous and widely-respected, oppositional voice. His work is now known to literally thousands of educational researchers, his "fans" among educators number in the hundreds of thousands, and his well-reasoned judgments about what research "really says" are now being cited in debates about educational policy across the nation.

As suggested above, I can think of no other person who plays a stronger role in defense of America's public schools today. Truly, Jerry has become a "national treasure" and someone who richly deserves the Brock International Prize. I recommend him in strongest terms.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce J. Biddle
Professor Emeritus of Psychology
and of Sociology

no longer the case. No longer could critics of education maintain that the system of public schooling in America was in a state of collapse, for he had demonstrated that this was clearly not so. The school reform conversation that began in earnest in 1983, with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, changed in 1991. Today, with 12 Bracey Reports in print, the school reform conversation revolves around how to make all schools *better* and, especially, how to focus efforts on those specific areas -- largely inner-city and rural schools -- where conditions are dire and improvement is crucial.

Dr. Bracey has also taken his message outside the groves of academe by maintaining an extensive speaking schedule and by publishing op-ed pieces in the general press. Yet, as a trained research psychologist, he continues to rely on the hard data to support all of these efforts.

Much of what is said in the arenas where public policy is made will always be "spun" for political purposes. Where education is concerned, Dr. Bracey's work has removed the spin and enabled policy makers and citizens alike to see the issues clearly. For this reason, if for no other, he is eminently deserving of the Brock International Prize in Education.

Cordially yours,

Bruce M. Smith

Bruce M. Smith
Managing Editor
Phi Delta Kappan

BMS:th

The following information resulted from an interview with Dr. Bracey in mid-March of this year. I discussed with him a variety of questions that I wanted him to answer. I indicated that I would e-mail the specific questions to him and that he then might respond with his answers by e-mail. The materials in this section include my questions and his answers.

QUESTION AND ANSWER INTERVIEW
WITH DR. GERALD W. BRACEY
BY
MERVIN K. STRICKLER, JR.

1. In preparing my nomination of you for the Brock International Prize in Education, how would you like to be listed?

   I would list me as someone with formal education through the doctoral level in psychology, but as someone who has worked in some aspect of education since 1967. In recent years I have specialized in policy analysis and assessment.

2. What are some of the areas in which you have taught?

   I have taught introductory, educational and developmental psychology at the college level. I also taught a field-based course as part of the Multi-cultural Educational Development Program, a pre-service program at Indiana University, Bloomington. Also at Bloomington, I worked with four other faculty members to develop the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Young Children. In this program I taught/participated in an Interdisciplinary Seminar in Young Children, an ongoing seminar for students in the program. I co-taught a course in Teachers As Researchers for teachers in Cherry Creek (CO) Schools.

3. How do you feel about the schools that your children attended?

   I thought that the schools my children attended in Virginia and Colorado were superior to those I had attended in Williamsburg, Virginia, even though that town is home to the College of William and Mary, a number of the teachers had attended that school, and the focus of high school teaching was to prepare us for William and Mary and the University of Virginia, the institutions most popular with graduates of the high school.

   My children's schools had a richer, more challenging curriculum and a more current one. For instance, in biology my children studied ecology, evolution and genetics. I memorized phyla. Similarly, their physics courses described subatomic particles; mine described Newton's laws and the six simple machines.

4. What do you consider to be some of the best features of our public schools?

   For all of the talk of schools stunting creativity, American schools foster inquiry much more than schools in other nations. They also set the stage, in science, for genuine peer review. Such review does not exist in Japan, for existence, and in an article Japanese scientists credited the peer review process in America as the major reason that American scientists win Nobel prizes in great quantities and Japanese scientists do not.

   When I lived in Hong Kong I was occasionally invited to lecture in developmental psychology at Hong Kong University. On the first instance, acting from my American cultural experience, I prepared lecture notes, but also some questions stimulate thought and discussion. My questions were total failures as the students simply sat there. Later, the head of the psychology department, in the room for my lecture, advised that the students were probably embarrassed that I didn't know the answer to the questions.

   Similarly, an American teaching in Scotland recounted in the *Washington Post* her struggles to get her teenage charges to discuss Shakespeare. They were simply not used to having their thoughts or questions valued.

   By contrast, my daughter's elementary teachers used to advise her that there was no such thing as a bad question. I would guess that a school career in such different contexts has a profound impact on students' capacity for original thought and their willingness to take risks (the Japanese scientists also said risk-taking was rate in Japan).

Similarly, even though American schools teach students in groups, they try to adapt instruction to individuals. At my granddaughter's first grade Christmas songfest, I was seated next to a Korean lady. At one point she said "American schools are heaven for children." When she elaborated (she had a fifth-grader as well as a first grader), she said she meant the individual attention that American schools provided in contrast to the rigid lockstep, test dominated instruction of Korean schools. She was returning to South Korea with her newspaper reporter husband and wasn't at all pleased at the prospect.

5. What do you consider to be some of the major needs of our public schools?

Among the needs is a need for a new formula for funding, see #11 below.

6. Apart from funding changes, what other needs do you see?

Schools also need better trained and more enthusiastic teachers. They need teachers and administrators who can act more as models and examples of what they are promoting. That is, teachers and administrators sing the praises of the "lifelong learner," but too often do not demonstrate the love of life-long learning themselves. Many years ago, Arlene Silberman, wife of Chuck Silberman, author of *Crisis in the Classroom*, and a writer in her own right, told me that when she wanted to reach teachers she placed articles in *Redbook* and other women's publications because teachers didn't read any more deeply than anyone else.

Schools need more coherent programs for staff development. Too often staff development consists of a smattering of this and that. In the words of a teacher I used to work with, an inservice day is a day when "some guy blows in, blows off, and blows out.

Many schools need more money. Schools *can* spend money on programs that don't improve education, a la Kansas City, but many schools lack current textbooks, sufficient numbers of textbooks, counselors, and science and language labs. As one California student put it in 2001, "We sit around in computer class and talk about what we would be doing if we had computers."

Those who hold the "money doesn't matter," "don't throw money" at the schools position have been shown to be wrong from many different perspectives.

7. What are some of the major errors made by critics of public education?

In some cases, the errors of the critics are not errors. The critics have distorted and spun statistics. They have selected and hyped the harshest appearing statistics. They have done both to advance political and/or ideological agendas.

Dominant among these are the alleged statistics of the Final Year Study of TIMSS. Former secretary of education, William Bennett told an audience at the Heritage Foundation "In America today, the longer you stay in school, the dumber you get relative to kids in other industrialized nations. American students were near the top in TIMSS as 4th-graders, in the middle as 8th graders. American students appeared to be at or near the bottom in math and science literacy, advanced mathematics and physics, the four subjects tested. In fact, the American sample differed from those in other nations by many factors. For example, we included students who were enrolled in pre-calculus classes to see how they would do. They did awful, largely because the test presumed the students had already taken calculus. American students who had taken calculus were average.

I believe the decline from 4th to 8th grade is real and calls for some rethinking of what is offered in the middle schools. Historically, the middle years in American schools have functioned as the culmination of elementary school. In other nations, they serve as the start of high school. American schools look back and review, other nations' schools look forward and introduce new material. A recent study showed that algebra is not even an option for 25% of American eighth graders and only about 14% of American 8th-graders take it.

I think the decline from 8th to 12th grade is likely not real. One piece of evidence is that from the advanced math test cited above. In a similar vein, in most nations, teenagers are students or workers, not both. But American teenagers often are both and 55% of the seniors in the study had work weeks that research has shown are too long for them to do well in school. These 55% did not do well in TIMSS, while those working only a few hours a week were again average, the position they held as 8th-graders.

The second most egregious error has been to argue that the typical American school is in crisis or is, to use the most common cliché, a "failing school." In fact, in OECD's study of achievement, white American 15-year-olds were near the top among 32 nations in reading, math and science, while black and Hispanic students were near the bottom. Ethnicity here is largely operating as a proxy variable for class. Poor students typically do not do well.

An education reform program that assumes that the typical American school is in crisis will look quite different from one based on the conclusion that we need to focus on a subset of American schools. A reform program targeted at all schools will be misleading.

We do not need to test all students even every three or four years, much less annually, to know what schools need help.

8. Whom do you consider to be the major clienteles you reach in your writing, lectures, and other areas of communication including: newspapers, popular magazines, radio, television interviews and professional seminars and workshops?

In short, I try to reach everyone. I write occasionally for scholarly journals when I have something of interest to that community. I do not write much for these journals because they are already full of research that is neglected by the practitioner community, and I have seen myself as a bridge between the two, as a disseminator of research. The purpose of my Research column in *Phi Delta Kappan* is to translate the arcana of research into terms that practitioners can understand. The Research column does not argue points as does the annual "Bracey Report", but the topics covered therein are obviously ones that I am interested in. Apparently so are the readers. Of the many components to *Phi Delta Kappan,* the Research column consistently finishes second in reader surveys in terms of interest, importance and frequency read.

In addition to the Research column, I try to reach practitioners through articles in *Education Week* and in journals published by education professional organizations: *Educational Leadership, NASSP Bulletin, School Business Affairs, The School Administrator, Principal,* etc. On several occasions I have created tapes with AudioEd, an organization that makes tapes for administrators to listen to in their automobiles. I also provide talks and workshops for various professional groups.

Beyond that I try to reach lay audiences either directly or through the media. Direct communication involves mostly articles in general interest publications such as the *Washington Post, and USA Today.* On a number of occasions, I have written op-ed pieces for newspapers in places where I have spoken.

Naturally, I and the organizations who sponsor my talks attempt to get local media to cover the event and they sometimes do. I also maintain a list of education writers around the country with whom I communicate by email. Sometimes I send a Research column, sometimes an article from one publication, sometimes a reaction to some news event.

I also maintain a website, the Education Disinformation Detection and Reporting Agency. The 1500-odd members of that list include educators of all levels, board members, legislators, consultants, lobbyists, parents, and consultants.

9 What should the "average" parent know about their schools today?

The "average" parent should be familiar with their children's teacher(s), the principal and the school board. The latter is important because school boards today tend to get involved with issues that previously were left to the staff.

The average parent also needs to know a lot more about testing than the average parent does now. Testing is no longer a tool, it is a weapon used to hammer schools into the shape desired by politicians, businessmen and ideologues.

10. What can parents do to support and help improve public education?

Parents can support and improve schools by getting involved although "getting involved" is a double-edged sword. In one study, parents in affluent public schools were more involved than those in private schools. In at least one school, the involvement threatened to overwhelm the school. The parental involvement did not stem from nervousness about the school's competence, according to the researchers, but to the attitude that parents have both a right and an obligation to be involved.

In the same study, schools in low-income areas had to work to obtain parental involvement. Much of the involvement that came from parents concerned what they perceived as unfair grading or disciplinary actions taken against their child. School-generated involvement tended to be in non-academic areas.

Parents can also support and improve schools by trying to impress upon children that schoolwork should be taken seriously (assuming, for the moment, that assignments are not mindless). Several articles have turned on the fact that students don't complete homework because parents don't insist on it and, indeed, consider soccer practice and other activities more important.

11. How do you feel about the present system of funding public education through property taxes? How would you suggest we fund public education?

The present system of funding largely through property taxes insures that the class and ethnic gaps in achievement will not be closed. Indeed, it appears that the high standards movement, allegedly an engine for social equity has *increased* the distance between rich and poor--poor schools lack the resources to address the standards mandated for them.

The generally affluent district I worked for took one approach to standards: it would form committees to examine standards and decided what to do with them. Its teachers and supervisors had the time and security for such an examination and the administration would insure that time was provided. In schools where students are taken out of reading class to pick up bottles, bullets and condoms on school grounds (California, 2001), this is not an option.

A property tax based system assures that schools in areas with low tax bases will be starved financially. A system based on sales taxes, as in Michigan, would improve the situation. A system based on income taxes would be even better because sales taxes are regressive. They take a larger proportion of poor people's incomes.

12. What effects do you feel the new federal legislation on education will have? Positive? Negative?

The details of the new federal program are still being formulated, but there is little cause for optimism.

Some parts of the legislation deny reality, never a good long-term strategy. For instance, we are now in a time of falling state revenues and consequent budget cuts. We are also in a time of teacher shortages that experts predict will become worse. Yet the program requires all teachers to be fully accredited. This is unreal.

Similarly, only nine states have a testing program as large as that required by the legislation. They will have to spend a great deal more to meet the requirements, not only for the testing itself, but to augment the state departments of education which will have to monitor the programs.

The legislation invented a concept called Adequate Yearly Progress. As first written, the formula for AYP would have failed 89% to 98% (depending on level of test score aggregation) of the schools in Texas and North Carolina, two states recently singled out for progress in raising test scores. The definition of AYP now rests with the states, which would seem to be a means of guaranteeing chaos. Moreover, some researchers have found evidence that year-to-year changes in test scores are volatile and that most of the change comes from factors outside of the school.

The program also threatens to curtail the states' flexibility, an irony since the administration is supposedly a states-rights administration. For instance, the state of Maryland considered not giving its state tests at the 8th grade while it re-evaluates those tests. The U. S. Department of Education has said that Maryland *must* give the tests if it wants Title I money.

There are also signs of rigidity and one-size-fits-all thinking in the U. S. Department of Education's approach to the teaching of beginning reading and to the concept of grade level. While schools are struggling to individualize instruction to the varying student abilities in a given class--as much as six years variance in reading levels in elementary classrooms--the Department is emphasizing grade-level instruction.

13. How do you account for the fact that many politicians and critics of public education who wanted to eliminate the United States Department of Education now seem to support even more federal participation in education?

Well, there they go again. It's now been 22 years since candidate Reagan said he wanted to do away with the Department and the law of bureaucracy prevails--once established, bureaucracies continue. While the law is not immutable--witness the demise of OTA--it is strong.

Beyond that, while 7%, the amount of a state's education budget covered by federal dollars, is not a large chunk of a state's budget, it is noticeable. Moreover, it is most noticeable in two areas that states are least likely to protest federal financial intrusion: special education and Title I. These are largely federally created programs so it is appropriate to fund them (special education has never received the level of funding promised by the federal government).

In addition, state officials have noticed that education in general is a highly electable issue to run on. To propose doing away with the Department could be seen (by an expedient opponent) as attempt to eliminate money for the handicapped and disadvantaged. Not good for an image.

At this time, too, state budgets are hurting and turning down dollars is more difficult than usual.

14. Would you comment on the role of vouchers and charter schools in relationship to public education?

I think vouchers are ultimately a disaster for public schools while charters can be helpful or hurtful depending on how they are funded and overseen.

Vouchers cannot help but drain money from the public schools at the risk of leaving the publics with fewer resources and harder to educate kids. In addition, the empirical evidence on vouchers in other countries weighs heavily against them. In Chile, a national 20-year program of vouchers appears to have done little for achievement. Upwardly mobile parents tend to choose voucher schools because these schools have acquired an image (an image not justified by achievement). In New Zealand, vouchers have greatly increased social stratification and ethnic segregation, especially in urban areas where it can least be afforded.

Charter schools offer the possibility of increased choice, which is good. As diversity is helpful to the survival of a species, so is diversity in education helpful to match children's talents and interest to instruction. Thus far, though, charters have disappointed observers. They seem to differ little from regular schools and have not served as the laboratories of innovation they were supposed to be.

In California, where the local school district authorizes the charters, researchers have found little evidence that public schools learn from charters or that charter operators see part of their function as enlightening the rest of the district. The potential is there, though, since the charter is still a part of the district (a few are operated directly by the state as a consequence of conflict with the district).

In Michigan, by contrast, charters are funded mostly through state universities and have little connection with the district in which they reside. Many "mom and pop" charters were started by people with a "vision" of education, but without the financial and administrative skills needed to run a school. They have increasingly turned to Education Management Organizations (EMOs) for these skills, leading to what one evaluation team called "cookie cutter schools." This further distances the charters from the public schools and in many cases sends money from poor districts to big-salaried EMO officers in another state.

A second-year evaluation of charters in Ohio found owners yearning for the kinds of assistance offered by EMOs and one can predict a trend in Ohio similar to that in Michigan. This does not augur well for diversity or for the public schools.

Neither vouchers nor charters have so far produced the kind of increased achievement promised. Charters entered the field of education with promises of absolute accountability: if we don't get scores up, close us down. The cases of shutdowns are few and shutdowns for academic reasons extremely rare--usually fiscal mismanagement is cited. It must be said though, that the interrelations between fiscal and educational affairs in a charter are tightly intertwined. In addition, it is much easier to show that money has been squandered or inappropriately used than to show that a charter's achievement is "bad enough" to terminate or not renew the charter. It is also the case that after a charter has run its course, usually three to five years, those monitoring the charters must now deal not with just the school but with a community that has formed around the charter.

15. Do you have comments on the role of so-called magnet schools and whether or not they have helped public education?

Magnets offer a similar opportunity for increased diversity within the public school setting. I cannot provide a summative judgment on whether magnets have served to keep students in urban schools. In one case that I know of, the Key School in Indianapolis, I think that magnet has provided wonderful opportunities for those who attend. It is based loosely on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and as a consequence offers a much richer curriculum than the typical school which emphasizes only verbal and mathematical talents.

A magnet such as the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County, Virginia, has a more mixed set of outcomes. It has a disproportionate number of science scholarship winners, even taking its selective students (SAT verbal average, 725, math 745) into account. On the other hand, it has gotten caught up in affirmative action controversies. Some parents, and students, want academic talent to be the only criterion for admission, which mitigates against minorities.

In addition, there is some evidence that attendance at a "star" school such as TJ diminishes the chances that those students not at the top of their class will be admitted to selective colleges and universities. Nor in star schools are those students not at the top as likely to take AP courses and exams as students with similar test scores in more heterogeneous schools.

16. We hear a lot about the urgent needs to help improve public education in the Inner-cities and urban areas – what are we and should we be doing to improve public education in rural, isolated areas?

The first thing we should do to aid poor schools, be they urban or rural, is to find some way of insuring that poor schools get the resources that middle class schools take for granted. On March 18, 2002, William Raspberry's column in the *Washington Post* included a report from Lowndes County, Alabama where the former H. Rap Brown was just convicted of murder. The person visiting Lowndes described it as a place where time stopped 50 years ago. Blacks are in power now, but many homes (thirty percent of which are trailers) still have no running water or septic tanks. Sewage runs in open trenches. "Kids attend ramshackle schools with coal-fired furnaces and as many as a third of them spend time out of school with respiratory illnesses." This description is similar to the many I have in a federal court brief from a 1990 suit in Alabama--schools without potable water, schools where the shelves are falling down because termites have eaten them, etc.

These problems are not limited to the Deep South. A September, 2001 article in the *Sacramento Bee* described similar conditions in California schools.

Next, we should undertake programs to insure that what is learned in school is not lost. One study found that poor, middle class and affluent students learned the same amount in elementary school during the school year (at least, insofar as that can be captured by test scores, but the poor students lost ground over the summer. The middle class and affluent kids did not. The result was that the poor students, who started school behind their middle class and affluent peers, fell farther and farther behind between first and fifth grade. Programs over the summer that maintain school learning are needed. These programs need not

necessarily look like "summer school," but could be the kinds of enrichment activities (park visits, library visits, organized sports, etc.) that middle class kids engage in.

