Vito Perrone

Nominated by

Linda F. Nathan

Portfolio for Vito Perrone nomination
For Brock International Prize in Education

1) Biography of Perrone
2) CV for Perrone
3) Celebration of Vito Perrone, Linda Nathan
4) Letters of support:
   - Lowell Thompson, University of N. Dakota
   - Ivan Dahl, University of N. Dakota
   - Joseph Featherstone, Michigan State
   - Jerome Murphy, Harvard
   - Hubert Dyasi, City College
   - Deborah Meier, Mission Elementary School
   - Ted Sizer, Coalition of Essential Schools
   - Francisco Guajardo, University of Texas

5) Excerpt from Letter to Teachers, ch. 11 pp. 120-130
6) Excerpt from Teacher with a Heart pp. 45-49
7) "Toward a Profession of Hope," speech given by Perrone upon his retirement from teacher education at Harvard.

Short Biography of Vito Perrone,
Prepared and written by Eleanor Duckworth, professor
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Vito Perrone has said that teaching is essentially a moral and intellectual endeavor. Those same adjectives characterize his life and work.

Vito Perrone started teaching in 1954 and has never stopped. He continued to teach high school history classes even as he became assistant and associate professor, at Northern Michigan University, and professor of history and dean of education at the University of North Dakota. He continued to teach over 100 preservice teachers even as he directed Harvard's teacher education program and served as department chair. And as administrator, consultant, advisor, founder--in endless numbers of organizations--his stance has been in large part that of a teacher.

And there have been many such roles, among them: Vice President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; President of the National consortium on Testing; board chairman of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students; founding director of the American Indian College Fund; Principal Investigator and Director of Research on the Annenberg Rural Challenge; co-chair of the board of the Fenway School; coordinator of the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation.

His books and other writings are practical and inspirational, critical and hopeful, accessible and profound.

Though he is trained as an historian, his work is deepened and strengthened by its rootedness in issues of the contemporary world. While Professor of History and Education at the University of North Dakota, he was also Professor of Peace Studies. While Director of Teacher Education at Harvard University he spent much time recruiting and finding funds for students of color. He served as principal consultant to the Immigrant Children Study of the National Coalition of Advocates for students, before becoming the Coalition's board chairman. As co-founder and coordinator for 30 years of the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation -- a national body despite its name - he kept the group connected with economic and political issues which education can never neglect.

VITO PERRONE
Harvard Graduate School of Education
224 Longfellow Hall, Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-7748

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. 1963 Michigan State University (History, Education)

M.A. 1958 Michigan State University (History, Education)

B.A. 1954 Michigan State University (History, Social Science)

FULL-TIME POSITIONS:

1988-Present Member of the Learning and Teaching Faculty, Harvard University, and Senior Fellow, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

1986-88 Vice President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

1980-81 Visiting Professor, Harvard University

1972-86 Professor of History, Education and Peace Studies, Dean, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota

1968-72 Professor of History, Dean of the New School of Behavioral Studies in Education, University of North Dakota

1965-68 Associate Professor of History and Education, Dean of Common Learning (1966-68), Dean of Graduate Studies (1967-68), Northern Michigan University

1962-65 Assistant Professor of History and Education, Northern Michigan University

1957-62 Teacher, Lansing Public Schools

1956-57 Teacher, Warren Fitzgerald Schools

1954-56 1st Lt., U.S. Army (Infantry, Communications)

PUBLICATIONS (Selected):

Lesson for New Teachers, McGraw-Hill, August 1999

Reflections on Leonard Covello: A Teacher With a Heart, Teachers College Press, September 1998.

"Reflections on Teaching: Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn", Teachers College Record, Summer, 1997.

"Generative Topics for Process Curriculum" (with Benna Kallick) in Supporting the Spirit of Learning: When Process is Content (edited by Arthur Costa and Rosemary Leiberman), Sage, February 1997.

"Why Do We Need a Pedagogy of Understanding", (opening chapter of Teaching for Understanding, edited by Martha Wiske, Jossey-Bass, Fall 1997).

"How can We Prepare New Teachers to Teach for Understanding?" (Chapter 10, Teach for Understanding, edited by Martha Wiske, Jossey-Bass, Fall 1997.

"Secondary School Teacher Education." Handbook on Research in Teacher Education, MacMillan, 1995 (with Rob Traver).

"Barriers to Adventurous Teaching in the Humanities" Occasional Paper, American Council of Learned Societies, Spring 1995.