Given my druthers, I would want programs that were able to get to pregnant women in the first trimester of pregnancy and provide prenatal care. The lack of such care assures that many more poor children than necessary will be born with low birth weights and, as a consequence, later show intellectual deficits.

At a minimum, I would want a quality preschool program. Headstart is a start, but only a start. Headstart appears to have some longer term benefits, but not like those seen in the Perry Pre-School Project, the Abecedarian Project, or the Chicago Child-Parent Center Project. Cost-benefit analyses of the children in these projects show that society gets back $7 for every dollar invested up to age 27. Some benefits accrue to the individuals, some to society as a whole. The teachers in these projects were better trained than the typical Headstart teacher (who, in turn, has more training than the typical daycare center worker).

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THE INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU LEARN OF JUST SOME OF THE FRAMES OF REFERENCE USED BY DR. BRACEY IN HIS EFFORTS TO REFUTE SOME OF WHAT HE FEELS ARE INCORRECT OR UNSUBSTANTIATED ARGUMENTS AGAINST PUBLIC EDUCATION.

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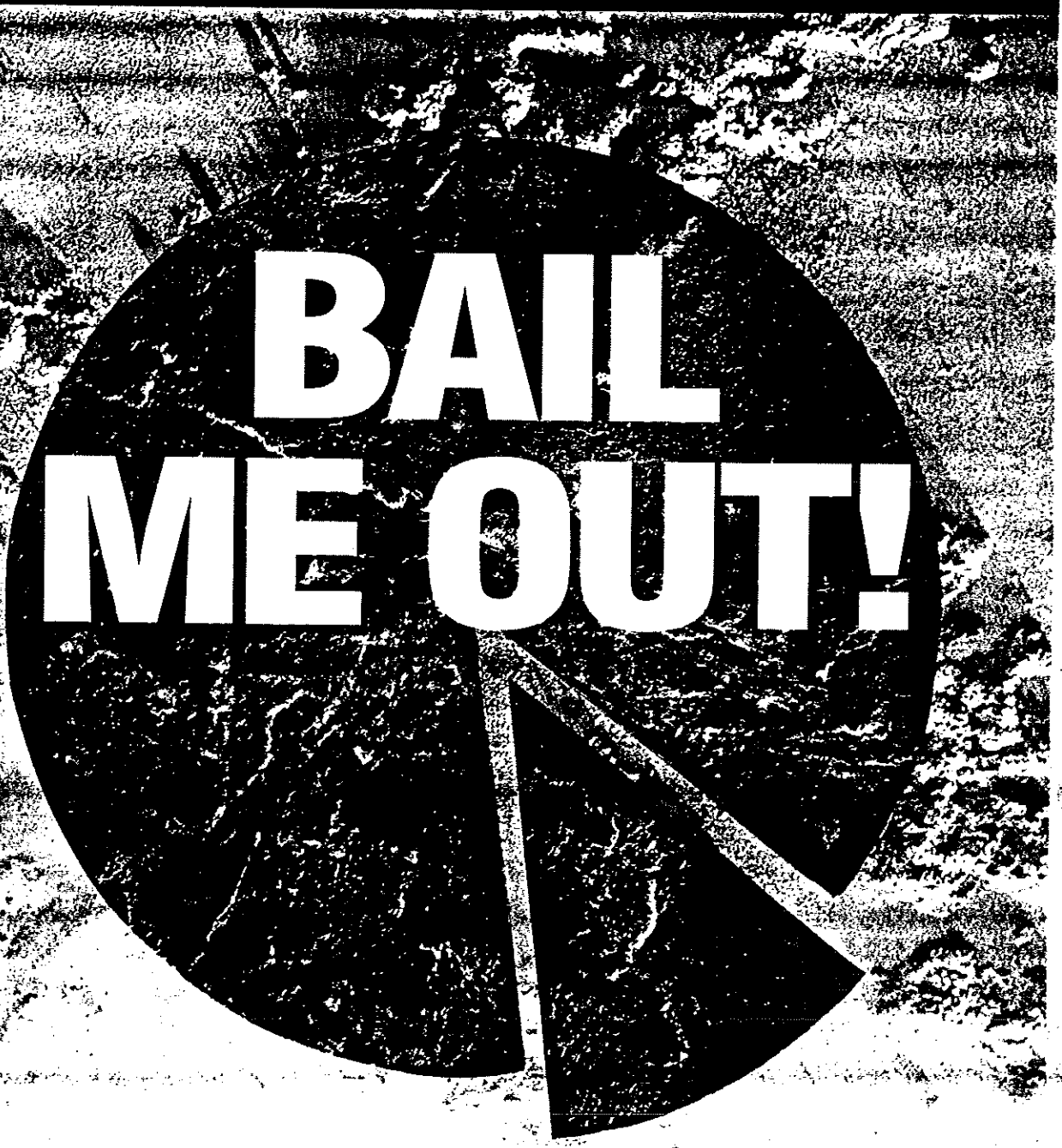

BAIL ME OUT!

Handling Difficult Data and Tough Questions About Public Schools

Introduction

Why You Need a Book Like This

You need a book like this for four reasons: (a) You need to be able to READ the data. (b) You need to read the DATA. (c) You need to be able to discuss the concept of "achievement" in all of its ramifications, not just in terms of test scores. (d) You need some perspective on how we got to the place we are in the first place. Let's talk about these reasons for a moment. Consider the following quote:

> Nationally, teachers—public and private—are 50% more likely than the public at large to choose private schools (17.1% to 13.1%). Not too make too fine a point, teachers, public and private, white and black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, low income, middle income, and high income, know how to address the nation's education crisis: they vote with their feet and their pocketbooks. . . . If private schools are good enough for public school teachers, why aren't they good enough for poor children? . . . With teachers choosing private schools, the truth is self-evident: while they work in public schools they choose private schools for their own children because they believe they are better. They are connoisseurs. And no one in our society is better qualified to make that judgment than teachers. (Doyle, 1994, p. 3)

Doyle penned his passage in an ominous tone. He implies that public school teachers of all stripes are a treacherous bunch, abandoning their own institutions in favor of private schools. Teachers are connoisseurs. One definition of connoisseur is "a person with informed and discriminating taste." Teachers, therefore, know what good schools look like and send their kids to them. They send their kids to private schools. Certainly, this is the impression left by the rhetoric. It is what you would come away with if you did not actually look at Doyle's results.

When we actually read the data, Doyle's rhetoric fades fast. First off, Doyle claims that teachers are 50% more likely to choose private schools than the general public—17.1% to 13.1%. This is an arithmetical error. The larger figure is only 30% larger than the smaller one. Did Doyle commit this mistake on purpose, figuring that no one would notice? Given his ideology, it could be. In any case, his 50% claim is wrong.

Second, the 17.1% figure contains both public and private school teachers, not just public school teachers, something Doyle mentions only briefly. He clearly implies that it is *public* school teachers who refuse to let their kids attend the institutions they work in: "If private schools are good enough for public school teachers, why aren't they good enough for poor children?" Ignoring that this is a non sequitur, we can still determine that the contention is false from Doyle's data. In one sentence, Doyle is forced to acknowledge that public school teachers *don't* use private schools a great deal: "Yet public school teachers as a group choose private schools less often than the public at large, by a one-point margin, 12.1% to 13.1%." How it must have pained Doyle to write that sentence. It is quickly sloughed over in favor of the portentous rhetoric that pervades the monograph.

So, you actually have to READ the data, not just the rhetoric, to know what is going on. And you have to be able to read the DATA to properly interpret its meaning. There's an arithmetical error to deal with. The figure that Doyle cites as implicating public school teachers actually includes private school teachers.

But there is more. What kinds of families are prone to use private schools? Wealthier and better educated families are more likely to buy into the notion that private schools are superior. This *should* lead more teachers to use private schools. While some 25% of all adults 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, virtually 100% of teachers do. In fact, the proportion of teachers owning at least a

master's degree is *double* the proportion of the public who hold a bachelor's, more than 50%.

In addition, while teachers do not receive princely sums for their endeavors, they are usually not the only wage earners in the household, either. The year of Doyle's study, 1994, teachers' commanded about $35,000 for their services, but their household incomes were double that. In spite of their educational levels and wealth, teachers still stick with public schools more than the public at large.

Actually, the report shows that private school teachers are more inclined to use public schools than private schools. Doyle's data reveal that only 32.7% of private school teachers send their kids to private schools.

Difficulties in interpretation can occur in texts that carry smaller loads of partisan rhetoric. Data are not really data. *Data* is Latin for "givens" and nothing in the world of educational statistics is "given." It is constructed and must be interpreted. For example, while NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scores have been rising somewhat over the past decade, for many years most of the trendlines were relatively flat. Some people called the flatness "stagnation." Others called it "stability," arguing that there was no reason to expect NAEP, an assessment system not linked to any curriculum, to rise. Indeed, Archie Lapointe, the former executive director of NAEP, commented that the principal problem with NAEP was keeping kids awake for the tests. Since the test entered and left the students' lives on the same day and never returned with any impact on the student, the teacher, the principal, the superintendent, or the parents, it was hard to get kids motivated. Anecdotally, when a district I worked in participated in a try-out for NAEP state-by-state comparisons, about half of the teachers reported to me that they had trouble keeping the kids (eighth graders) on task.

People wonder about the recent increases in NAEP scores. These can be interpreted as reflecting the fact that more and more students are taking more and more academic courses in high school. There is probably something to this. On the other hand, in the most recent NAEP reading assessment, those states with the biggest gains since the previous testing are states with the biggest increases in the number of students excluded from testing.

Thus, it is important to READ the data and to read the DATA. Part I of this book attempts to make you a better, wiser reader.

The ability of public schools to attract the children of the teachers is not usually thought of as a measure of "achievement." But, in the broadest sense, it is. Part II of this book will elaborate on dimensions of achievement that mostly are not test related, but that are important nonetheless. In fact, with the current madness for test scores only, it is all the more important to hang onto and remember broad considerations of achievement.

Finally, it is important to know what is going on. Recently, while conducting a series of workshops for the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (IDEA), over lunch someone referred to me as a "numbers guy." It's true, but today everyone needs to be a numbers guy. It used to be that the only data of concern to teachers and administrators were those concerning budgets and personnel. No more. School people who do not know what the data actually say about schools are vulnerable not only to half-truths and spun data, but to the perseveration of myths about schools. Some of these myths are remarkably long lived in spite of data refuting them.

For instance, Doyle's study that shows 12.1% of public school teachers send their children to private schools appeared in early 1995. Still, the editorial of July 7, 1998, in the *Florida Times Union* began this way: "Here's a Jeopardy-type puzzle: the president, vice president, half the U.S. Senate, a third of the House, and about 40% of public school teachers. The question is, who sends their children to private schools?" ("Allowing Choice," 1998).

Obviously, *Times Union* editors hadn't even read Doyle's rhetoric, much less his data. It is a wonderful aspect of journalism that editors don't have to provide citations for their sources. We can guess, though, that the source of the statements is two 1993 columns by *Washington Post* pundit George Will. In March 1993, Will noted that 43% of public school teachers in Chicago sent their children to private schools (Will, 1993a). In September of that same year, Will conveniently generalized this figure to the nation: "Nationally about half of urban school teachers with school age children send their children to private schools" (Will, 1993b). It is this sentence around which the *Times Union* editors apparently framed their quiz question.

On reading the column, I called Will's office for a citation. Will referred me to Clint Bolick of the Institute for Justice. Bolick said he had gotten the quote from David Boaz at the Cato Institute. Boaz referred me to a paper by Denis Doyle and Terry Hartle, at the time both at the American Enterprise Institute. After all this chummy

quoting without citations by right-wing think tanks, it turned out that Doyle and Hartle had estimated the proportion from 1980 census data. It was nowhere near half.

I described my findings in *Education Week* as "George Will's Urban Legend" and, at the suggestion of a friend, sent a prepublication copy to the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page (Bracey, 1993). I received a letter from Daniel Henninger, an op-ed page editor, thanking me for the submission and specifically thanking me for debunking Will's phony statistic. But just before California voted on a voucher proposition that fall, the *Journal* carried a much-longer-than-usual editorial titled "Teacher Knows Best" (*Wall Street Journal,* 1993). The editorial supported the voucher referendum and delivered to its readers Will's phony statistic as if it were real. The disconnect between the *Journal's* reportage, which is often balanced and fair, and its editorial page, has been observed by many other journalists. A writer for the on-line magazine *Slate* once referred to the *Journal's* editorial page as "a viper's nest of right wing vitriol." Another, noting that one article reported that more than half of American corporations pay no federal income tax, wondered if the editors actually read their own paper.

Part III of this book provides a summary of data pertaining to the achievements of American public schools. You need to know this stuff. In Part II, Aspects of Achievement, we'll also provide a brief historical exposition of America's loss of confidence in its schools.

Please note: While Part III focuses on data that pertain to tough questions, considerable data are sprinkled throughout the book, especially in Part I. These data are cross-referenced at the beginning of Part III.

PART I

Principles of Data Interpretation, or, How to Keep From Getting Statistically Snookered

POP QUIZ

This quiz is made up of statements interpreting (or misinterpreting) educational statistics. Give reasons why you think the statements might be true and what you might do to verify their accuracy. Take this quiz now and after you have finished the book. Write your answers down both times for comparison purposes. My responses are given at the end of the book. No peeking.

1. "Home schoolers posted an average ACT score of 22.7 out of a possible 36, tying with students in Rhode Island, who had the highest ACT marks of teens in any state" (Andrea Billups, *Washington Times,* August 18, 1999, p. A3). Students in Virginia scored only 20.6. Any comments on why Rhode Island students would score so high? On why home schoolers would? On why Virginia students would score so low?

2. An item on NPR's "All Things Considered" in August 1999 stated that production in Russia grew 14% in the past 12 months, so the country was clearly headed for recovery. Any comments?

3. "The average SAT score for all students was 1,014 in one year and it was 964 for those saying they were going to major in education. So the average student is 50 SAT points smarter than his teacher" (Martin Gross, author of *The Conspiracy of Ignorance: The Failure of American Public Schools,* in a speech at the Cato Institute, Washington, D.C., September 13, 1999). Any comments?

4. "On virtually every measure, schools are performing more poorly today than 40 years ago" (Martin Gross, same speech). Any comments?

5. A report from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) showed that 2 years after graduation, males with high school grade point averages (GPAs) of 3.0 or higher earned $1,062 a month, while those who had GPAs from 0 to 1.99 made $1,252 a month. The report comments: "While it shows that male undergraduates with the lowest GPAs had higher average earnings than those with the highest GPAs, the difference was not statistically significant." Any comments on the report's comment? (*ETS Policy Notes, 9*(2), Summer, 1999, p. 2).

6. On September 23, 1999, Gannett News Service reported that a survey of mayors found that four out of five of them said that their city had a shortage of workers. Fifty-eight percent of the mayors said that the shortage was affecting their ability to attract new business and 40% said that it was hurting their ability to keep existing businesses in their cities" (Sioux Falls *Argus Leader,* "Worker Shortage Hurts Cities, Mayors Say" [Associated Press wire story], September 23, 1999, p. 9A). Any comments?

7. In 1993, former Secretary of Education William Bennett released a report via the American Legislative Exchange Council contending that money was unrelated to achievement. Bennett observed that some of the states with the highest SAT averages were low spenders while some of those that spent the most money had low SATs. Looking over Bennett's report, columnist George Will pointed out that North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Utah, and

Minnesota were all low spenders with high SAT scores, while New Jersey spent more per child than any other state and finished only 39th among states for SAT averages. Any comments?

8. In the Summer 1999 issue of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* University of Rochester economist Eric Hanushek claimed that "the information that we have from 1970 for NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] indicates that our 17-year-olds were performing roughly the same in 1996 as in 1970. . . . There have been improvements in NAEP scores for younger students, but they are not maintained and are not reflected in the skills that students take to college and to the job market. In summary, the overall picture is one of stagnant performance." Any comments?

A

POP QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The statistics on home schoolers and ACT scores raise the issues of selectivity and representativeness. Who gets schooled at home? Typically, these children are the offspring of people who are more affluent and better educated than the public at large. They are children who would do well on tests as long as they weren't locked up daily in a dark basement. We can't really tell if they are doing better than expected unless we can compare them with a demographically similar group of students in public schools. Even then, the comparisons would not be strictly proper: Home schoolers are in educational environments where the pupil-teacher ratio is usually 1:1. That *ought* to mean higher test scores.

Rhode Island students score high because only a tiny fraction of them take the ACT. About 70% of Rhode Island seniors take the SAT. Since SAT scores are accepted not only at Rhode Island colleges, but at all colleges in the Northeast, the Rhode Island students taking the SAT are students aiming for some out-of-state university, such as the University of Colorado or Brigham Young, that makes more use of the ACT.

We don't really know if Virginia students scored "so low." Not many Virginia students take the ACT, either. Because of this, Virginia students are typically above average on the ACT. The average score is not presented.

2. Saying that the Russian economy grew 14% gives us a rate, a percentage, not a number. The information provided does not tell us

where the Russian economy is starting from. A 14% rate is good, but given the stories of the low state of that economy, it might well not mean that a recovery is soon forthcoming.

We would need to see the Gross Domestic Product of the nation over a long period of time to know how well Russia is or is not doing (something that would be hard to obtain, communist nations having been notoriously secretive about such statistics).

3. The two SAT figures, 1,014 for all students and 964 for those saying they intend to major in education, come from high school seniors. It will be another 2 years before any of them actually declare a major, and some of those will change majors one or more times before graduation. And while it is generally known that 50% of those who enroll in college do not finish, we don't know if the attrition is higher for education majors than for those majoring in other fields.

Gross's statement presumes that all of those who declared an intent to major in education became teachers. It also presumes that those who announced an intention to major in something else did *not* become teachers. But both statements are known to be untrue. Many teachers, especially those headed for careers in secondary schools, major or minor in an academic field and also take enough education courses to qualify for accreditation.

The one study that compared future teachers with other majors found no difference in college grade point averages at the end of the sophomore year. The one teacher who compared actual teachers with people in other professions found teachers' reading skills exceeded by only a few, usually scientific, professions.

4. One wonders what constitutes "virtually every measure." Forty years ago from the time of Gross's speech would put us in 1959. This would be one year after *Life* magazine had run a five-part series on the "crisis" in education, a crisis signalled by the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik. Still, it might well be that schools, especially secondary schools, did have lower test scores. The high school graduation rate at the time was approaching 70%, well below the 83% of today. Since those who leave high school do so primarily because they are having academic difficulties, these dropouts would presumably take their lower test scores with them.

The fact is, though, that "virtually every measure" amounts to virtually naught. What measures could we look at? Not the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It hasn't even

been proposed yet. Not the SAT. Although the use of the SAT was increasing rapidly, only 564,000 SATs were taken in 1959-1960, compared with 1,200,000 today. The precise statistics we need aren't lying around, but the 564,000 constitute only 30% of all high school *graduates*. Currently, about 43% of the *senior class* takes the SAT.