"The Collaborative Spirit in Historical Perspective." On Common Ground, Yale, Summer 1994.

"How to Engage Students in Learning." Educational Leadership, February 1994

101 Conversations with Your Child (A Series of Books for Parents), Chelsea House, 1992-94.

"Learning for Life: When do we Begin?", Equity and Excellence, University of Massachusetts, Summer 1993

Expanding Student Assessment (Editor), ASCD, Washington, D.C., 1991.

A Letter to Teachers, Jossey-Bass 1991.

"Learning from Biographies," introductory essay, The Chelsea House Library of Biography (to be a series of 100 biographies), NY, 1991, forward.

On Standardized Testing, Position Paper for The Association of Childhood Education International, Washington, D.C., 1991 (In Childhood Education, Spring 1991) Reprinted in

Education Digest, Winter 1991, and in Annual Editions, 1992.

The Good Common School (Contributing author), National Coalition of Advocates for Students, Boston, MA, 1991.

"Large Purposes," in Progressive Education for a New Century, (Ed. Kathe Jervis and Carol Montag), Teachers College Press, 1991.

"Testing, Teachers and Schools," in The Prices of Secrecy: The Social, Intellectual and Psychological Costs of Current Assessment Practice, (Judah Schwartz and Katherine Viator, Eds., ETC, Cambridge, MA, 1990.

"Grace Rotzel and the School in Rose Valley," Bulletin, The School in Rose Valley, Swarthmore, PA, Fall 1990.

"How Did We Get Here?" in Achievement Testing in the Early Grades (Ed. Constance Kamii) NAEYC, 1990.

Publications (Selected), continued

"Scholarship in a Centennial Year," Insights, November 1989.

Working Papers: Reflections on Teaching, Schools, and Communities, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1989.

"What Should Schools Teach? Issues of Process and Content," Insights, December 1988.

Fulfilling the Promises of Reform, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Fall 1988.

"Teacher Education and Progressivism," in Education for Democracy (Kathe Jervis and Arthur Tobier, Eds.) The Cambridge School, 1988.

Guest Editor, North Dakota Quarterly, "Visions of Peace," Winter 1988.

"The Discovery of the Early Years," High Scope Education Foundation, Spring 1988.

"Ways and Words: A Tribute to Lillian Weber," Insights, May 1987.

"Thinking About Schools--1986," in Learning About Learning, Indiana Department of Education, 1986 and Education 1986, ECS, Spring 1987.

"Peace Studies," Insights, February 1986.

Joanna Knudsen Miller: A North Dakota Pioneer Teacher, North Dakota Historical Society, 1985.

"The Prospect School at Twenty Years," Insights, Spring 1985.

"Educational Equity," Insights, May 1985 and Challenge and Responsibility, ASCD, 1987.

Portraits of High Schools (Ed.), Carnegie Foundation, Princeton University Press, Winter 1984.

"Reflections on Computers, Schools, and Classrooms," Journal of Computer Education, Fall 1984.

"The Testing Maze," Family Learning, Fall 1984.

"Merit Schools," North Dakota Legislative Research Council, Fall, 1983 and North Dakota Journal of Education, Spring 1984.

Publications (Selected), continued

"Schools and Critics," Grand Forks Herald, November 13, 1983 and Dimensions, Fall 1983.

"North Dakota's High School Requirements: A Rationale and Recommendations," North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, August 1983.

The University of North Dakota: Entering a Second Century, the University of North Dakota Report to the North Central Association, August 1983.

"Progressive Education: A Critical Legacy in Conservative America," Reunion, Reaffirmation and Resurgence, Windflower, 1983.

"Effective Schools: A Critique," Insights, April 1983 and Outlook, Fall 1983.

Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota: Highlights of a Century-Long History, University of North Dakota Centennial, 1982.

"Classroom Monitoring and Assessment," Basic Skills: Issues and Choices, National Institute of Education, 1982.

Monograph series on "High School Students and Work," Bureau

of Educational Research and Services, Fall 1981.

"Testing, Testing, and More Testing," Childhood Education, December 1981.

"Truth in Testing," Insights, October 1980.

"Education in the '80s," National Elementary Principal, Spring 1980. Reprinted in the Journal for Teaching and Learning, Fall 1980.

"Competency Testing: A Social and Historical Perspective," Educational Horizons, October 1979.

"How Not To Improve Educational Achievement: A Response to the National Academy of Education," National Elementary Principal, January 1979. Reprinted in Ed. Digest, October 1979.