The only test scores we have that link the two time periods are from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Iowa Tests of Educational Development. These tests indicate that performance was lower in 1959 than it is today. So the one measure we do have contradicts Gross. Beware of nostalgia.

5. This report raises the issue of the difference between statistical significance and practical significance. The students with the lower GPAs are earning almost $200 a month more than those with the highest GPAs. I expect that this latter group of students would find a $200 a month increase, a raise of almost 20%, to have some real practical significance for them.

One might w der why students with low GPAs out-earn those who have at least a "B" average. We can only guess, because the report does not address the issue. My guess is that students with high grade point averages who are not in college probably disdain dirty work. I would imagine that a large percentage of them are moping around trying to "find" themselves since they are not doing what most of their academic peers are, attending college or some other postsecondary institution. Those with low grade points might well have taken hard jobs such as construction work that initially pay well but that offer few career opportunities.

6. This is as much a logical conundrum as anything else. If 80% of all cities are experiencing shortages of skilled labor, how can only 58% of them say it's affecting their ability to attract new business? On the flip side, if a business were to experience difficulty in finding skilled workers, where could it move to? It would have only 20% of American cities to choose from.

One can wonder, as well, how close the mayors are to this problem. Who benefits by saying that there is a shortage of skilled labor? The mayors. Who loses? By implication, the schools, since it is implicitly the schools' fault.

7. All of the above questions have been taken from very recent reports (as of this writing), most of them appearing in the popular press. This question and the next are drawn from the book itself. The comments of Will and Bennett draw us back to Principle 2, "Follow the Money." Who benefits from these comments? The political Right that wishes to contend that money is not important to school performance. And those who wish to indict many schools for wasting that money—New Jersey, it is implied, is wasting money because it spends more and gets less.

The statements also raise a question about the measure. Is the SAT, whose middle initial originally stood for "aptitude," the right criterion measure of "achievement"? The people who developed it certainly didn't think so. And is "dollars per student per year" the right measure of money spent? Certainly not without factoring out differences in buying power, which are quite large among states.

Bennett's statement, as noted earlier in the test, also raises the question of selectivity. Of the states named, only Minnesota has as much as 10% of its senior class taking the SAT. New Jersey had 76% of its seniors bubbling in answer sheets. As noted, when these differential participation rates are factored out, the test score differences among states become small.

8. With this question we come back once more to the issue of making sure we have the right instrument. The National Assessment of Educational Progress was not designed to monitor closely what goes on in classrooms. Students, especially 17-year-olds, do not take it seriously. One wonders what kinds of pretty designs show up on NAEP answer sheets.

In addition, Hanushek has neglected to take Simpson's Paradox into account. Gains in the aggregate average, which is what Hanushek presents, are smaller than gains for individual ethnic subgroups. Over the period Hanushek discusses, the scores for ethnic minorities have been rising, but the minorities have become a larger and larger proportion of the total sample.

The WAR AGAINST AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS Privatizing,

Commercializing Education

THE WAR AGAINST AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PRIVATIZING SCHOOLS, COMMERCIALIZING EDUCATION

GERALD W. BRACEY

Preface

The blue book of propaganda known as *A Nation at Risk* decried the state of the nation's public schools. Its message was "more": more hours in the school day, more days in the school year, more courses, more rigorous courses, more credits for both students and teachers, and so on. Soon after *A Nation at Risk* appeared, however, calls came for not more but "different." First, people said we had to "restructure" schools. But soon, people were saying we had to abandon the public schools for other structures altogether. Former assistant secretary of education Chester E. Finn, Jr. put it this way:

> The public school system as we know it has proved that it cannot reform itself. It is an ossified government monopoly that functions largely for the benefit of its employees and interest groups rather than that of children and taxpayers. American education needs a radical overhaul. For starters, control over education must be shifted into the hands of parents and true reformers—people who will insist on something altogether different than murmuring excuses for the catastrophe that surrounds us. (Finn, 1998)

I don't know if Finn has ever been in a public school. Nothing he has written indicates that he has. Like many reformers, Finn appears to peer at schools from afar. But he is symbolic of a certain class of reformers who feel that if we could just get those dumb, recalcitrant educators out of the schools things would be fine. Education reform has a long and ignoble history of searching for magic bullets. Those who hold beliefs similar to Finn's have engaged in experimentation with education that is unprecedented since the Common School was established: charter schools; vouchers; Educational Management Organizations; tuition tax credits. These and a high-standards movement run amuck are all part of the education landscape these days.

Some reformers are mere opportunists who look at the $700 million that the United States spends in all sectors of education and want some of those dollars. Others truly believe that a market-driven system would lead to a better education for all. Still others would like to teach religion in publicly supported schools without having to worry about the niceties of the First Amendment. And others, especially those starting charter schools, have a "vision" of what education should look like.

No one has summarized in one place these various types of experiments, and that is the purpose of this book. It is largely descriptive, even where describing experiments that I do not believe will help. There are some arenas, though, such as that of vouchers, where my negative conclusions are obvious. The opening sections of the book should also make it clear that none of the various experiments can be justified using the argument that the entire public school system is in crisis.

The first sections of the book establish a context for today's educational debates, examining the various philosophies that underlie different approaches to schools. They examine historically how we arrived at a place where parents are nervous about schools and then they look at the data that bear on that anxiety to see if it is justified.

Following these chapters, the book then describes the different kinds of experiments transpiring in education. It does not pretend to be exhaustive in naming all of the players, but provides information about those that are typical and those that are dominant in their particular arenas.

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—Gerald W. Bracey

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Prologue

A war is being waged on America's public schools. They are under siege. Sometimes the war doesn't look like a war because it is a war waged mostly in the polite language of academic debates. Sometimes it is waged in the polite terms of new "partnerships," but it is a war nonetheless. Indeed, the polite language of the war is so important that when some of us have called it for what it is, we have been shunned. For instance, in 1993, Michael Usdan of the Institute for Educational Leadership and Lowell Rose, then the executive director of Phi Delta Kappa International, proposed a conference to be called "Common Ground" that would bring school critics and school defenders together to find out what they had in common. I learned that some from the Right (Dennis Doyle and Chester E. Finn, Jr., among them) had told Usdan and Rose that if I was invited, they wouldn't come.

I shamed Usdan and Rose into an invitation by pointing out that little common ground would be found if one side was allowed to set the rules. Still, it was offered only on condition that I not be a speaker. The conference was a bust—a very polite bust. The various antagonists danced around the issues for two days, and nothing came of it.

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is a polite essay. It induces horror only when one realizes what Swift's satire proposes. So it is with many of the polite proposals for modifying or replacing public schools. And it is not that the public schools don't *need* modifying. Frederick Wiseman's 1967 documentary *High School* sends the viewer to sleep with the trivial and stultifying atmosphere of what was supposed to be a good school.

Too many schools still bore too many kids. Indeed, they are likely to be even more boring today in spite of being much more exciting than in the past: Kids today are so much more sophisticated and knowledgeable about the world. The advent of niche magazines, targeted television, computers, CDs, and the

Internet have made it possible for students to amass vast amounts of specialized knowledge at very early ages. A lone teacher cannot keep up with all of the different directions that students can go. The Columbine killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were said to be "high-ability" kids. In our need to view the Columbine tragedy as just that, no one to my knowledge has also observed that Harris and Klebold were also amazingly knowledgeable, resourceful, planful, and thorough. Other students demonstrate these qualities in more socially benign ways, but the Columbine killers demonstrated them nonetheless, posing powerful challenges to teachers.

Enemies of the Public Schools

Conservative Foundations: Follow the Money

The war is being waged by multiple enemies. Some of them can be spotted by observing the research they fund. "Follow the money" is one of the principles of data interpretation described in *Bail Me Out!* (Bracey, 2000a; advice given to *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein by their Watergate investigation informant, "Deep Throat"). It's good advice. For instance, in August 2000, a report appeared finding that African American students using vouchers apparently scored higher than a matched sample remaining in public schools (Howell, Wolf, Peterson, and Campbell, 2000). The authors credit a virtual who's who of conservative foundations for funding the study: the Achelis Foundation, Bodman Foundation, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, William Donner Foundation, David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Smith–Richardson Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and Walton Family Foundation.

As the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy observed, these are not neutral, idea-oriented organizations (1997). While the mainstream foundations such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford, and MacArthur followed a pragmatic, issue-oriented program of funding, the conservative foundations poured money into a single idea: the reduction of "liberal big-governmentism." Conservatives often refer to public schools as "government schools." Getting the government out of schools is part of the conservative agenda. The Milwaukee-based Bradley Foundation has actively promoted vouchers in that city. Members of the Walton family spoke at a voucher-privatization conference in Washington, D.C. Milton and Rose Friedman created their foundation precisely and solely to promote vouchers, an idea Milton Friedman put forward in 1955 and elaborated in his 1962 book, *Freedom and Capitalism.* On their website, the Friedmans have this to say:

> Since then [1955] we have been involved in many attempts to introduce educational vouchers—the term that has come to designate the arrangement we proposed. There is a distressing similarity to attempts made over three decades and from coast to coast. In each case, a dedicated group of citizens makes a well-thought through proposal.

> It initially garners widespread public support. The educational establishment—administrators and teachers' unions—then launches an attack that is notable for its mendacity but is backed by much larger financial resources than the proponents can command and succeeds in killing the proposals. (Friedman and Friedman, 2000)

Interestingly, in the November 2000 elections, voucher proposals in California and Michigan went down in flames, with 70 percent of voters in both states saying no. In these instances, the proponents of the vouchers had outspent the "educational establishment" opponents by two to one. When I asked Friedman how he interpreted this debacle, he said that the "defeats are highly relevant to the question of political tactics," and he retained his faith in the efficacy of vouchers (Friedman, 2001).

The person whose name appears on most evaluations of voucher programs is that of Paul Peterson at Harvard University. In 1990 Peterson described himself and fellow voucher advocates as, "A small band of Jedi attackers, using their intellectual powers to fight the unified might of Death Star Forces led by Darth Vader whose intellectual capacity has been corrupted by the urge for complete hegemony" (Peterson, 1990, p. 73). This is not the perspective of a disinterested, objective researcher. According to Howard Nelson, senior researcher at the American Federation of Teachers, Peterson has also worked with the Institute for Justice, the principal legal organization behind the voucher movement. For example, it was lawyers from the Institute who argued before the Wisconsin Supreme Court that religious schools should be permitted access to publicly funded vouchers. Peterson's partisanship led researchers at Mathematica, Inc., to disavow his description of the results of a study they and Peterson had jointly conducted (Zernike, 2000). Had they not offered such a disavowal, their own credibility as disinterested researchers would have been called into question.

New enemies are appearing. On October 3, 2000, the day of the first debate between presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush, a full-page ad appeared in the *Washington Post* decrying the low state of American students compared to those in other nations and declaring the system a failure: "Every year we pump more money into our public education system, and every year the system gets worse. . . . Only when schools are forced to compete for students will they be motivated to improve. Only then will the system open up, new options emerge and education look like the rest of America. Meanwhile, nearly 90% of American children are stuck in a failing system."

The ad was sponsored by the Campaign for America's Children, headed up by billionaire industrialist Theodore J. Forstmann and former secretary of education William J. Bennett. The slanted, spun, and distorted statistics that this group operates with can be found at http://www.putparentsincharge.org. Part of this book will show that the system is not only not failing, it is improving. It will also raise questions about whether or not education *should* look like "the rest of America" (whatever *that* means).

Higher Education: Biting the Hand That Feeds

Some enemies of the schools do not even perceive themselves as such. Large research universities often abet the more open enemies of public schools. To extract money from foundations and governments, they emphasize the negative. Susan Fuhrman, at the time a professor at Rutgers, now dean of the school of education at the University of Pennsylvania, once declared, "If you want money, ya gotta say the schools are lousy. So what else is new?" She said it in a room full of academics and the startle factor of her comment was such that she might as well have said, "The sky is blue."

Virtually all of the papers delivered to the group that produced *A Nation at Risk* were commissioned from professors at large research universities; a few went to think tanks, which are universities without students. The only paper written by a public school employee was an unsolicited critique of one of the commission's symposia. Although "the Commission was impressed during the course of its activities by the diversity of opinion it received regarding the condition of American education," no such diversity showed through in the papers or in the final report. Given this loading of the critical dice, the schools never had a chance.

The antischool position of university professors is hardly new. University of Illinois historian Arthur Bestor's 1953 book, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Education in America's Public Schools*, laid waste to the schools and, especially, to the schools of education that prepared teachers to teach in them. For some reason, professors at colleges of arts and sciences have been unable to comprehend Harold Hodgkinson's observation that it's *All One System* and to assist rather than attack schools and schools of education (Hodgkinson, 1985). After all, the schools of education prepare the teachers who will teach the children who will attend the colleges of arts and sciences. The teachers groom the future students of the professors. The high schools also groom future professors. The Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, best known for his study of America's ethnic segregation, in another work expressed bafflement at the lack of support American universities showed for schools (Myrdal, 1969).

Business and Industry: A Workforce at Risk?

Business and industry have not always been antischool, although they have often taken this position in recent years. For many years, however, they have attempted to control the curriculum of the schools. As discussed in Chapter 4 (The Historical Context), for over a century, business and industry have prodded schools to turn out "products" that would more readily suit the businessmen's need for a docile yet energetic workforce.

Some who wish to eliminate the public school system simply want to do so for profit. The investment firm Lehman Brothers reportedly sent brochures to their clients saying, essentially, "We've taken over the health system; we've taken over the prison system; our next big target is the education system. We will

privatize it and make a lot of money" (Chomsky, 2000). A number of articles have reported that investors are bullish on such efforts.

These various efforts have been coupled with deliberate attempts to mislead Americans about the nature of the future job market. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and a host of others have produced bogus arguments and "facts" in this effort. "We have to prepare people for the jobs of the future," goes the refrain. Even as the low-skill service sector explodes, reformers are screaming that all jobs in the future will be infinitely more complicated and difficult than currently. The goal is simple: If you can make people anxious about their future, you can control them. People who are anxious about the future are less able to see their neighbors as fellow citizens and more likely to perceive them as competitors.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education accomplished this by putting forth an absurd theory about what makes a country economically healthy and competitive in a global marketplace. In its propaganda-laden 1983 publication *A Nation at Risk*, the commissioners had this to say: "If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system" (p. 7). The commission thus tightly yoked the economic health of the nation to the standardized test performance of children aged five to eighteen.

Wise observers saw this as the nonsense it was and responded with words similar to those of the education historian Lawrence Cremin:

> American economic competitiveness with Japan and other nations is to a considerable degree a function of monetary, trade, and industrial policy, and of decisions made by the President and Congress, the Federal Reserve Board, and the Federal Departments of the Treasury, Commerce, and Labor. Therefore, to conclude that problems of international competitiveness can be solved by educational reform, especially educational reform defined solely as school reform, is not merely utopian and millennialist, it is at best a foolish and at worst a crass effort to direct attention away from those truly responsible for doing something about competitiveness and to lay the burden instead on the schools. It is a device that has been used repeatedly in the history of American education. (1989, pp. 102–103)

Alas, only a few educators, not the general public, read Cremin's remarks and his sensible comments never caught the eye of the media. As the nation slipped into a recession in the late 1980s, the commission's theory gained widespread popularity. Variations on "Lousy schools are producing a lousy workforce and that is killing us in the global marketplace" could be heard in many quarters. By late 1993, however, the economy had come roaring back. "America's Economy, Back on Top" headlined the *New York Times* in early 1994. Many other publications ran similar banners. The *Times* author presented not only a positive picture of the present but also a glowing portrait of the future:

> A three percent economic growth rate, a gain of two million jobs in the past year, and an inflation rate reminiscent of the 1960s make America the envy of the industrialized

> world. The amount the average American worker can produce, already the highest in the world, is growing faster than in other wealthy countries, including Japan. The United States has become the world's low-cost provider of many sophisticated products and services, from plastics to software to financial services.
>
> For the most part, these advantages will continue even after countries like Japan and Germany snap out of their recessions. It is the United States, not Japan, that is the master of the next generation of commercially important computer and communications technologies and also of leading-edge services from medicine to movie making. (Nasar, 1994)

She was right, of course. The seven years since those words were written saw economic prosperity at heights previously thought unattainable. Unemployment dipped to a level considered theoretically impossible—until it happened. America's workers have become even more productive. And the increase in productivity has translated into gains in growth without any significant inflation. Although the Federal Reserve Board during one period raised interest rates six times in eighteen months to head off inflation, the economy raced ahead. In the first half of 2000, the economy expanded by a heady 5.5 percent.

The economy then began to cool. What followed was more a crisis of confidence—recessions are usually more about psychology than about the economy. While economists reaffirmed the basic health of the economy, President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill seemed determined to bring on a recession by talking as if it had already happened.

Whether or not a recession actually occurs—and in the spring of 2001, it seems unlikely—the economic slowdown has been singular in one respect: No one has yet blamed the schools. The operative word might turn out to be "yet," but so far others have taken the hit, most notably Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, whom critics contend did not lower interest rates fast enough or far enough.

The blame for the bearish market has been spread around, however, among venture capitalists who hyped the dotcoms, analysts who were "quoted incessantly as oracles for five years" but now are seen as corrupt and worthless, Wall Street in general, which consisted of an "unholy combination of venture capitalists and investment bankers" who "teamed up to fob off phantom companies" on the public, and the news media, who weren't skeptical enough (Barbash, 2001).

Meanwhile, Japanese students continued to score well on tests even as the Japanese economy continued to sink. William Safire (and many others) blamed the government's protection of bad loans and its unwillingness to let inefficient companies go out of business (Safire, 2001). George Will agreed with Safire that Japan's government exercised too much control over the economy and the economy therefore "has entered a second ghastly decade" (Will, 2001). All commentators observed that the Japanese government either didn't know what to do about their economic problem or knew what to do and simply lacked the political will to do it.

American educators should take no comfort in the disconnection between Japanese test scores and Japanese economic health except to point out that the

disconnection is there. Despite its decline, the Japanese economy is the world's second largest and if that nation collapses, the rest of the world will suffer, the United States especially since Japan has invested so heavily in this country, investments that might have to be withdrawn in horrific economic conditions.

One might think that, at the very least, school bashing would be considered bad form in such good times. Yet, three months after the *New York Times* article quoted above appeared, IBM CEO Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., in the midst of firing 90,000 employees, took to the op-ed page of the *Times* to declare "Our Schools Are Failing." They are broken, said Gerstner, because they do not prepare students who can compete with their international peers.

Even after the "Asian tiger" economies had tanked, even after Japan had wallowed in recession for a *whole decade*, Gerstner continued his refrain. Remember, this is the man who organized three "education summits" and cajoled the nation's governors attending those summits to do his bidding. At the 1998 event, Gerstner convened the group with a speech outlining "the good, the bad, and the ugly of American education." It began with these words:

> The good: Our kids have the potential to be the best in the world. In science and math, our fourth-graders are right up there with the very best.
>
> The bad: By 8th grade, we rank 28th, behind, among others, Russia, Thailand and Bulgaria.
>
> The ugly: By 12th grade we trail every developed nation in the world. In fact, we're doing better than only Cyprus and South Africa. (Gerstner, 1999)

Gerstner's talk illustrates how school bashers often omit inconvenient statistics. Gerstner conveniently excludes science at eighth grade. The ranking of twenty-eighth is for math only. American eighth-graders ranked thirteenth in science among the forty-one nations taking part. Critics like Gerstner also accept uncritically statistics that make American schools look bad: The twelfth-grade data that Gerstner cites do not hold up under scrutiny as will be seen in Chapter 5.

For their part, Bill Clinton and Al Gore contributed to the distortion with a letter to the editor of *USA Today*. In it, they declared that "By the year 2000 60% of all jobs will require advanced technological skills" (Clinton and Gore, 1995). I wrote Messrs. Clinton and Gore, asking for a citation for their 60 percent figure and asking as well for a definition of "advanced technological skills." To increase the likelihood of a response, I sent copies to Richard Riley and Robert Reich, then secretaries of education and labor, respectively. My four epistles produced one response: Someone in Riley's office wrote to say that she was certain that someone in Reich's office could answer my queries.

Education and the Future of Work. I should note in passing that many speakers, when referring to the jobs of the future, imply that advancing technology will make jobs more complex, sophisticated, and difficult. In fact, advancing technology often makes things easier. Who, reading this book, would trade their current

word-processing program for one from fifteen years ago? The development of single-lens reflex (SLR) cameras with built-in light meters greatly simplified photography. Yet those same SLRs themselves seem cumbersome, unwieldy, and difficult to use compared to today's digital and point-and-shoot cameras.

The Jobs of the Future. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides a different answer about what jobs of the future will look like. The most recent projections are given in Table 1.1.

Occupations in the computer and health fields dominate the list—the latter, no doubt, in part because of the graying of the nation. The leading edge of the baby boom generation is only a decade away from the benchmark retirement age of sixty-five. Yet only five of these fast-growing jobs require "advanced technological skills," if one assumes that means something beyond simply sitting in front of a personal computer (PC) and using a software package such as Microsoft Office or Lotus SmartSuite.

However, as I have indicated elsewhere (Bracey, 2000a), statistical pictures painted with rates often differ markedly from pictures painted in terms of numbers. When we look at "fastest growing" we are looking at a rate. Table 1.2 shows the projections for the ten occupations with the largest increase in *numbers.*

Only three occupations are found on both lists. Of these, two require sophisticated use of information technology (systems analysts and computer support specialists), and one does not (personal and home care aides). Note that most of the jobs in this second list are occupations that have traditionally provided large numbers of jobs. Retail sales, for example, provides only 570,000 fewer jobs than the top ten fastest growing jobs *combined,* 4,620,000 versus

TABLE 1.1: ***The 10 Fastest Growing Occupations, 1998–2008 (In Thousands)***

		Employment		*Change*	
		1998	*2008*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1.	Computer engineers	299	622	323	108
2.	Computer support	429	869	439	102
3.	Systems analysts	617	1194	577	94
4.	Database administrators	87	155	67	77
5.	Desktop-publishing specialists	22	44	19	73
6.	Paralegals and assistants	136	220	84	62
7.	Personal care and home health aides	746	1179	433	58
8.	Medical assistants	252	398	146	58
9.	Social service assistants	268	410	141	53
10.	Physicians' assistants	66	98	32	48

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

TABLE 1.2: *The 10 Occupations with the Largest Job Growth, 1998–2008 (In Thousands)*

		Employment		*Change*	
		1998	*2008*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1.	Systems analysts	617	1194	577	94
2.	Retail salespersons	4056	4620	563	14
3.	Cashiers	3198	3754	556	17
4.	Managers and executives	3362	3913	551	16
5.	Truck drivers	2970	3463	493	17
6.	Office clerks	3021	3484	463	15
7.	Registered nurses	2079	2530	451	22
8.	Computer support specialists	429	869	439	102
9.	Personal and home care aides	746	1179	433	58
10.	Teacher assistants	1192	1567	375	31

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

5,189,000. High-tech jobs might be growing fast, but they are swamped by the growth in the low-tech, low-pay service sector.

For the most part the war on America's schools is *not* a conspiracy. It is too open for that. Ever since he proposed school vouchers in 1962, Milton Friedman has been arguing that we should replace "government" schools with vouchers and a privatized system of education. Ronald Reagan, a devotee of Friedman, made vouchers and tuition tax credits centerpieces of his education agenda.

Christian Conservatives

Attacks also come from Christian conservatives, who promote vouchers and tax credits in the hope of funding schools that can use tax dollars to teach religion without worrying about the First Amendment (others, however, as discussed in Chapter 8, oppose vouchers on the grounds that taking public money will inevitably result in government regulation and loss of independence). Catholic school officials have for the most part discreetly refrained from public comment on the war, but it is hardly a secret that many would like to see vouchers provide money to their financially ailing schools. One article on the exodus of teachers from Catholic schools because of low pay indicated that some Catholics "point to the growing national voucher movement, which would allow parochial and private schools to receive taxpayer funding in the form of student vouchers—perhaps freeing additional money for teacher salaries" (Massey, 2000).

Vouchers also would offer Catholic schools an opportunity to spread the faith, one of the functions of Catholic education. One study comparing public and private schools described a conflict between a Catholic school principal and

the local priest. When the principal asked about academic achievement, the priest responded, in effect, "What profit it a man to gain Harvard if he lose his Catholicism?" (Rothstein, Carnoy, and Benveniste, 1999).

Although the various camps wage their war in polite terms, those who attack the schools do not fight honestly. Critics of public schools often present distorted, selected, or spun statistics to make their case. We have already seen such spinning in Gerstner's speech at his education summit. Similarly, in a speech celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Heritage Foundation, former secretary of education William J. Bennett declared flatly, "In America today, the longer you stay in school, the dumber you get relative to kids from other industrialized nations." To make this statement, Bennett had to accept uncritically results from one of the worst studies, methodologically speaking, ever conducted: the Third International Mathematics and Science Study's (TIMSS) Final Year Study. I have discussed the many problems with this study elsewhere (Bracey, 2000b). Bennett accepts unquestioningly the authors' interpretation of their data because this interpretation supports his own view of the problem.

The spectacle of a former secretary of education spouting lies about public schools is appalling, but there is apparently no limit to the depths to which Bennett can sink. For instance, in a September 4, 2000, op-ed essay in the *Washington Post*, Bennett wrote that "About half of high school graduates have not mastered seventh-grade arithmetic." This is a peculiar statement, on several counts. First, we don't test "high school graduates," so how could he know? Second, Bennett offered no definition of "mastery." Third, he offered no definition of "seventh-grade arithmetic," a phrase that has no currency among educators.

I called Bennett's office and was told that the figure came from *The Book of Knowledge*—not the familiar childhood encyclopedia but a book on how to invest in the "education industry," written by Michael Moe, director of Global Growth Research at Merrill Lynch (Moe and Bailey, 1999).

When I called Moe's office, I was told that the statistic was "an interpretation of 1996 NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] mathematics test results." Rest assured, readers, that there is no possible way to go from the NAEP data to the "interpretation" that Moe gave them—the interpretation that Bennett uncritically accepted as correct.

Bennett is hardly alone. Consider the Hudson Institute's report "On Shaky Ground," an assemblage of statistics designed to make the Indiana public schools look bad and to grease the skids for vouchers and for conservative political candidates. At one point, the report gnashes its teeth over the fact that students in Connecticut who carry an A+ high school grade point average score 71 points higher (total score) on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than Indiana students with A+ averages. A close look at the statistics, however, indicates that only 2 percent of Connecticut seniors report A+ averages, compared with 4% of Indiana students. When compared to other states with similar percentages, Indiana does not lag behind in SAT scores. One can wonder which states' teachers have

the most accurate grading system, but when Indiana is compared like-against-like, it does not suffer in the comparison.

The report further states that "Being an A student in an Indiana public school still makes it difficult to compete with A students from other states, but being a B or C student makes it difficult to compete with just about anyone." This statement has no foundation. Indiana's B students scored 484 on both sections of the SATs. Ignoring New Hampshire and Connecticut for a moment, the range of verbal scores for the twelve other SAT-heavy-use states ranges from 465 to 492 on the verbal and 463 to 489 on the math. Connecticut and New Hampshire do have somewhat higher scores. Compared to most states that make heavy use of the SATs, Indiana scores higher than some, lower than others.

In Connecticut, the SAT verbal score is 506 and math is 503 for B students, and in New Hampshire the scores are 507 and 504. However, Connecticut is the wealthiest state in the union, and New Hampshire has by far the highest proportion of well-educated parents of SAT takers—parents who live in southern New Hampshire but work in high-tech jobs in Boston, Massachusetts, and send their kids to New Hampshire public schools. New Hampshire is a small state that has a number of elite private, college preparatory, boarding high schools, many of whose students come from other states. The College Board, though, counts students as residents of wherever they take the SAT. Thus, in reporting SAT scores, New Hampshire can claim these residents of other states as its own.

The statements about competing with students from other states also perpetuate a myth: The SAT is the lone gatekeeper determining who goes to college where. As has been shown, however, even highly selective colleges, such as Brown, admit students across a 450-point range, from 350 to 800 (Bracey, 1999).

These points might seem technical or even obscure to nonresearchers, but any worthy researcher preparing a report from an objective standpoint would notice them. They are the kinds of ideologically loaded statistical missiles that the public schools' enemies are launching.

Even where the Hudson Institute reports accurate statistics, it gives the numbers a twist to make schools look bad. For instance, the report states that "Socioeconomic status [SES] as defined by the Indiana Department of Education explains *only* 65% of the variability in school passing rates on the eighth-grade ISTEP" (emphasis added; ISTEP is the Indiana state accountability testing program). Statistically, this means that the correlation between SES and passing is slightly better than .80 (variability in scores is given by the square of the correlation coefficient, and .80 squared = .64). This is an enormous correlation.

The Enemy Within

In some cases, the enemy is found within. I cannot speak to the motivations of all the governors, boards, and legislators who have sponsored "standards" and "high-stakes tests." It is clear, however, that the Virginia Board of Education established standards and tests with ludicrously high pass rates in order to make

the public school look bad, to make parents nervous about their schools, and, thereby, to ease the passage of voucher legislation. On the first round of tests, 98 percent of all schools failed and on the second round 93 percent. Some high schools have seen dramatic improvements in their algebra I scores to the point where, after four rounds of testing, more than 5 percent of the students passed. Algebra is required for high school graduation. One can only hope that the Commonwealth of Virginia is building sufficient numbers of jails to accommodate all of the kids it seems determined to toss onto its streets.

One group of education officials, the Education Leaders Council (ELC), is in thrall to privatization as well as other reform movements such as charters and vouchers. The council is led by chief state school officers such as Arizona's Lisa Graham Keegan, Pennsylvania's Eugene Hickok,[1] and Georgia's Linda Schrenko, along with Frank Brogan, former Florida Superintendent of Public Instruction and current Lieutenant Governor, and Abigail Thernstrom, coauthor (with her husband, Stephan) of *America in Black and White* and member of the Massachusetts State Board of Education. *The American Prospect* describes Thernstrom as someone "who prefers the usual conservative medicine of vouchers and draconian standards" to improve education (Shatz, 2001).

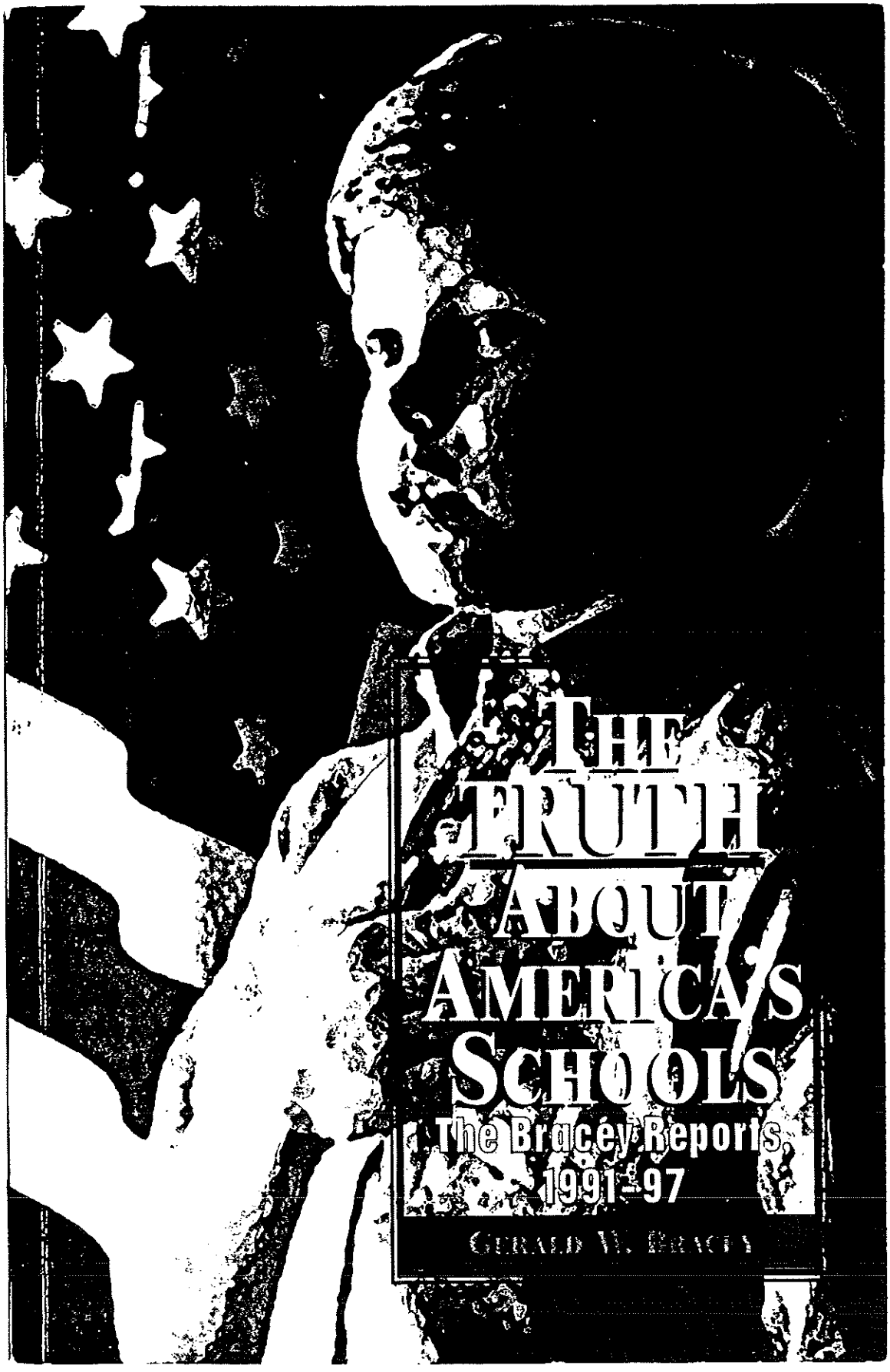
In September 2000, I "debated" Edison Schools founder Chris Whittle on profit making at the annual ELC conference (debated is in quotes because Whittle presented a 20-minute infomercial on the wonders of the Edison Schools and did not address any of the issues I had raised). Obviously the ELC has no objection to people making money off of schools. After the debate, Keegan thanked me for having the "courage" to appear before the ELC and take on Whittle. I don't think it took courage, just facts, but it is true that I have never had an audience glower at me the way that one did.

These examples could be multiplied many times over. They would all indicate, however, that most of those criticizing public schools are less interested in what the facts really say than in what their ideology demands that the facts say. It's a war, so all's fair.

1. Keegan has since resigned her Arizona post to head the ELC, and Hickok is undersecretary of education in the current Bush administration.

The TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA' SCHOOLS The Bracey Report

1991-1997


THE TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA'S SCHOOLS
The Bracey Reports, 1991–97
GERALD W. BRACEY

FOREWORD

The public schools have always had their critics. But after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the critics of public education in America became more strident and more ubiquitous. Those critics eventually included three "Education Presidents," many public officials at all levels, the mass media, and even some education professionals — those who made careers of collecting grants to "fix" problems that had been magnified out of all correspondence with reality.

Hammered daily by statistics presented without the context that gives them meaning, most other Americans bought into the myth that the nation's public schools were in a state of collapse. It was a disheartening decade for many teachers and school administrators, who recognized the myth for what it was but whose voices could not be heard above the cacophony of the critics.

Then, in October 1991, the *Phi Delta Kappan* published Gerald Bracey's first data-based analysis of the condition of public education. Bracey's findings were in sharp conflict with the prevailing view. Instead of discovering an education system verging on total collapse, he found the schools to be about as effective as they had ever been (though the population they served had become dramatically harder to educate).

Not that Bracey started out to defend the public schools. Like most Americans in 1990, he thought that the schools his own children attended were "okay" but that other public schools across the nation were in serious trouble.

Indeed, as he explained in the prefatory note to *Final Exam: A Study of the Perpetual Scrutiny of American Education* (Technos Press, 1995), the first two Bracey Reports came about by acci-

dent. "Quite literally, if the *Denver Post* in late 1990 had not reprinted a Richard Cohen column that had appeared two months earlier in the *Washington Post*, 'Johnny's Miserable SATs,' the Bracey Reports would not exist," he said. Cohen's column aroused Bracey's curiosity, causing him to take a close look at SAT scores over the years in relation to demographic changes within the test-taking population. That analysis turned up a small drop in the verbal SAT score over time and no drop in the math score — a much healthier situation than Cohen and most other commentators had led us to believe.

Bracey published the results of his analysis in *Education Week*, and that article — "SATs: Miserable or Miraculous?" — prompted colleagues across the nation to send him other data that corroborated his findings. Those colleagues included a group of systems engineers at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, whose own conclusions regarding the condition of public education in America matched Bracey's — but whose report of those conclusions had been suppressed by "internal politics."

Out of all these data came the initial article, "Why Can't They Be Like We Were?" The publication of that piece in the *Kappan* brought Bracey more new data from colleagues — enough to merit a second Bracey Report (a title coined by the editors when it became clear that the reports would be an annual feature). And that second Bracey Report spawned subsequent ones. The initial Bracey Report, which footnoted the third draft of the Sandia Report, also made pirated photocopies of the Sandia Report hot items across the nation. Now the secret was out: The American system of public education was *not* in the state of collapse.

Since 1991, the national dialogue about the condition of public education has shifted — albeit glacially — from the notion of total collapse to the view that U.S. public schools will not be good enough for the 21st century. That's a position that Bracey endorses. As he noted in the introduction to *Transforming America's Schools: An Rx for Getting Past Blame* (American Association of School Administrators, 1994), "One need not assume school failure to propose school reform."