"Discussion Paper: General Education Requirements," University of North Dakota, Spring 1979.

Publications (Selected), continued

"Evaluation of Students in Medical Schools: An Outsider's Perspective," Evaluation in Medical Schools, University of North Dakota Medical School and UND Press, May 1979.

"Graduate Teacher Education: An 'Upbeat' View," ERIC Monograph on Graduate Teacher Education, Spring 1979.

"Basic Skills and Higher Education," The North Dakota Task Force on Basic Skills and the North Dakota Board of Higher Education.

"College Admissions: A Perspective," National Forum of the College Board, 1978.

"Competency Education: 'Doing Something About the Schools,'" North Dakota State Department of Public Instruction, 1979; City College Notes, May 1979.

Final Report: Staff Development Project, National Institute of Education, Fall 1977, placed in ERIC System (Research 1973-77).

"The Teacher as Researcher," Childhood Education, May 1978.

"Standardized Testing: Which Way?" North Dakota Journal of Education, October 1977.

An Evaluation Report of the North Dakota Indian Language Studies Program: In The Schools (with Janet Ahler, October 1978 (for NEH).

"Documenting Teaching and Learning," Social Policy, September/October 1977.

Social Conflicts and Fine Arts, The American Indian Curricula Development Program for Grades 9-12: An Evaluation (with Janet Ahler), United Tribes of North Dakota, 1977.

"Documentation: A Source for Personal/Professional Learning and Staff Development," Insights, April 1977. Reprinted in Educational Measurement, Ontario Institute, Spring 1977.

"A View of School Reform," in Roots of Open Education, City College, 1977.

Follow Through: An Implementation Review (with Ursula Simonson, Jeanne Campbell and Richard Landry), U.S. Office of Education, 1976.

Publications (Selected), continued

Abuses of Standardized Tests, Phi Delta Kappan Foundation, 1977.

"Interview with Grace Carlson," Journal of Teaching and Learning, August 1976.

Two Elementary Classrooms: Views from the Teachers, Parents and Children, Kendall-Hunt, 1976.

Does Accountability Count Without Teacher Support: An Assessment of the Kalamazoo Accountability System (with Michael Patton and Barbara French), National Education Association, Michigan Education Association, Kalamazoo Education Association, 1976.

New Views on Testing (Coord.), Association for Childhood Education, 1975.

"Students of Teaching," City College Notes, Spring 1977.

"Teacher Oriented Staff Development," Today's Education, November/December 1976.

"On Standardized Testing and Evaluation: A Position Paper," Childhood Education, October 1976. Reprinted in Our Weekly Reader: Teachers Edition, Spring 1977.

"The American Issues Forum: A Bicentennial Program," North Dakota Social Studies Bulletin, Fall 1975.

"A Perspective on the Sector Analysis of Ecuadorian Education," Bulletin of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 1975.

"Alternatives to Standardized Testing," National Elementary Principal, August/September 1976. Reprinted in Education Digest, January 1976, North Dakota School Board Journal, Spring 1976, Citizens Action in Education, Spring 1976, Ed Review, British Columbia, Spring 1976, Manitoba Administration Bulletin, Fall 1976, Insights, January 1976, The Myth of Measurability, Hart Publishers, 1977.

"A Follow-up Study of Students in Open Classrooms," Insights, May 1976.

"Parents and School," Primary Learning, Association for Childhood Education, 1974.

"Open Education: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going," Insights, November 1974. Reprinted in City College Notes, Winter and Spring, 1974-75.

Publications (Selected), continued

"Another Look at Open Education: An Essay Review," The Review of Education, Fall 1974.

"A Starting Point for Curriculum Development," (with Lowell Thompson), Clearing House, February 1974.

"Report from North Dakota," in Evaluation Reconsidered, City College, 1973.

"Valuing Diversity," Childhood Education, November 1973.

"Getting It All Together," Chapter I, New Views of School and Community, National Association of Elementary School Principals/Association for Childhood Education, 1973.

"Some Fresh Ideas for Upgrading our Elementary Schools," Life, October 20, 1972.

"Accessibility to Schools," North Dakota Journal of Education, Spring 1972.

Open Education: Promise and Problems, Phi Delta Kappan Foundation, 1972.

"Parents and Schools," The Administrator's Quarterly, February 1972.

"Parents as Educational Participants," The Urban Review, November 1971.

"Teachers for Change," The Administrator's Quarterly, October 1971.