Meanwhile, as long as the new data merit them, Bracey will continue to write his annual reports on the condition of public education for the *Kappan*. He has proven to us time and again that he is data-driven. No one "owns" him; as an independent agent, he single-mindedly pursues whatever truth can be derived from empirical evidence. When he errs in his interpretation of the data (which happens only rarely), he publicly admits his mistake and corrects it. And when others ignore or misuse data to tell a tale about American public education that simply isn't so, he doesn't pull his punches in publicly calling those individuals to task. It was Bracey, you may remember, who coined the label "data-proof ideologues."

While taping a radio show recently with John Merrow, Bracey noted that, when he embarked on his study of the condition of public education, he had "no position."

"Do you have one now?" Merrow asked.

Bracey paused, and then replied: "Yes, in the sense that I am more convinced now that my original conclusions were correct. But no, in the sense that all last year [1996] I told audiences all over the country that, if the Third International Mathematics and Science Study proved to be a credible study and showed that American kids really looked lousy when matched against their peers in other countries, then that is what the next Bracey Report would say."

Trained as a developmental and cognitive psychologist, Bracey remains true to the principles of his profession. He is not an "apologist" for the public schools. He is not a "revisionist" of education history. He is a truth-teller.

And, when the history of my editorship of the *Kappan* is written, I believe that the journal's role in bringing Bracey's views to public attention will be perceived as one of the *Kappan*'s proudest accomplishments.

Pauline B. Gough
Editor, *Phi Delta Kappan*

The 11th Bracey Report on The Condition of Public Education

October, 2001

THE 11TH BRACEY REPORT ON

The Condition of Public Education

By Gerald W. Bracey

Mr. Bracey takes a close look at our national mania for testing, at new NAEP data, at international comparisons — and, alarmingly, at where it could all end up.

A LOT of people think I defend schools reflexively. Not so. But a little more than a decade ago, I found a lot of data that proved that the people who make up what I have come to call the Education Scare Industry were wrong, and I said so. When I have thought the schools have been wrong, I have said that, too.

I begin this report with three of the most despicable, totalitarian acts by school authorities known to me in the 34 postdoctoral years I've been in education. These are the attacks by Gwinnett County, Georgia, on Susan Ohanian; by the Massachusetts Department of Education on Alfie Kohn; and by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) on George Schmidt. I presume Ohanian and Kohn are known to *Kappan* readers from their bylines in this journal. Schmidt was a teacher in Chicago. All three of their stories are dirty — but informative — tales about deeds done in the name of high-stakes testing. The beginning of the Schmidt and Ohanian stories were recounted in the 10th Bracey Report. They continue here.

In addition to being a longtime teacher of English and journalism, Schmidt also publishes a muckraking (not a pejorative term in my lexicon) monthly newspaper called *Substance*. One day, a plain brown envelope delivered to the *Substance* offices was found to contain copies of the CASE (Chicago Academic Standards Examinations). Schmidt thought the test items were awful and, rather than write an editorial to that effect, published them in his paper. CPS suspended him without pay and sued for $1.4 million, which it claimed would be necessary to write new tests. CPS subsequently fired him.

When I saw the tests, I tried to imagine what would have happened had I produced them back in the days when I was director of testing for the Virginia Department of Education. Someone would have leaked the tests to the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*. The *Dispatch* would have published the worst questions, along with a scathing editorial mocking the state department's incompetence. The department would have summarily sacked me and deservedly so. This is what should have taken place in Chicago. The *Chicago Tribune* should have picked the tests up from Schmidt, published the worst items, and written a scathing editorial. Then CPS should have fired Carole Perlman, director of testing. Instead, the *Tribune* backed the tests and demanded that Schmidt be fired. Perlman testified against Schmidt at his hearing.

These tests were more than just a set of "trivial pursuit" items, although most of the items were that, too. The tests contained items that had no right answer, items that had multiple right answers, and items to which the official right answer was wrong. It also contained items for which an earlier item cued the answer for a later one. In short, these tests were garbage.

At a hearing on the issue (at which I testified in support of Schmidt), Perlman had the effrontery to defend the tests and even cajoled Tom Kerins, former Illinois director of testing, to testify on behalf of the tests and to confirm the cost estimate to replace them. Shame on you, Tom.

The $1.4 million, by the way, works out to about $12,000 an item. Chicago schoolteachers, not professional item writers, wrote the questions. At $12,000 per question, every four items cost the equivalent of a Chicago teacher's annual salary. How could they possibly cost so much? Well, it is true that CRESST (Center for Research on Evaluation, Student Standards, and Testing) liberated $500,000 from CPS, but it claimed to have provided only a little technical assistance in teaching teachers how to write items. How CRESST could charge so much money for so little work could also spark an investigation. The CPS suit is ongoing, as is Schmidt's countersuit involving First Amendment arguments.

Some educators in Western Massachusetts invited Alfie Kohn to be the keynote speaker at a conference. When the Massachusetts Department of Education (MDE) heard that Kohn would be the keynoter, it told the organizers that, if Kohn spoke, the

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A BARREL OF GOLDEN APPLES

AS WE DID last year, we have placed the annual Rotten Apple awards directly on my website, the Education Disinformation Detection and Reporting Agency (www.america-tomorrow.com/bracey). If you

do not wish to become a member of EDDRA or if you just want to see what kind of material shows up on the site, you can find an index at www.america-tomorrow.com/bracey/EDDRA. In the meantime, three recipients have earned Golden Apples this year, and a new hybrid category of Brass Apples has appeared.

money for the conference would be withdrawn. The organizers caved, even though the money to pay Kohn was not from MDE funds. Officially, the reason for denying Kohn the right to speak was that his topic was beyond the theme of the conference. Kohn was invited to speak on standards and assessment, and the organizers titled the speech "The Case Against Standardized Testing."

The purpose of the conference was for charter schools and other public schools to share information about common issues. But, as Chester Finn and his colleagues have observed, "Charter school discussions are saturated with talk about accountability."[1] And talk about accountability usually includes talk about testing. Other sessions at the conference covered testing, and many had nothing to do with charter schools.

Kohn was paid — *not* to speak. He says that the MDE's action was not surprising: "It's a small step from saying, 'Pass this test or you don't graduate,' to saying, 'Renege on this speaker or you don't get funded.'" The ACLU is progressing toward a suit.

The Ohanian saga, which she discussed briefly in her January 2001 *Kappan* article, remains murky with regard to who is behind it and what they hope to accomplish — other than to frighten her and make her spend money on lawyers in two states. I spoke to Alvin Wilbanks, the school superintendent in Gwinnett County, who advised me that there was an "ongoing investigation" but steadfastly refused to tell me who was conducting it. Jim Keinard, the Gwinnett School Police officer in charge of the investigation, has not returned phone calls or replied to e-mails. Ohanian has recently been ordered to supply fingerprints and a writing sample. Georgia law does not permit officers to ask for a writing sample.

More than most high-stakes tests, the one in Gwinnett County had roiled many waters. Given the enormous amount of testing already present in the district, many Gwinnett citizens simply saw no need for it. Some saw malice and maybe even malfeasance in a memo from Assistant Superintendent Gale Hulme. Hulme claimed it was "human error" that caused some RFPs for the Gateway exam not to be sent to most bidders on time. It is not clear that only CTB/McGraw-Hill received the RFP on time, but only CTB bid. Harcourt Educational Measurement declined, in a memo from then-Vice President Phillip Young, dated three weeks after the deadline.

Finally, some Gwinnett teachers were upset that the passing scores on some tests were set very close to 25% correct. This, of course, is the chance level, uncorrected for guessing, and strongly suggested that the whole enterprise was a political game.

Based on information provided by Gwinnett School Police, Vermont detective Timothy Bombardier in an affidavit accused Ohanian of attending a meeting of the "Alfie Kohn Group." Bombardier wrote that "The Alfie Kohn Group trains people in how to disrupt and prevent the implementation of high-stakes testing. On 31 March 2001, the Alfie Kohn Group met at Columbia University in New York, and Lisa Amspaugh was in attendance. [Amspaugh is a former resident of Gwinnett County and a critic of the test.] An attendee at the meeting advised investigators that a session was held specifically to plan strategies to disrupt the Gateway test."

This would be hilarious if it did not come from an agent of the law. The conference was organized by Columbia University faculty members and FairTest. I spoke at sharing a session with noted radical Ted Chittenden of the Educational Testing Service. One day was indeed devoted to developing strategies to counter the negative effects of high-stakes testing, but it dealt with topics like how to get the message to the media, to politicians, etc. No one ever mentioned the Gateway test, and no one said anything about disrupting any test administration or committing any acts of civil disobedience. Neither Ohanian nor Kohn attended the meeting.

The tale began with someone who pilfered the county's high-stakes test. Among the events that followed was the spectacle of all schools having to count, in front of a policeman, their copies of the test.

Testing, Testing, and More Testing

A couple of decades ago, I formulated Bracey's Paradox: test scores mean something only when you don't pay any attention to them. Lately, a lot of people have been paying a lot of attention to them.

If 2000 was the year that testing went crazy, 2001 was the year it went stark raving mad. I have already recounted three of the most outrageous incidents. Others merely reflect the tyranny of testing. What say we take a moment to consider a few of the personal qualities that standardized tests do *not* measure: *creativity, critical thinking, resilience, motivation, persistence, humor, reliability, enthusiasm, civic-mindedness, self-awareness, self-discipline, empathy, leadership,* and *compassion.*

Events in New York and Virginia reflected testing's ascent to dominance. In New York, 37 small alternative schools had built their curricula around portfolios as a means of assessment. They wanted to use these in lieu of the state tests for graduation. No can do, said New York Education Commissioner Richard Mills.[2] Alternative school students have to take the tests just like everyone else.

In Virginia, people pressured the state board of education to permit alternatives to the board's own tests, then the sole determinant of eligibility for high school grad-

uation. Okay, said the board — and added more tests: the SAT, the Advanced Placement tests, and the International Baccalaureate. Grades and teacher recommendations were deemed too subjective. We should note that, for all their subjectivity and alleged variation in meaning and rigor from place to place, high school grades still predict first-year college grades at most universities better than the SAT.

"NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" also acknowledged testing's prominence with a long segment. (A transcript of this "NewsHour" segment can be found at www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june01/testing_2-15.html.) Monty Neill of FairTest and Alfie Kohn squared off against Bill Evers of the Hoover Institution (an education advisor to President Bush) and Lisa Graham Keegan, then the state superintendent for Arizona. Evers and Keegan mumbled platitudes and generalities, most of which had no basis in data. Said Evers, "What we want to do with these tests is know where these children are and if we do it year by year, we can see progress, we can see gains, we can see the growth, we can see problems with teachers as well as students."

Can we now? Thomas Kane of the Hoover Institution and Douglas Staiger of Dartmouth College concluded that between 50% and 80% of the "improvement" in annual test scores for a school was temporary and caused by fluctuations that were not related to an increase in achievement.[3] David Grissmer of the RAND Corporation put the implications of these findings this way: "The question is, are we picking out lucky schools or good schools, and unlucky schools or bad schools? The answer is, we're picking out lucky and unlucky schools."[4]

Kane and Staiger made a telling statement: "Most of these [school accountability] systems have been set up with very little recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of the measures that they're based on."[5] The reason they have been set up that way, of course, is that the people who set them up, the Keegans and Everses of the world, have an agenda. It is all about ideology, power, and control and not at all about children, learning, and education.

Neill and Kohn pointed out a number of other weaknesses of tests, as well as some of the negative outcomes they produce. They didn't mention that, in Virginia Beach, the board of education called a special session to decide if it needed to mandate recess for the district's elementary schools, because many of the schools had eliminated recess in favor of additional test preparation. The problem extends well beyond Virginia Beach.[6]

Washington Post reporter Liz Seymour found that Virginia's tests not only flunk a lot of children but also have created a new class of dropouts: teachers. Some have taken early retirement, some have fled to private schools, and some have requested transfers to grades that are not tested.[7] Seymour interviewed teachers only in some of the highest-scoring districts in Virginia, those who would have the least to fear from the tests. The high-stakes fourth-grade test in New York is having a similar effect. Because tenured teachers can choose their assignments, fourth grade has become the province of the least-experienced teachers.[8]

Seymour quoted Virginia state board president Kirk Schroder, who claimed, "People miss the big picture here. The reality is that accountability is changing the culture of public education, and in some respects that has created some very positive achievement in some places where student achievement did not exist." Schroder offered no examples. Surely, he did not have in mind the performance of students in algebra I in Richmond schools. On the third administration of the algebra I test, Richmond's high schools had these passing rates: 19.8%, 10.3%, 9.0%, 5.8%, 4.6%, and 2.6%. Only three small, selective, affluent schools did better.

The techniques for setting passing scores reveal the purely political nature of these programs. Virginia employed the widely used Modified Angoff procedure. The process generates a recommended cut score from each of the 20-odd judges who participate. Usually, a cut score in the middle of the full range of recommended scores is taken as the official passing score. For 19 of 21 tests, the Virginia board selected the *highest* recommended cut score. For the two others, it set the passing score higher than *any* of the judges had recommended.

But at least the Virginia judges had some training and used a generally accepted procedure. In California, a panel of 100 people were given a dictionary definition of "competence" and told not to worry about setting a high passing score because eventually students would get there.[9] The judges recommended a cut score of 70%. State Superintendent Delaine Eastin overruled the judges and set the passing score at 60% for one test and 55% for the other. Still, a majority of the students failed, and the media scratched their heads over how so many students could flunk such an "easy" test, a test that, after all, required students to get barely more than half of the items right. (Recall that norm-referenced tests are composed mostly of questions that about half of the students get wrong; the percent correct on a test says nothing about its difficulty.)

The Alliance for Childhood, a loose coalition of psychiatrists, pediatricians, and educators, attempted, with little success, to bring some sanity to the situation with a position paper on high-stakes testing. The section headings summarize the paper's story: "The Technology of Testing Is Flawed"; "Test Scores Have Meaning Only in the Context of the Whole Child"; "Evidence Is Growing of Harm to Children's Health"; "More High-Stakes Testing Means More Dropouts, Fewer Good Teachers"; and "Standardization Is the Enemy of Effective Public Schools."[10]

Into the existing nuttiness over testing, Bush injected an unworkable and self-contradictory plan for chaos. In the name of giving states more freedom and flexibility, the President proposed to force them to test all students every year in reading and math in grades 3 through 8. Schools would be required to make "adequate yearly progress," a concept that caused everyone's eyes to roll back in their heads — even those who hadn't seen the article by Kane and Staiger on the instability of annual gains. The initial House version would have labeled most schools as "failing schools."

When Shadow Secretary of Education Sandy Kress rewrote the "adequate yearly

The That's Our Teach! Award goes to the sharp-eyed students in Lacey, Washington, along with the **This Thing Needs Some Humor Brass Apple Award** to an anonymous "former contract employee" of Riverside Publishing. Riverside produces the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), which some Washingtonians call Washington Assaulting Student Lives.

One WASL geography item required students to arrange four imaginary towns on a school bus route from west to east. The correct sequence was Mayri, Clay, Lee, Turno. The students in Lacey, a small town near Tacoma, noticed that this sequence taken together sounded a lot like Mary Kay LeTourneau, whom the *New York Times* identified as "perhaps the state's most infamous teacher."[1] LeTourneau became sexually involved with one of her 12-year-old students, bore him two children, and is currently in jail for child rape.

John Laramy, the president of Riverside, said that the firm reviewed the questions for racism, sexism, and other inappropriate biases. "It's clear we need to put in another check for malicious intent," he said. The item's hidden meaning had eluded other item writers and the firm's fairness committee, as well as the teachers and professors who reviewed it. The state said it would not count the item in the scoring.

1. Sam Howe Verhovek, "Test Answer Calls to Mind a Scandal," *New York Times*, 29 April 2001.

progress" formula, he called his own work "Rube Goldbergesque."[11] Chester Finn said the legislators had rendered the notion of adequate yearly progress so "complexified" that it defied explanation to parents and teachers.[12]

In addition to "adequate yearly progress," the Bush plan calls for all students to reach the "proficient" level on state assessments, said assessments to be confirmed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or by a nationally normed test. As FairTest noted in its analysis of the many problems in the Bush plan, this would require rates of progress never before seen in education (www.fairtest.org/nattest/bushtest.html).

In most states, fewer than one-third of fourth-graders currently attain the NAEP proficient level, and performance on state assessments often differs widely from NAEP. In Texas, for example, 89% of youngsters are proficient on the state reading assessment, but just 29% are proficient on the NAEP. Only 12% of black students scored proficient or better on the 2000 NAEP reading assessment. Sixty-three percent scored below basic. If the NAEP were administered in the third grade, similar results would probably be found. Currently, the House plan comes in 10-year and 12-year versions. Suppose the 10-year version becomes law. An average of 6.3% of American third-graders must move from below basic to proficient each year for 10 consecutive years.

New York Times education writer Jodi Wilgoren interviewed education leaders in all 50 states and found them complaining about the Bush proposal because it ignores an entire decade of work to develop standards and tests.[13] But what has this decade of work gotten us? Falling test scores.

Aside from the SAT, only the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development provide evidence of long-term trends. By Iowa law, each new form of the test must be equated to the old form. Scores rose from 1955 to about 1965, fell for about a decade, and then rose to mostly record highs by the mid- to late 1980s. After the 2000 renorming, though, the scores fell. No one seems to understand why. I would place my own bet primarily on changing demographics. The 2000 census paints a very different picture of America from the one painted by the 1990 census — much less the earlier ones.

Now for a quick summary of the best of the rest of this year's news about tests. Richard Atkinson, president of the University of California System, set tongues wagging by proposing that the university do away with the SAT as a college admissions requirement. He proposed temporarily using the College Board Achievement Tests until something better and more appropriate could be developed. The media made big deal when Mount Holyoke banished ... SAT, but Joanne Creighton, Mount Holyoke's president, said that the test never counted for more than 10% in the admissions decision anyway.

Many stories covered cheating scandals. Many others documented the major errors made by companies that develop and score tests and explored the injurious impact of these errors on students. Resistance to the tests also grew. Parents in several states boycotted state-mandated tests. The Business Roundtable felt the resistance sufficiently to issue a monograph on how to counter the testing "backlash."[14]

Eugene Paslov, CEO of Harcourt Educational Measurement, garnered a fair amount of ink by saying that tests such as the ones his company produces *should not* be used as graduation requirements. He said his company could not tell school districts how to use the tests, but "we do have a responsibility to tell policy makers how we feel."[15]

New NAEP Data

The most disturbing thing about the 2000 NAEP reading and math assessments was the way media and state officials covered and interpreted them.

The reading data, which did not show any change, received little in the way of headlines. Nevertheless, in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece, former Delaware Gov. Pete du Pont called the results "disastrous."[16] Recall again that American students finished second in an international comparison of reading achievement. Theoretically, we could be suffering an international literacy crisis, but no one has claimed so.

Few papers carried the math results on the front page. Many of the nation's leading papers, including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *USA Today*, buried the story deep in Section A. This is disturbing because the results were generally positive. The 12th-grade scores dropped three points from the 1996 level, leaving them w ahead of the scores in 1990. Both fourth

and eighth-graders showed improvements. If their scores had dropped, a couple of journalists admitted to me, the story would have garnered page-one placement.

Most papers treated the results as a *state*, not a national, story. The national results appeared mostly in national papers and in papers in states that did not participate in the assessment. In some states, the newspapers and state officials bragged — Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia. In other states, they lamented the low performance — Arkansas, California, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming. Still others did a little of both, pointing out gains but mentioning below-average performance — Alabama, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, and Ohio. The headline in the Biloxi *Sun Herald* was the most sorrowful: "Mississippi Improves Scores, but Finishes Last on Test."

This kind of coverage is disturbing because the utility of the NAEP depends on its invisibility. (See Bracey's Paradox, above.) As soon as you start paying attention to a test, you introduce all kinds of corrupting influences that invalidate the scores. State officials attributed gains to their state's reform efforts. Although the NAEP likes to bill itself as "the nation's report card," it is increasingly becoming the *states'* report card to be used for bragging or to goad educators to greater effort and achievement. Thus it will not be usable to "confirm" Bush's testing program or any other program.

The Walk a Mile In My Shoes Award goes to Barbara Ehrenreich for *Nickel and Dimed* (Metropolitan Books, 2001). Part of the June 2001 Research column discussed the difficulties that working poor parents have in leaving their workplaces to handle their children's school problems. I cited bland statistics about the desperate plight of the working poor in helping their children in school, but they didn't give the flavor of what it's like to try to get by on $7 an hour. That works out to $14,000 a year for 50, 40-hour weeks.

Ehrenreich went "slumming," but, unlike the usual brief affluent-visit-the-poor trips, she conducted her experiment for two years, trying to get along by working at minimum-wage jobs from Florida to Maine to Minnesota. She discovered that there is no such thing as "unskilled" labor. Every job — and she held a bunch — required the mastery of new terms, new machinery, new techniques. For a person "well into my fifties" with a Ph.D. in biology, she says, the unskilled jobs posed quite a challenge. "It is a shock to realize that 'trailer trash' has become, for me, a demographic category to aspire to" (p. 12).

Ehrenreich had it both easier and tougher than people who live on minimum wage: easier because she didn't have any children to worry about, tougher because she was unable to see how the permanently poor make use of family, friends, and the community in their attempts to get by. Still, her glimpse of low-wage workers is illuminating.

The end of "welfare as we know it" probably isn't working, but we don't really know, in part because Congress appropriated no funds to see what happened to the poor after the law took effect. In addition, the Democrats did not eagerly look for flaws during the period of "unprecedented prosperity," which they took credit for, and the Republicans, having passed the legislation, have lost interest.

Those of us who are not poor do whatever it takes to make the poor invisible. We don't ride public buses, live in mixed housing, or shop in consignment stores. We don't see, as Ehrenreich did, working people working with injuries because their employer offers no health insurance and a day off is not an option because "the loss of one day's pay will mean no groceries for the next."

Perhaps Ehrenreich's most stunning conclusion is that "the 'working poor' as they are approvingly termed are in fact the major philanthropists of our society." They give of themselves so that the rest of us can enjoy our lifestyles as the nonpoor. The effects of these particular savage inequalities show up, of course, in the schools.

No Child Left Behind

The Bush education plan as presented to Congress in the document "No Child Left Behind" begins with three falsehoods: "Today nearly 70% of inner-city fourth-graders are unable to read at a basic level on national reading tests. Our high school seniors trail students in Cyprus and South Africa on international math tests. And nearly a third of our college freshmen find they must take a remedial course before they are able to even begin regular college-level courses."

There are no published data to support the 70% contention. (In an August 1 speech to the Urban League, Bush amended the figure to "almost two-thirds." In an earlier speech, First Lady Laura Bush had used the better figure of 60%.) The 2000 NAEP results in reading show that 47% of students in central cities score below basic. Sixty percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches score below basic.

As for high school seniors trailing Cyprus and South Africa, these are the two countries that the U.S. outscored, not trailed. Of course, to consider these data at all, one has to accept the results of the Final Year Study of TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study), which, as I hope I have made clear before, one should never do.[17] The flaws in the data render them virtually uninterpretable. When I parsed the results and found groups most comparable to the students in other countries, American high school seniors remained about average, which is where they were as eighth-graders.

The statement on college remediation makes it seem that college freshmen are showing up at Harvard lacking basic skills. Maybe. But I doubt that sound national figures exist because "remedial" means different things in different states and on different campuses. In Virginia, for instance, remedial courses are not offered at the flagship institutions. You won't find them at William and Mary, the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, or most of the other

four-year universities. They are offered by three urban universities, by two historically black universities, and, especially, by the community colleges. If students did not take algebra II in high school, then decide that they want to go to a four-year college and so take algebra II at a community college, does that make the course remedial? Isn't providing such opportunities a core function of community colleges?

The President's statement also overlooks the inconvenient fact that about two-thirds of high school graduates go on for further education. Shouldn't we be applauding this?

Paul Gigot — soon to be editoral page editor of the *Wall Street Journal* — said that the signal quality of the legislation was that "Teddy Kennedy is happy, and Checker Finn is not."[18] Certainly, most conservatives did not care for the Bush plan. The Heritage Foundation slammed it. So did the Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, and Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation. Analysts concluded that Bush had given the conservatives so much of their agenda in his first 100 days that he could afford to anger them now on a few issues.

"Missing in action" in all of the contentiousness has been Roderick Paige, the new secretary of education. The *Houston Chronicle* noted that "according to his official schedule, the secretary spends the bulk of his time meeting with foreign dignitaries, going to dinners and receptions, or traveling around the country."[19] *The New Republic* observed, "In any Administration, the blatant marginalization of the only African American domestic Cabinet secretary would be noteworthy. In an Administration that loudly trumpets its commitment to Cabinet government and racial diversity it's stunning. . . . From the beginning the White House seems to have expected him to be the education plan's public face — and nothing more. . . . Ah, the soft bigotry of low expectations."[20] Paige has denied rumors that he is unhappy with Bush and is planning to resign.[21] He has now declared that he is "at the table" and will seek a higher profile, but Jack Jennings of the Center on Education Policy still has him filed under "I" — for "irrelevant."[22]

As this is written, Congress is in recess. Everyone is predicting cantankerous debates to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) when legislators return this fall. The June 20 issue of *Education Week* carried a side-by-side comparison of the competing versions.

New International Data

Early 2001 brought the release of the TIMSS-R (R for Repeat) and TIMSS Benchmarking Studies. The media greeted these studies with a collective yawn in the first instance and with silence in the second. Actually, the TIMSS-R report contained what I call "microcosmic data" — a small set of statistics that reveal the condition of education writ large.

The U.S. Department of Education disaggregated the TIMSS-R data by ethnicity. I wondered what the results would have looked like if the entire U.S. sample had consisted of students of only one ethnicity. In the TIMSS sampling system, Asians and Native Americans constitute too small a group to generate a reliable estimate. The scores from blacks, whites, and Hispanics and those from the 38 participating nations (adding an ethnic group makes a total of 39) generate these results:

	Score		Rank (of 39)	
	Math	Science	Math	Science
Whites	525	547	13	6
Blacks	444	438	32	32
Hispanics	457	462	30	29
Int'l average	487	488		

These results look drearily familiar. Unfortunately, TIMSS has no direct measure of poverty, only such indicators as the number of books in the home. The data above are stark enough, but if we could show data by ethnicity and poverty level, we'd see even more dramatic evidence of savage inequalities.

Of somewhat more interest than TIMSS-R was what I will call TIMSS-B, the TIMSS Benchmarking studies. Taking all 38 nations together, TIMSS-B calculated what proportion of students attained certain "benchmark" levels: 90th percentile, 75th percentile, 50th percentile, and 25th percentile. In addition to the 38 nations, 13 states and 14 school districts or consortia of districts participated.

The 38 nations generated an international mathematics average of 487. U.S. students scored 502. All 13 states (Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas) scored higher than the international average, and all but four of them scored at or above the U.S. average. Idaho, Maryland, Missouri, and North Carolina scored lower. Michigan, Texas, and Indiana topped the list. (Yes, Texas, but more about that in a moment.) Note that none of the states that scored highest in the first TIMSS (Iowa, Nebraska, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin) participated in TIMSS-B. Here are the results for math:

Percentage of Students Attaining Selected Math Benchmarks

	90th	75th	50th	25th
International	10	25	50	75
Texas	13	32	66	90
Connnecticut	11	31	67	91
Illinois	10	29	65	92
Massachusetts	10	31	68	92
Michigan	10	33	70	92
Oregon	10	32	69	91
South Carolina	10	30	60	88
Indiana	9	28	65	88
Pennsylvania	9	28	65	91
Maryland	8	27	57	87
North Carolina	7	25	57	88
Idaho	5	24	61	88
Missouri	4	20	58	89
United States	9	28	61	88
Singapore	46	75	93	99
South Africa	0	1	5	14

TIMSS-B did not offer competition as tough as TIMSS. Some industrialized nations that took part in TIMSS did not participate in TIMSS-B, and a few more developing countries did. In the original TIMSS none of the seven highest-scoring states

The Keeping My Priorities Straight Award goes to Eugenia Sitaras, a kindergarten teacher in Brooklyn, New York. Sitaras failed to claim immediately her half of $130 million from the New York Lotto because she had responsibilities to take care of. "I had to finish preparing for my parent/teacher meetings." Sitaras eventually took a one-time lump sum of $31 million. As this is written, she is vacationing in Greece and says she plans to continue teaching.

named above placed more than 6% of students at the 90th percentile in math.

Still, there *were* 37 countries, plus Taipei, in TIMSS-B, including such high flyers as Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong. Seven states had percentages of students at the international 90th percentile that were as high as or higher than these 37 nations. All but two states had at least 25% of their students scoring at the 75th percentile, and all 13 states had higher percentages scoring at or above the 50th percentile or at or above the 25th percentile than these 37 countries.

The United States had almost as high a proportion of students at the international 90th percentile, 9%, as the top-scoring states, and only 14 of the 37 nations had as high or higher proportions at this level. The U.S. had a higher percentage than average on the three other benchmarks. The contrast between the highest-scoring nation, Singapore, and the lowest, South Africa, shows the great gulf between the First and Third Worlds.

A Nation at Risk tightly yoked the test performance of students to the economic health of the nation. However, on 10 July 2001 Singapore declared its economy officially in recession.[23] Meanwhile, observers worry that Japan will experience a *second decade* of recession. These facts should end any further assertions that high scores produce a competitive economy. By the way, education alone doesn't produce jobs. If it did, India wouldn't have tens of thousands of unemployed software engineers waiting for visas to the U.S.

The results for the American districts and consortia reveal contrasts almost as stark as those between the highest- and lowest-scoring nations. In math, only the five Asian nations finished ahead of Naperville, Illinois, and the First in the World Consortium, a group of 19 suburban Chicago districts. Only seven countries bested Montgomery County, Maryland, which has a lot more poverty than people realize and which also has more than 100 foreign languages to cope with. And only eight nations outscored the Michigan Invitational Group.

At the bottom, only five countries scored lower than the Miami-Dade school district. Only eight trailed Rochester, New York, and Chicago surpassed only 10. (In the original TIMSS, only three of 41 countries scored lower than Mississippi; only one scored lower than Washington, D.C.)

As with the first TIMSS, American students fared better in science than in math. The international average was again 488, but the U.S. average in science was 515. All states scored higher than the international average, and four scored below the U.S. average. Here are the benchmark results for science:

Percentage of Students Attaining Selected Science Benchmarks

	90th	75th	50th	25th
International	10	25	50	75
Michigan	22	47	75	91
Oregon	19	43	73	91
Indiana	18	41	72	92
Connecticut	17	39	69	90
Massachusetts	17	40	71	92
Pennsylvania	15	38	70	91
Texas	15	35	61	83
Illinois	14	36	66	88
Missouri	14	36	67	89
Idaho	13	37	70	91
South Carolina	13	34	60	85
Maryland	12	31	59	84
North Carolina	11	30	60	85
United States	15	34	52	85
Singapore	32	56	80	94
South Africa	0	2	6	13
Naperville	33	64	90	98

The results from TIMSS, TIMSS-R, and TIMSS-B clearly indicate the need for something that people like me, David Berliner, Bruce Biddle, Harold Hodgkinson, and Michael Casserly of the Council of the Great City Schools have been calling for for years: a "Marshall Plan" for the inner cities and poor rural areas. Reforms predicated on the dire state of the typical American public school or on the "crisis" in public education are wholly misguided.

My declarations about the inadequacy of the TIMSS Final Year Study stand. Still, those data yielded some interesting information. The College Board compared the scores of American students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams in calculus and physics with the TIMSS scores of the various countries.

In calculus, AP students outscored all 16 countries, averaging 573 points, compared to 557 for France, the highest nation (this difference was not statistically significant, but the other 15 were). Students who took the AP Calculus AB test (a test of first-year calculus) and received a score of 3 or better (considered passing) scored 586 on the TIMSS Advanced Math. Those who scored lower didn't fare much worse: 565. Students who took the AP Calculus BC test (a test of second-year calculus) and scored 3 or better aced the TIMSS test at 633. Roughly two-thirds of the students taking each test scored 3 or better.

In physics, AP students finished fourth, behind Norway, Sweden, and Russia. But recall that the Scandinavian students had studied physics for three years. Russia tested only 2% of the student population and only those in Russian-speaking schools. Those who achieved a 3 or better on the AP Physics test scored 586 on the TIMSS physics test, five points ahead of top-ranked Norway. Students with AP scores in physics of less than 3 scored substantially lower: 511. This ranks them ninth among the 17 countries in the TIMSS Final Year Study of physics.

The study also revealed a different aspect of the ethnic achievement gap: virtually no blacks or Hispanics took either AP test. The calculus group contained just 1% black and 3% Hispanic students. Seventy-two percent were whites, and 21% were

Asians/Pacific Islanders. The physics group was made up of 1% blacks, 4% Hispanics, 66% whites, and 26% Asians/Pacific Islanders. In both groups, 4% of the students checked "other."

Vouchers, R.I.P.

In his 1962 book, *Freedom and Capitalism*, Milton Friedman developed the modern concept of school vouchers — influencing, among others, Ronald Reagan, who made them part of his education agenda. Friedman and his wife Rose lead a foundation dedicated to the propagation of vouchers. On the website's FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section, one question is "Are vouchers popular?" The site says unequivocally yes and then provides a lot of survey data to try to bolster the claim (the survey data are more equivocal than Friedman would have you believe). Interested readers should visit www.friedmanfoundation.org and click on Frequently Asked Questions.

Survey data about vouchers, however, have always proved wrong when the issue becomes meaningful — as in a vote. This is how it happened in 2000. The 2000 election saw voucher proposals in California and Michigan go down in flames by large margins in both states. Silicon Valley entrepreneurs sponsored the California proposal and funded it generously. In Michigan, voucher advocates outspent opponents 2 to 1. I asked Friedman how he interpreted this debacle, and he said that the "defeats are highly relevant to the question of political tactics." But he also said that he retained his faith in the efficacy of vouchers.

Along with generous funding, voucher proponents garnered support from conservative pundits. George Will declared that facts about voucher successes had "pummeled" opponents; William Safire concluded that vouchers would wipe out the black/white achievement gap.[24] It didn't help.

Both pundits, interestingly publishing on the same day, drew mostly on the work of Harvard's Paul Peterson, who has allowed his voucher theology to cloud his vision. Early on, Peterson characterized voucher advocates as "a small band of Jedi attackers" who were engaged in a fight with the unified might of "Death Star forces."[25] Usually, researchers write up a research report, have some friends read and review it, then pass it on to a journal, where three or four anonymous reviewers will pass judgment on its merits. Peterson gave his study of vouchers in Milwaukee to the Associated Press. The resultant story just happened to appear on the same day that Peterson and his frequent publishing companion, Jay Greene, now of the Manhattan Institute, published an op-ed piece on the same subject in the *Wall Street Journal*, which characterized John Witte's original evaluation of the Milwaukee voucher program as "bad science." This just happened to be the same day that Republican Presidential candidate Bob Dole proposed vouchers to the Republican National Convention. As the Church Lady might say, "How con*veni*ent."

Deception by the Numbers, a booklet produced by People for the American Way, describes many of the inadequacies of Peterson's work. For instance, using data from his studies in New York City, Dayton, and Washington, D.C., Peterson has claimed that vouchers work for African American children, but not for other ethnicities.[26] This is a most curious finding that Peterson has never attempted to explain. In fact, black children in New York City showed gains only in the sixth grade, not in grades 3, 4, or 5. However, grade-6 gains were so large that, when Peterson averaged the four grades, the average was significant. Peterson's description of the results led David Myers of Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a co-investigator with Peterson in the New York study, to call the claim "premature." "Right now you come away saying, 'No there's no impact,'" said Myers.[27]

A later press release, available on the Mathematica website (www.mathinc.com/3rdLevel/school.htm), makes this clear: "The report shows no overall differences in test scores between 3rd through 6th graders who were offered vouchers and those who were not. However, there were large and statistically significant impacts for African American 6th graders who were offered vouchers."

Indeed, the results from Dayton are not significant even for African Americans.[28] Peterson has not explained this anomaly, either.

Meanwhile, back on the referendum front, the California proposal from Silicon Valley entrepreneur Timothy Draper would have provided a $4,000 voucher for all children, including the 600,000 students already enrolled in private schools. A wide spectrum of groups opposed the proposal. The plan for subsidizing those wealthy families whose children already attended private schools offended some. Some worried about draining money from the public schools. Some private schools said that they would not accept voucher students who scored below grade level, and others expressed no interest in expansion. And even if private schools were of a mind to grow, one estimate has contended that the nation's existing private schools could absorb only 4% of public school children.[29]

Michigan put a more complex proposal before the people. In addition to providing vouchers worth $3,200 to students in "failing districts," it established a teacher testing program and set a minimum funding level for schools. Supporters claimed that the legislation would affect more than 30 districts, but the Michigan Department of Education put the figure at seven.[30] Post mortems attributed the defeat to the complexity of the proposal, to the fear of taking money away from public schools, and to the fact that people could not easily read the proposal's position on the political spectrum by looking at supporters and opponents. Popular Republican education reform Gov. John Engler opposed it. So did former Gov. James Blanchard, a Democrat.[31]

In the wake of the defeats, voucher advocates, such as Peterson, Jeanne Allen, and Trent Lott, decided that the word "voucher" should be dropped from the lexicon of school choice. "I think maybe the word is part of the problem," Lott said. "Maybe the word should be 'scholarship.'"[32] At his confirmation hearings, Rod Paige told the committee that "the word 'vouchers' has taken on a negative tone."[33]

Given these events and sentiments, President Bush's voucher proposal was quickly removed from both the House and

the Senate education bills. As proposed by Bush, the plan would have transferred wealth from taxpayers of all denominations to the Catholic Church. Journalist and voucher advocate Matthew Miller argued that, in cities, a voucher would have to be worth at least $6,000 to interest people.[34] Bush's vouchers were, in Miller's word, "puny," worth just $1,500. Only the heavily subsidized Catholic schools, which have been hemorrhaging students (12.6% of all students in 1960, 4.7% in 2000), could have afforded to accept them.[35]

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the Cleveland voucher case. A federal appeals court, noting that 96% of the students using vouchers attended Catholic schools, had declared the program unconstitutional.