"Social Studies in Open Classrooms," April 1972 Elementary Education Supplement, Social Education and reprinted in Readings in Elementary Social Studies, MacMillan, 1972.

"A Perspective on Accountability," (with Warren Strandberg). Columbia Teachers College Record, Fall 1971. Reprinted in Accountability for Educational Results, Linnett, 1972.

"The New School," (with Warren Strandberg), The Elementary School Journal, May 1971. Reprinted in Education Digest, October 1971; also included in Education for 1980, University of Nebraska Press, 1971 and A Source Book on Open Education, Bantam Books, 1972.

"Preparing Teachers for the Open Classrooms," ETMR, May 10, 1971.

Publications (Selected), continued

"Toward an Open Classroom," ETMR, April 12, 1971.

"Preparing Teachers for Changing Conditions in Schools," New York Times Education Supplement, January 11, 1971.

"A Perspective on Evaluation," College of Education Record, August 1970.

"The Changing Role of the Teacher," Chapter 2, Learning Centers: Children on Their Own, Association for Childhood Education, 1970.

"Unifying and Integrating Teacher Preparation," (with Clara Pederson), Minnesota Reading Quarterly, May 1970.

A Pilot Project in International Education, (with Paul Orr), University of Alabama Monograph, 1969.

"Changes in Higher Education," Proceedings, 23rd Annual Meeting, North Dakota Council on Education, North Dakota State Department of Public Instruction, 1969.

"A Time to Learn and a Time to Teach," Bulletin, North Dakota Elementary School Principals Association, Spring 1969.

"A Perspective on Education," College of Education Record, May, 1969.

"Beyond North Dakota," Proceedings, National Seminar for State Education Planners, Mankato State Press, November 1968.

"Education: A Constant Source of Invention," North Dakotan, September 1968.

"The New World Glitter," Humanities, K-12, May 1967.

Image of Latin America: A Study of American School Textbooks and School Children, Grades Two Through Twelve, (U.S.O.E. S-070, Northern Michigan University, 1965).

"The Problem of Understanding in Inter-American," Hispania, March 1965.

"The Dilemma Of Oversimplification," Clearing House, September 1964.

SELECSELECTED FORMAL PRESENTATIONS/LECTURES:

Presentations have been made over the past several years to a variety of groups including school boards, school board associations, teacher associations, principal associations, community organizations, state legislative committees, professional organizations, and college and universities. Major contributions have been made to the following:

American Educational Research Association, Massachusetts Education Association, Michigan Education Association, North Dakota Education Association, California Education Association, North Dakota School Board's Association, North Dakota and Minnesota Elementary Principal's Associations, Association for Student Teachers (now ATE), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Nebraska Education Association, National Education

Association Education for the 70's Project, United Federation of Teachers Annual Convention, National Elementary Principals Association, Northern Plains Historical Conference, American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, Denver Urban League, Boston School Supervisors Symposium, Center for Urban Education Seminar Series, National Commission for UNESCO Seminar Series, national and regional conferences regarding TTT and COP (U.S. Office of Education programs), National Conference
of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Department of Health, Education and Welfare National Conference on Testing, MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, American Council of Liberal Arts Colleges, New York State Department of Education, Minnesota Council of the Arts, University of North Dakota Medical School, Mayville State College, Minot State College, Dickinson State College, North Dakota State University, Moorhead State University, Mankato State University, University of Colorado, California State College-Fullerton, University of Louisville, University of Alabama, University of Illinois, University of Massachusetts-Boston, City College of New York, Columbia University, Yale, University of New Hampshire, University of Minnesota, University of Wisconsin, Central Michigan University, University of Arkansas, University of Nebraska, Michigan State University, University of New Mexico, Harvard University, Lesley College, Bank Street College, University of Michigan, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of California-Berkeley, Swarthmore, University of Pennsylvania, Virginia Tech, New School of Social Research.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (Selected):

Membership in American Historical Association, National Council for the Social Studies, Conference on Peace Research, Phi Delta Kappa, Association for Childhood Education.

Member of Board, Founding Director, American Indian College Fund

Principal Consultant to Immigrant Children Study, National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985-present.

Contributing Editor, North Dakota Quarterly, 1988-present.

Chair of Board, National Coalition of Advocates for Children, 1995-present.

Co-chair, Fenway Board, 1991-present.

Coordinator, University of North Dakota Center for Peace Studies, 1980-86.

Boardmember, National Board of Inquiry, National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1983-85.