Charter Schools

Accountability burbled to the top of the pot of charter school issues this year. In his 1996 book on charter schools, Joe Nathan wrote, "Hundreds of charter schools have been created around this nation by educators who are willing to put their jobs on the line, to say, 'If we can't improve students' achievement, close down our school.' That is accountability — clear, specific, and real."[36] And nonexistent. If this all-or-none test were applied to charters, precious few would still stand.

Charter operators have often resisted producing financial or achievement data, even when this information falls under a state's freedom of information law. An RPP International report for the U.S. Department of Education found that just 37.3% of charter schools sent a progress report to the chartering agency. Some 60.9% did send a report to the charter board, but only 41.2% sent one to the students' parents, and only 25.3% delivered one to the community.[37] A review of accountability in 10 active charter states found little activity and few trends toward tightening accountability requirements.[38]

But people are *talking* about accountability. Chester Finn and his colleagues wrote in 1996 that they had "yet to see a single state with a thoughtful and well-formed plan for evaluating its charter school program."[39] Finn and his colleagues returned in late 2000 to observe, "Charter school discussions are saturated with talk about accountability. Some view it as the third rail of the charter movement, some as the holy grail."[40] They proposed something they call "accountability by transparency," whereby "the school routinely and systematically discloses complete, accurate, and timely information about its program, performance, and organization." Their system, though, requires so much information in the form of various test scores, progress toward goals, student standards, curriculum, instructional methods, demographic characteristics, and more that it would seem to eviscerate the original concept of a charter school.

In any case, it will not be adopted. No state has a true formal accountability program. Several, among them Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio,

have formal annual reports that call for specific information, but the reports don't always contain all the information required. And even if they did, states lack any decision rules to permit the sponsoring agency to determine whether a charter has or has not met its goals, especially in the academic arena. Massachusetts comes closest, with on-site visits that last several days, but the rigor of the process is not matched by equally rigorous decisions.

Some states, such as Michigan, appear to be moving *away* from accountability. Evaluations of Michigan charters by Public Sector Consultants/MAXIMUS, by Jerry Horn and Gary Miron of Western Michigan University, by Eric Bettinger, and by Randall Eberts and Kevin Hollenbeck have all reached the same basic conclusion: while some individual charters achieve at high levels, Michigan charter schools, as a group, perform below demographically comparable Michigan public schools.[41] These evaluations appear to have had zero impact on the governor (a charter advocate) or the legislature. Indeed, the only charter school bill currently before the legislature simply increases the number of charters that public universities can operate.

Tepid achievement by charter schools in Michigan is especially troubling because Michigan might well be a bellwether state with regard to charters. Over a period of a few years, private, almost exclusively for-profit education management organizations (EMOs) have come to dominate the Michigan charter scene. EMOs now operate 71% of Michigan charters, enrolling 75% of the state's charter students. Five years ago, EMOs controlled only 16% of Michigan charter schools.

The percentage of EMO charters could well increase. People who start "mom and pop" charter schools often do not have any experience running a school. They soon discover that even a small school — and most charters have fewer than 300 students — is a lot of work. People with no training in accounting suddenly have to manage the books. People with no training in administration have to hire and fire and manage the faculty and staff. People with limited "people skills" now have to win the acceptance of diverse constituencies.

In addition, Michigan charter sponsors, mostly public universities, encourage charter operators to team up with EMOs. The EMOs, presumably, have the skills and experience that the individual charter operators lack. Charter authorizers also favor EMOs because they are known quantities. This reduces the risk that some idiosyncratic, visionary charter operators will mismanage or steal money, develop a curriculum bereft of intellectual content, or otherwise mess up. Finally, working through an EMO gives the charter operators access to start-up capital. The lack of capital poses the biggest problem for charter founders.

Interestingly, a little-noticed provision in California's Proposition 39 might have solved or greatly ameliorated this problem. The proposition generated much debate because it lowered the size of the majority of voters needed to approve school bonds. But the proposition also directed school districts to provide charters with facilities that are "reasonably equivalent" to those provided by the public schools. All districts must comply by 2003.

One might anticipate an EMO takeover similar to Michigan's in Ohio. The most recent report from Ohio's Legislative Office for Educational Oversight (LOEO) had this to say about charters, called "community schools" in Ohio, and EMOs:

> LOEO found that community schools benefit significantly from the assistance of management companies in areas such as financial management, curriculum development, teacher inservices, and general support and guidance. Directors [of charter schools] remarked to LOEO that the management company is the first place they turn when they have questions.
>
> Community schools not operated by a management company must be responsible for all aspects of running the school, ranging from curriculum design to staff hiring and evaluations to planning budgets. The director of one community school without a management company commented that "schools operated by a management company have the assistance I was looking for this year."[42]

Turning to EMOs might be practical, but it defeats some major purposes of the charter school movement: to stimulate innovation in curriculum and instruction and to give the people in the school building and the parents in the community ownership and control over what goes on in the school.

In fact, accountability for charters has proved more complicated than such early advocates as Joe Nathan, Albert Shanker, Ted Kolderie, and Ray Budde envisioned. Most state-level evaluations have concluded that no single instrument serves appropriately for all schools. It is clear in these evaluations, though, that the charter authorizers, boards, and the school operators haven't thought much or clearly about what *would* serve as appropriate instruments.

Bruno Manno has outlined some of the difficulties:

> Today, it's hard to know how well charter schools are actually doing. . . . There are three predominant reasons for this situation.
>
> First, the charter strategy is so new that it's difficult to measure results. There's just not much data out there. Second, today's charter accountability systems remain underdeveloped, often clumsy and ill-fitting, and are themselves beset by dilemmas. A final reason for the dearth of charter school accountability information lies with authorizers and operators. Truth be told, they are often content to leave accountability agreements nebulous and undefined. Leaving accountability agreements indeterminate is fraught with danger because over the long term this approach is more likely to lead to a charter school being subjected to the rule- and compliance-based accountability practices that characterize conventional schools.[43]

Rutgers University researcher Katrina Bulkley finds four factors that make it difficult to revoke or not renew a charter:

> 1. Educational performance is not simple to define or measure, nor is how good is "good enough" in educational quality. In this context, authorizers sometimes turn to "proxies" to assess school quality.
>
> 2. Other aspects of a school's program, often more difficult to measure than test scores, are also important for families and authorizers.

3. Teachers, parents, and students become very invested in particular schools, and destroying a community is more difficult than serving a diffuse public interest (like the one that would be served by closing a low-achieving school).

4. Charter schools have become a highly politicized issue on both sides, and some authorizers are concerned about their decisions (to close schools) reflecting poorly on charter schools as a reform idea.[44]

These four challenges form what Bulkley calls "the accountability bind." Proxies for achievement include parent and student satisfaction, accreditation by some national accrediting agency, and, in the case of EMOs, a possible "halo effect" — if authorizers view one school managed by the EMO as successful, they are likely to see the EMO's other schools that way as well.

As regards the fourth challenge, those who authorize charter schools are often favorably disposed to the charter concept. This gives them an additional reason to let the charter continue. Bulkley observes further that, "while authorizers have difficulty determining what is and is not a successful charter school, they have even more difficulty deciding that a charter school is *unsuccessful enough* to justify as high a sanction as closure."[45]

Not many charters have suffered the indignity of a revoked or nonrenewed charter. Nationally, just 4% of all charters have closed. Texas has the highest rate at 8%. And some situations there have received devastating publicity. No doubt that publicity served as one reason why the Texas House of Representatives wanted to declare a moratorium on new charters. In a compromise, the legislature, over Gov. Rick Perry's objections, capped the number of allowable charters at 211 (192 operated in 2001-02). Perry allowed the bill to become law without signing it.

When charters do close, it is not always clear why. Authorizers seldom list academic reasons as the principal cause. Usually money problems dominate, but this might be misleading. Eric Premack of the Charter School Development Center at California State University, Sacramento, outlines the problems very well in an e-mail message to me:

> Pinpointing the primary cause of a revocation is a lot more difficult than one might think. Difficulties of schools academically, legally, financially, and at the school governance level tend to be very closely related. For example, if a school is unable to offer the academic program at the level promised to parents, it only takes a small number of parents disenrolling their children to send the school into a financial tailspin. This financial pressure, in turn, tends to lead to infighting at the governance and administrative level.
>
> When districts revoke, they usually focus on the financial and legal issues because they tend to be much easier to document. District staff prefer to bring clear and unambiguous reasons to their boards. As you [referring to me] know from your years of research in this area, measuring academic growth and progress is a dismal and slippery "science." It's a lot easier for districts to document that a charter school's budget is out of balance than it is to document declines in test scores or poor implementation of some promised academic program.

Premack refers to "districts" because, in California, the local school districts authorize charter schools. In some states, authorizers include universities, community colleges, the state department of education or, as in Arizona, a separate state charter school board.

Bulkley's and Premack's descriptions make it seem unlikely that anything like "accountability by transparency" will appear in the near future. In any case, accountability by transparency is a concept remote from the realities of schools. More important, it conflicts with human nature: everyone wants to look good.

Incidentally, when charter laws list their purposes, one purpose is to stimulate competition among the public schools. In some states that permit private schools to convert to charter status, this produces increased competition among *private* schools. The laws that permit private schools to convert also forbid them to charge tuition beyond the public funds they receive. They can offer the same educational program as in the past, but they now can offer it essentially for free.

EMOs

The first full school year in the new century treated some of the most visible EMOs unkindly. From the TesseracT Group, nee Educational Alternatives, Inc. (EAI); to Advantage Schools, Inc.; to the Edison Schools, it was not a good year.

As EAI, TesseracT had managed schools in poor urban areas — Baltimore, Hartford, and Miami-Dade County. After losing those contracts, EAI changed its name to TesseracT, moved its headquarters from Minneapolis to the toney Phoenix suburb of Scottsdale, and, despite charging $8,500 in tuition and as much as $1.95 per mile for pupil transportation, went broke. Founder John Golle came out of retirement but couldn't stanch the bleeding.

Boston-based Advantage went into 2000-01 led by Steve Wilson, a former aide to former Massachusetts Gov. John Weld. Wilson had helped write Massachusetts' charter school law and raised a few eyebrows when he jumped from government into the government-sponsored charter school business. In April 2001 Advantage released a report claiming large gains in the test scores of its students. The largest gains came in kindergarten through grade 2 and looked more than a bit unrealistic. Later grades showed much smaller gains. Wilson got fired. In June Advantage sacked 40 headquarters staff members and, a few days later, announced that it was being taken over by Mosaica Education, Inc.

Advantage appears to have lost more contracts than any other EMO, five out of 14. But, like other EMOs, it has never turned a profit. Both Advantage and Mosaica had claimed that they would make black-ink entries on their ledgers if they operated 30 or more schools. Neither had more than half that number. It remains to be seen whether 30 schools will constitute the critical mass these companies need. Readers might recall that *New York Times* reporter Michael Winerip savaged Advantage in the *New York Times Magazine*. The Eighth Bracey Report summarized his find-

ings. Advantage's pedagogy also received some more recent skeptical attention in the *New Yorker*.[46]

Thirty schools certainly held no magic for Edison Schools, Inc. It managed 113 in 2000-01. (Edison counts each level of schooling under the same roof as a separate school.) Edison still lost $1.36 for every dollar it took in.[47] Edison has now signed new contracts in Las Vegas, in Indiana, and in Pennsylvania and has been hired by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge to develop a "plan" that might privatize all or part of Philadelphia's schools. Many people cried "foul." Brandon Dobell, a senior analyst with Credit Suisse First Boston Corporation, said, "It's like putting a fox in charge of the hen house." Arizona State University researcher Alex Molnar was harsher: "This stinks of conflict of interest from top to bottom."[48] When I "debated" Edison founder Chris Whittle in the fall of 2000, he predicted that Edison would be profitable by 2004. Whittle had earlier claimed that Edison would come close to profitability in 1998 and would certainly attain that status by 1999-2000.[49]

I put debate in quotes above because, although billed as one, the usual debate never occurred. The event took place at the annual meeting of the Educational Leaders Council, a D.C.-based group of conservative school reformers now headed by Lisa Graham Keegan, formerly state superintendent in Arizona. The traditional debate format is pro, con, and rebuttal. The ELC required me to present the negative case first. It mattered little. Whittle did not address any of the issues I raised and simply delivered a 20-minute infomercial for Edison.

Readers might want to watch the Education Leaders Council because it now has an inside track to the White House. President Bush named one of its leaders, Eugene Hickok, as undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Perhaps that is why Keegan testified before Congress a few weeks after her arrival in town. Hickok previously served as secretary of education in Pennsylvania.

As noted, EMOs have virtual hegemony over the charter school movement in Michigan and appear poised for a similar assault in Ohio. This is disturbing. Evaluations of charters in Michigan referred to EMO schools as "cookie cutter" schools. Others have likened them to fast food franchises. As one Advantage teacher (actually a receptionist filling in and teaching the top-level math class) said to Michael Winerip, "You just have to remember to stay on script."[50]

Teachers in San Francisco charged that Edison was too scripted. Across the continent in New York, Edison headquarters responded, "Maybe our model is not for you."[51] When Edison expressed an interest in teacher preparation, an anonymous individual said that the company would teach skills useful only in Edison schools, thereby binding its graduates to the company.

Where It Could All End Up

The 16 November 2000 *Straits Times* (Singapore) described the run-up to national examination day in Korea, a day that seals the fates of high school seniors.[52] Many mothers go to temple for a few hours for 99 consecutive days to pray for their children's success. On the 100th day, they arrive around 8 p.m. and pray all night: hands up; clasp hands in prayer; bow; down on knees; head to floor; back on haunches; clasp hands in prayer. Repeat 3,000 times.

Many stores and kiosks sell chocolate axes and forks to help students "spear" the right answers. Bands and cheering throngs meet the seniors as they approach the test sites. Workers report an hour later for work — to ensure that rush hour traffic jams don't prevent the seniors' timely arrival. In Seoul, takeoffs and landings at Kimpo International Airport are banned for certain periods. The U.S. military halts training at all 90 South Korean bases for nine hours.

The students are not exactly happy. "I've been preparing for college since elementary school, and it all comes down to just one day that will decide my future," said one. Stakes are indeed high. The people who end up with the most prestigious jobs and who hold public offices are those whose test scores admit them to one of the three most prestigious universities. These three institutions will enroll 15,000 of 873,000 applicants. That's 1.7%.

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BACKTALK

Same Old Story

I wish to respond to "The 11th Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education" (October), by Gerald Bracey. I am disturbed and concerned over the *Kappan*'s decision to publish this article without taking the time to determine if it is accurate, fair, and unbiased.

The Chicago Academic Standards Exams (CASE) are standards-based semester exams in the courses required for graduation from the Chicago Public Schools. They were initiated during the 1998-99 school year as a pilot without high stakes. Each exam was developed and written by teams of Chicago Public School teachers. Each item was teacher-written and teacher-reviewed. The decision was made to pilot these exams systemwide in order to ensure that all Chicago public high school teachers would be able to have input into the process.

The reason why George Schmidt was fired from his job is that he published these copyrighted pilot tests without the permission of the Chicago Public Schools. Schmidt received the test security policy at his school, that policy was reviewed for him and all teachers, and he made a decision to publish selected tests even after he knew the consequences.

The quality of the tests was never the issue. Because the 1998-99 school year was a pilot, these tests could not be categorized as high-stakes tests. During the 1999-2000 school year, the tests continued to be piloted to ensure input and to ensure that quality controls were being followed. Even in the current year, the exams make up only 10% of the students' semester grades and are not used as a major factor in high school accountability. The primary purpose of these exams is to assist teachers in determining whether they are successful in teaching to the Chicago Academic Standards in their classrooms.

It would have been appropriate for the *Kappan* to include this general information in the October issue. It would have been appropriate to note that there is a three- to five-year development period when new exams are produced. It would have been appropriate to note that these exams were "no stakes" exams during the pilot period. It would have been appropriate to note that these exams were written by teachers in Chicago high schools. It would have been appropriate to note that there is a crisis in urban high schools when it comes to teaching to high standards. It would have been appropriate to note that copyright laws are pretty clear when it comes to duplicating copyrighted material. It would have been appropriate to note that the issue of testing is a complex one and that simply being against high-stakes testing does not make one a hero. It would have been appropriate to note that giving high school teachers total freedom to determine curriculum and instructional technique on an individual basis is not a good thing for our students. And finally, it would have been appropriate to note that, since the introduction of standards-based instruction in Chicago's public high schools, the city's ACT scores have improved dramatically.

All of these issues could have been addressed. Instead, the *Kappan* chose simply to give voice to the same tired old story, implying that everyone who speaks out against assessments of any kind in our schools is a hero. — *Phil Hansen*, chief accountability officer, Chicago Public Schools.

We welcome comments on Kappan *articles. Address letters to Backtalk,* Phi Delta Kappan, *P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. Letters selected for publication may be edited for space and clarity. Please hold your comments to no more than 250 words. — The Editors*

The Author Responds

The sentences of Phil Hansen's lament lurch from point to point with no apparent concern for coherence or logic. This makes targeting a response difficult. But let me address a couple of specific points.

Hansen states that "the quality of the tests was never the issue." This is certainly true, although not in the sense that he means it. These were *always* poor tests.

Hansen states that the tests were piloted in 1998-99 and again in 1999-2000. He then reports on a number of things that he thinks "it would have been appropriate" to note. I think it is also appropriate to note that, if this is the best you can do after two years, you deserve to be ridiculed and fired.

Most of the questions are at best shallow, trivial-pursuit-type questions, and many can be answered independent of instruction. Consider just three examples: "What type of government depends MOST on its military to stay in power?" "Which literary term refers to the rhythmical pattern of a poem?" "People who study the objects of earlier civilizations are called . . . . "

But some questions are even worse: What major landforms are found in most of Europe? A) plateaus, B) plains, C) hills , D) mountains. Umm, what constitutes "most" of Europe? And what, pray tell, is the correct answer? Or take another: All of the following are part of a typical African woman's life in rural areas EXCEPT: A) preparing food, B) taking care of children, C) helping her husband grow cash crops, D) selling crops at the market. Chicago apparently teaches that "Africa" is an undifferentiated

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Backtalk

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whole. The 40-plus nations of that continent will be surprised. Or one more: "The alliance at the start of World War II, known as the Axis, included which countries?" The answer deemed "correct" is Germany, Italy, and Japan. But, of course, "at the start of World War II" — 1 September 1939 — Japan was more than two years away from entering the global conflict, and only Germany and Italy were referred to as "Axis powers." Bad history; bad question. And so forth.