Board of Directors, Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1983-present.

Coordinator, Boston Superintendent Search, December 1980-June 1981.

Coordinator and designer, Field Studies, Carnegie Study on the Early Years.

Coordinator and designer, Field Studies, Carnegie Study on the High School. This project resulted in a book published in the Fall of 1982. This project also provided the basic data for the Carnegie Report.

Chairperson, Association for Childhood Education Committee on Teacher Education.

Member, North Dakota Task Force on Basic Skills, 1977-86.

Evaluator, North Central Association, 1973-86.

Director, National Endowment for the Humanities Institute on Western and Local History, 1976-77 and World Civilizations, 1994-97.

National Planning Committee, American Issues Forum, 1974-75.

Contributing Editor, Urban Review, 1974-80 and Teaching Political Science, 1974-82.

Publications Advisor, National Elementary Principal, 1974-76.

Other Professional Activities (Selected), continued

President, National Consortium on Testing, 1974-82.

Coordinator, North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, 1972-present.

Director, Trainers of Teacher Trainers Program, 1968-72.

Member, U.S. Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Preparation of Teachers, 1972-76.

Member, Ford Foundation Study Commission on Teacher Education and Licensing, 1970-71.

Director, NDEA Institute in American History, 1966.

Director, Joint Northern Michigan University-American Historical Association Workshop in American History, 1965.

President, Northern Michigan University Faculty Organization, 1965-67.

Chairman, Northern Michigan University Faculty Senate, 1964-67.

Representative to the Michigan State Council of Academic Senates, 1964-68.

Member, Advisory Council to Michigan State Board of Education for the Development of a State Plan for Higher Education, 1966-68.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Married
Seven children
DOB: 4/26/33 Bath, Michigan

06/95

Celebration of Vito Perrone
February 14, 2003
By: Linda Nathan

I first met Vito in 1985. He was in Boston to give a talk at Harvard, and, as part of his itinerary, he wanted to visit a school. We showed him around Fenway High School, where I was co-director, and he sat in on our bi-weekly Social Issues meeting.

The discussion was heated that day. There was lots of complaining about why the students didn't do homework. Vito listened intently. Then, quietly, he asked, "Why do you give homework?"

We sat there for a moment, stunned by the question. Then a burst of loud objections. "Homework is like eating your vegetables," said one teacher. "It's good for you."

Vito persisted: "But if no one is doing it, how is it helping anyone?"

Students have to do homework, we cried. That's what school is about. Teachers teach. Students do homework.

Vito's simple question had thrown us for a loop. We had been stuck on the surface, asking why the kids don't do the homework. Vito's quiet "Why?" exposed deep layers of discussion and debate that we had never delved into. What purpose does homework serve? How is that purpose connected with your curriculum? How is your curriculum connected to the way you think about students and teaching and learning? How is that thinking reflected in your mission?

And because Vito is Vito, he didn't just lob in that question and then leave. He promised to return and help us think through these hard issues. It was the beginning of a rigorous and stimulating process for our school: to define who we were and who we wanted to become.

For at least fifteen years Vito was our coach, our cheerleader, and sometimes our strongest defender. As co-chair of Fenway's Board, he helped us think through whether we wanted to be a charter school or a pilot school within the Boston Public Schools system. We chose the latter.

Every year we had our pre-Thanksgiving retreat here at Harvard with Vito presiding. He always opened the meeting. He would frame the issues and situate our work in the broader context of education reform.

Those retreats were often grueling. We would raise troubling issues with no obvious solutions. Teachers were upset and angry. Nothing, it seemed, had been accomplished.

I called Vito after one of these retreats. It was the night before Thanksgiving. "It was a disaster," I told him. "I feel like such a failure."

He listened, patiently, as he always did. "You raised good questions," he reminded me. "In fact," he said, "the questions were even more complex than last year's."

"But Vito, why do I feel so bad?"

He reminded me again that the "work" wasn't mine alone. I was not responsible, he said, for making everyone feel good in one day. I *was* responsible for guiding, listening, and probing—and helping frame better and better questions so that we could, as a group, find better and better answers.

I remember when Vito suggested that we have an exchange program between Fenway and Central Park East Secondary School in New York. I had never heard of the school. Soon I had CPESS teachers staying in my house, and I was farming out 7th and 8th graders from New York to various families in Boston. This was an important moment in Fenway's development. Over the years we shared ideas on curriculum, on how to design advisories, and on graduation by portfolio.