Hansen calls these tests "standards-based." It would be appropriate to ask what kinds of standards the questions above might be based on. — *Gerald W. Bracey.*

KUDOS TO BRACEY

Gerald Bracey cannot get enough thanks for the work he is doing in uncovering what I call "selective perceptual displacement." By this phrase I mean that critics of public education selectively use carefully chosen data to create a negative perception of our public schools. Bracey is using his research and writing skills to expose those who would use inaccurate or distorted data to condemn an institution crucial to our culture. For his talent, his persistence, and his courage, I wish to thank Bracey for the objective work he has done in support of our public schools. — *James H. VanSciver,* director of secondary education, Seaford School District, Seaford, Del. ■

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EDUCATION

1967, Ph.D., Developmental Psychology, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

1962, A.B., Psychology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

HONORS

Brock International Prize in Education Nominee, 2002.

Outstanding Educator of 2001, The Horace Mann League, 2002.

First Distinguished Fellow, Agency for Instructional Technology, 1994-95.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2001-Present. Associate, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, Michigan. Write articles, review and develop proposals, critique manuscripts.

1995-1996. Executive Director, Alliance for Curriculum Reform.
Major Responsibilities: Provide leadership to the Alliance, coordinate activities of the Alliance and advocate Alliance positions.

1991-Present. Independent Consultant, Author, Speaker.
Major Responsibilities: Write articles and research reviews for professional and lay audiences. Consult for school systems, educational organizations, and private corporations. Speak to educators and others about assessment and the condition of public education. Conduct workshops on data analysis and statistics.

1991-91 Senior Policy Analyst, National Education Association, Washington, D. C.
Major Responsibilities: Develop policy in areas of Assessment, Early Childhood Education and Schools of Choice. Write book on assessment. Write monthly column on research applications to classrooms. Serve as liaison to Child Care Action Committee, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

1986-91 Director of Research and Evaluation, Cherry Creek Schools, Englewood, Colorado.

Major Responsibilities: Administer and interpret program of norm-referenced tests. Develop, administer and interpret program of criterion-referenced tests and performance assessments. Develop assessment and program capabilities in administrative and instructional staff. Conduct program evaluations. Act as liaison to District Accountability Committee. Recommend changes in instructional programs based on developments in research. Develop and administer budget.

1985-86 Special Assistant for Policy and Program Planning, Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, Virginia.

Major Responsibilities: Keep abreast of, analyze and synthesize research and programmatic trends in the various fields of education, psychology, sociology and information technology, likely to affect educational policy and practice. Analyze reform initiatives in other states for possible relevance to Virginia. Prepare reports, policy papers and programmatic recommendations.

1977-85 Director of Research, Evaluation and Testing, Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, Virginia.

Major Responsibilities: Supervise Testing, Research, Evaluation, Pilot Studies, Accreditation, School Evaluation and ESEA Title IV-C (Now Chapter 2) staffs. Develop, administer, and interpret a coherent program of statewide pupil norm-referenced and criterion-referenced pupil testing, including readiness and career development components. Develop and maintain working relationships with institutes of higher education, local school districts, the legislature and the general public with regard to the above supervised areas. Evaluate applications for the Pilot Studies and Title IV-C programs. Administer and periodically revise standards for accrediting elementary and secondary schools. Commission and conduct educational research and program evaluation. Develop and administer budget.

1974-75 Lecturer, University of Maryland, European Division.

Major Responsibilities: Teach courses in Introductory, Child, and Educational Psychology.

1973-77 In transit: An extended tour of Asia, Africa and Europe.

1972-73 Assistant Professor, Multi-Cultural Educational Development Program, School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Major Responsibilities: Teach courses on poverty and human development. Develop curriculum for the program. Supervise field experiences of students in urban and rural poverty settings.

1972-73 Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Young Children.

Major Responsibilities: Develop program. Supervise research of graduate students. Teach Interdisciplinary seminars.

1970-73 Assistant Professor, School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Major Responsibilities: Teach undergraduate and graduate courses in human development and educational psychology. Supervise research of undergraduate and graduate students.

1970-72 Associate Director, Institute for Child Study, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Major Responsibilities: Assist the Director in the Administration of the Institute. Prepare and administer budgets. Facilitate idea development among faculty and visiting scholars.

1970 Adjunct Professor, Trenton State University, Trenton, New Jersey.
Major Responsibilities: Teach introductory psychology.

1967-70 Associate Research Psychologist, Early Childhood Research Group, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.
Major Responsibilities: Conduct and evaluate research in the cognitive development of young children, particularly in the areas of memory and attention. Develop programs of research on economically deprived children.

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"Public Schools: A Good Buy." *School Business Affairs*, November, 1995.

"The Fifth Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education." *Phi Delta Kappan*, October, 1995.

"International Comparisons in Spending." *Rethinking Schools*, Summer, 1995.

"The Right's Data-Proof Ideologues." *Education Week,* January 25, 1995.

"America's World Class Mathematics Students (and its Third World Mathematics Students)," *InterEd,* Winter, 1994.

"The Dim Shinings of International Comparisons," in John J. Lane, (Ed.), *Ferment in Education: A Look Abroad.* Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1995.

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"Meta-Analysis: An Introduction." In *User's Guide to Metastat.* Chevy Chase, MD: LMP Associates, 1994.

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"A Critical Look at Standards and Assessments." *Principal*, January, 1994.

"The New Technology: Some non-Traditional Definitions." *America's Agenda*, November, 1993.

"A Continuous Progress Educational System," *Focus on Education*, The New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993, Fall, 1993.

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"Testing The Tests: What Is Authentic Assessment?" *The High School Magazine*, December, 1993.

"The Third Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October, 1993.

"Learning From Other Countries," A review of Richard P. McAdams,' *Lessons From Abroad,* American School Boards Journal, November, 1993.

"George Will's Urban Legend," *Education Week*, September 29, 1993.

"Marching to a Different Computer," A review of Seymour Papert's *The Children's Machine. The Washington Post,* August 1, 1993.

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"International Competitiveness In School and Out: A New Look," *American School Board Journal*, June, 1993.

"Growing a Middle School From Scratch," *High Strides*, June/July, 1993.

"Productivity With Humanity: The Long-term Impact of Personal Computers in the Classroom," *Electronic Learning*, April, 1993 (Special Edition).

"School Is In," a review of Lewis J. Perelman's *School's Out, Electronic Learning*, May, 1993.

"Assessing the New Assessments," *Principal*, January, 1993.

"Standards for Whom? A Reply To Harold Stevenson," *Educational Leadership*, February, 1993.

"How To Tell If the New Assessments Measure Up," *Instructor Magazine*, November/December, 1992.

Person-fit statistics: Much Promise, Much Research Needed." *ERIC TM Digest*, December, 1992 (with Lawrence Rudner).

"What Research and Assessment Data Say About the State of Our Schools," *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice.* Winter, 1992.

"Good Schools, Bad Schools: Who's Right?" *National School Public Relations Association Network*, November, 1992.

"The Second Bracey Report On The Condition of Public Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October, 1992.

"Technology, Falling SAT Scores, and the Transformation of Consciousness," *Technos Quarterly*, Fall, 1992.

"Billiards, Bubbles and Better Tests," *Teacher Magazine*, October, 1992.

"Multimedia's Bright Future," *Educational Technology*, September, 1992.

"Cut Out Algebra!," *The Washington Post*, June 12, 1992.

"*Life With the SAT: Assessing Young People and Our Times*, by George Hanford. A review, *Journal of Higher Education*, March/April, 1992.

"Inching Towards National Standards," *America's Agenda*, Spring, 1992.

"Multimedia in Students Hands: Creating One's Own Understandings." *Technology and Learning*, April, 1992.

"How Bad Are Our Schools?" *Principal*, March 1992.

"Why Can't They Be Like We Were?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1991. Now known as "The First Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education.

"The Greatly Exaggerated Death of Our Schools." *The Washington Post*, May 5, 1991.

"The Big Lie About Education." *The Denver Post*, February, 1991.

"International Comparisons in Math and Science Don't Compute." *Rocky Mountain News*, February, 9, 1991.

"You Can't Tell the States Without a Report Card." *Agenda*, Spring, 1991.

"Alternative Assessment." *Agenda*, Spring 1991.

"National Standards, Local Tests?" *Agenda*, Spring, 1991.

"SAT Scores: Miserable or Miraculous?" *Education Week*, November 21, 1990.

"Culture and Cognition." *Excellence in Teaching*, Fall 1990.

"Do Admissions Officers Fail the SAT?" *College and University*, Fall, 1990.

"Rethinking School and University Roles." *Educational Leadership*, May, 1990.

"The Vain Search for 'The Basics.'" *Excellence in Teaching*, Spring, 1990.

"Why So Much Education Research is Irrelevant, Imitative, and Ignored." *American School Board Journal*, July, 1989.

"The $150 Million Redundancy: An Essay-Review of *The Case Against the SAT*." *Phi Delta Kappan*, May, 1989.

"Advocates of Basic Skills 'Know What Ain't So.'" *Education Week*, April 5, 1989.

"Educational Assessment." *Viewpoint*, Fall, 1988.

"Testing, Testing, Testing." (Eight part series). Cherry Creek Schools, Englewood, Colorado, January, 1988.

"The Muddles of Measurement Driven Instruction." *Phi Delta Kappan*, May, 1987.

"The Time Has Come To Abolish Research Journals: Too Many Are Writing Too Much About Too Little." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 25, 1987.

"Without a Cultural Language, We're All Mutes." *Rocky Mountain News*, March 23, 1987.

"The Impact of Testing on the Learning Process." In, *Testing in the Admissions Process*. New York: The College Board, 1986.

"Pandora and Pollyanna: Some Comments on 'Teacher Testing: The Rush to Mandate'" (by Gregory Anrig). *Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1986.

"The World In Bits and Pieces." *Newsweek*, October 28, 1985.

ETS As Big Brother: An Essay Review of *None of the Above*." *Phi Delta Kappan*, September, 1985.

"A Personal List of Favorite Computer Books." *Electronic Learning*, December, 1985.

"SAT Software Preparation Packages: Worth the Money?" *Electronic Learning*, September, 1985.

"On the Compelling Need To Go Beyond Minimum Competence." *Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 1983.

"CAI Effectiveness: What the Research Says." *Electronic Learning*, November, 1982.

"The Virginia Experience." In Nick L. Smith and Darrel N. Cauley (Eds.), *The Interaction of Evaluation and Policy: Case Reports from State Educational Agencies*. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

"Computers in the Classroom." *Public Education in Virginia*, Spring, 1981.

Standardized Testing and the Teacher. (With Sharon Hoover). Dansville, New York: Instructor Press, 1981.

"The SAT, College Admissions and the Concept of Talent: Unexamined Myths, Unexplained Perceptions, Needed Explorations." *Phi Delta Kappan*, December, 1980.

"On the Uses and Uselessness of Testing." Richmond *Times Dispatch*, June, 1980.

"Some Reservations About Minimum Competency Testing." *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 1978.

"Two Operations in Character Recognition: A Partial Replication." *Perception and Psychophysics*, 1969, *6*, pp. 356-360.

"Learning, Memory and Attention. In *Disadvantaged Children and Their First School Experiences: Theory and Methodology*." Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1969.

RECENT SPEECHES

Since 1997, I have stopped logging speeches. I give 25 or so a year, mostly on the condition of public education in the United States, but also on various topics such as testing, charter schools, and vouchers.

"Are we Preparing Our Students for Jobs that Won't Exist?" Jobs of the Future Conference, New Orleans, August 1, 1997.

"The Greatly Exaggerated Death of Our Schools." Variants delivered in about 150 locations since early 1992.

"Countering Disinformation About Schools." Delivered as a Phi Delta Kappan workshop in about 35 cities since fall, 1992.

"Statistics for People Who Hate Statistics." Delivered as an American Association of School Administrators Workshop in ten locations since fall, 1994.

"The Bracey and Sandia Reports: Four Years Later." Annual Council of Chief State School Officers Assessment Conference, Albuquerque, NM, June 15, 1994).

"Data, Data Everywhere: What's a School Board Member to Do?" Minneapolis School Boards Association, Bloomington, MN, August 13, 1993.

"Looking in on Our Schools." Tennessee Technological University, Cookevile, TN, August 10, 1993.

"What's Right With American Education?" Georgia Association of Educational Leaders, Jekyll Island, GA, July 20, 1993.

"Building on Strengths." California School Boards Association, Monterey, CA, July 18, 1993.

"In Support of Our Schools: A New Look at the Data." Wisconsin School Boards Association, Madison, WI, July 16, 1993.

"In Support of Our Schools: Interpreting the Data." A Phi Delta Kappa Professional Development Workshop, Chicago, Boston, and Tallahassee, Orlando, Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Richmond, November, 1992-April, 1993.

"A Story At Risk: Education in the Eyes of the Media." State University of New York, Albany, April 22, 1992.

"Data, Schools and Crisis," Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, April 21, 1993.

"Reinterpreting the Condition of Education," Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools, April 20, 1993.

"The True Crisis in Education," University of Delaware, Newark, DE., February 25, 1993.

"Making Sense of Data About Schools" Maryland State Board of Education, Baltimore, February 24, 1993.

"What the Data Say About School Performance," Washington, DC Metro Area School Superintendents Group, January, 1993.

"The State of Education and Its Implications for National Standards," Woman's National Democratic Club, Washington, DC, November 16, 1992.

Performance Testing: Its Nature, Uses and Limitations," Iroquois School District, Buffalo, NY, October 22, 1992.

"Schools and Society," Junior Achievement, Colorado Springs, July 9, 1992.

"Schools, Data and Public Relations," National School Public Relations Association, Atlanta, GA, July 7, 1992.

"Schools and International Competitiveness: The Missing Links," a debate with Dennis Doyle, Colorado Springs, June 18, 1992.

"School Achievement: New Data on National and International Comparisons," Dean's Invitation Conference, Arizona State University, Sedona, Arizona, June 15, 1992.

"The Greatly Exaggerated Death of Our Schools." Symposium presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 21, 1992. With Diane Ravitch and Lauren Resnick as respondents.

What's Right With Our Schools?" Keynote Address, University of Indiana Spring Conference, Bloomington, IN, April 15, 1992.

"The Condition of Education," Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, April 10, 1992.

"Are Our Schools Really As Bad As *They* Say?" A debate with Diane Ravitch, Education Writers Association, Miami, FL, April 3, 1992.

"The Greatly Exaggerated Death of Our Schools," Princeton City (Ohio), Public Schools, Cincinnati, OH, February 26, 1992.
"The Condition of Education," York (PA) Public Schools, York, PA, March 18, 1992.

"A Re-Examination of Public Education," Virginia Educational Research Association, Richmond, VA February 7, 1992.

"Desirable Qualities of Authentic Assessment," North Carolina Testing Conference, Greensboro, January 28, 1992.

"A Re-Examination of Public Education," North Carolina Testing Conference, January 28, 1992.

Ethical Concerns About the Federal Research Program, Commission on Educational Development and Research, Washington, DC, November 29, 1991.

How Bad Are Our Schools? Forum of Educational Organization Leaders, Washington, DC, November 18, 1991.

Issues and Data Concerning School Choice. NEA Inter-Unit Committee on School Choice, October 12, 1991.

Perspectives on American Education. The Annual Education Commission of the States Conference on Assessment, Breckenridge, Colorado, June 15, 1991.

The Condition of Education, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO, April 22, 1991.

Measurement Integrated Assessment. Colorado Association of School Executives, Denver, Pueblo, Durango and Fort Morgan, Colorado, April 2-6, 1991.

Authentic Assessment, Association of Colorado Education Evaluators, Golden, Colorado, March 23, 1991.

1990

Teachers As Researchers, Association of Colorado Education Evaluators, November 20, 1990.

Reinventing School. Virginia Polytechnic and State University, Blacksburg, VA, November, 1990.

1989

Standardized Tests: Their Nature, Their Problems, Their Replacements. Invited Address sponsored by eight professional educational associations, Englewood, Colorado.

Alternatives To Standardized Testing. Association of Colorado Education Evaluators, Castle Rock, CO.

School Reform and the Reform of Assessment. Colorado Partnership for Educational Renewal, Denver, CO.

1988

Fatal Attraction: Tests and Accountability. Invited address, annual Conference of Nebraska School Boards Association and Nebraska Association of School Administrators, Omaha, NE.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Consultant, Fairfax County Schools, 1996-.

First Distinguished Fellow, Agency for Information Technology, Bloomington, IN., September 1, 1994-June 30, 1995.

Editorial Board, *Learning and Individual Differences*, 1992-.

Editorial Board, *Educational Assessment*, 1992-.

Editorial Board, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 1984-86.

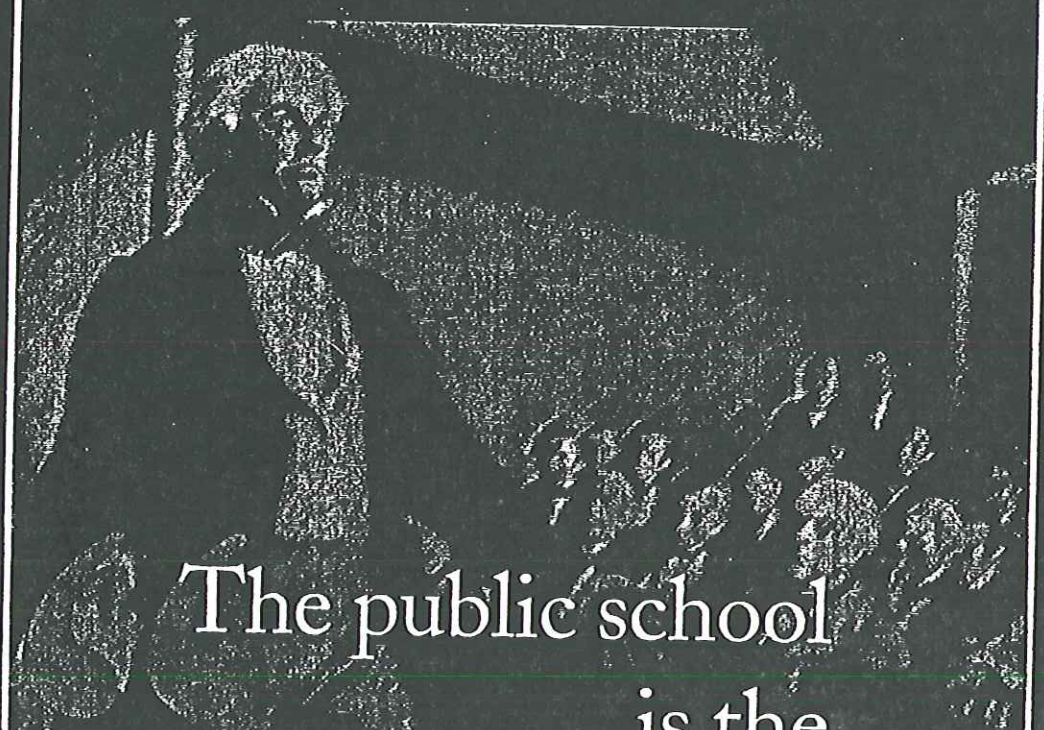
Member, National Steering Committee, Second International Study of Computer Use, University of Minnesota, 1991-.

Consultant, Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri, 1992.

Consultant, American Association of School Administrators, 1992-.

Consultant, Touchstone Applied Science Associates, Brewster, NY, 1992.

Consultant, The Galef Institute, Los Angeles, CA, 1992-1994.



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