Then Vito gently suggested that we might want to visit Ann Cook's Urban Academy to see how they organized curriculum. We had just begun experimenting with Project Week at Fenway. Again, Vito's little suggestion turned us on our heads. We wondered why we didn't have Project Year instead of just Project Week.

When Vito suggested that I join him in Chicago for a conference called the NDSG, it didn't even occur to me to ask what it was. I just said, "I'd love to!" My two oldest children were quite young at the time. Vito became known as "the man who takes Mommy to Chicago."

What an amazing experience that was. I had read about Lillian Weber. But to meet her and hear her talk—and to hear Pat Carini speak—when I got home I couldn't stop talking about it. How did Vito manage to pull so many wonderful and thoughtful people together in one place? I thought he had done it all for me. Before that trip to Chicago I was being sucked into the black hole of the Boston Public Schools. I came away from that meeting totally energized and committed to sticking it out in Boston. Because of that one meeting, I felt change was within reach, and that I had comrades all across the country willing to help, to strategize, and to share solutions.

Vito showed us that no school is an island. We had to reach out and collaborate with like-minded colleagues. When Fenway was almost forced to close in the late 80s it was Vito, among others, who helped us develop strategies to remain vibrant and grow stronger.

Later, Vito was instrumental in helping Larry Myatt and me to found Boston's Center for Collaborative Education and secure initial funding. Of course, he was a founding board member. Vito is not the type to start something and then walk away.

During one of our heated school conversations around 1990 Vito asked if I had considered taking time to reflect on and write about my work. I looked at him blankly. I didn't have time to *do* the work, let alone *think* about it. He suggested that I apply for Harvard's doctoral program. It would give me a chance, he said, to develop a more critical eye towards educational research, as well as a "time-out" to think about my own practice.

I don't think he realized how much time he was going to have to spend persuading me that I could actually write a dissertation. He guided my research which focused on teacher understanding of portfolio assessment practices. When I wanted to give up, he was there to encourage me.

Vito was my adviser at Harvard. As he coached me with my writing, I began to see the flaws in my own work with student writers. At times, Vito actually edited my writing line by line. I asked him about that. He replied, "How will you learn what sounds better, or what makes an argument clear, if I don't show you?" He never saw it as a weakness that I was still a developing writer. Vito's coaching made me to think about how we "correct" student work and what we think of as "helpful." In being Vito's student, I became a better teacher. I always say that Vito taught me how to write. He also made me promise to keep writing—a nearly impossible task, as you know. Nevertheless, I'm still writing today because of Vito.

In 1997 I was given the chance to start a school from scratch—the Boston Arts Academy. Vito was one of the first people I called. Was I ready to leave Fenway? Was Fenway ready for me to leave? As always, Vito listened and listened. He knew Fenway was in great shape. He knew, probably even before I did, that I was ready for a new challenge, and that my heart had always been in the arts. He encouraged me.

Many of the founding Boston Arts Academy faculty had been students of Vito's or had known Vito from their work at Fenway. During our first months, Vito invited us to participate in a seminar with Pat Carini, a dozen other educators and him. Learning and practicing the descriptive review process was a wonderful way to begin our school.

We continued the Fenway tradition of the pre-Thanksgiving retreat by having lunch with Vito. I wanted my young teachers to know him. As always, Vito listened and probed. How would we build our school culture? What was essential to all of us? To the parents? To the students? What were the generative questions for our humanities curriculum? For science? For theater? (I am sure that I learned the word "generative" from Vito. I think he invented it!) During that first year I called Vito often, to talk through a particularly difficult faculty meeting, to wonder aloud whether I had what it took to build a school.

Vito no longer takes me to Chicago. But my children have had the pleasure of growing up knowing Vito and Carmel. And many of my teachers and colleagues have known and worked with him. This semester, I'm teaching a course here at Harvard called "Building a Democratic School: Pilots, Charters and Alternatives to Traditional Schools." One of the

core readings is Vito's book, "A Letter to Teachers." Vito's words, Vito's kindness, Vito's patience and persistence continue to inspire me. I only hope that I can keep doing the kind of work, in the kind of schools, that Vito would be proud of.

U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   N O R T H   D A K O T A

IVAN J. K. DAHL

Professor Emeritus of Educational Foundations and Research

June 10, 2003

To Those It May Concern:

RE: Vito Perrone

Vito Perrone has made an outstanding contribution to education and it is a pleasure for me to write this letter on his behalf.

I have known Vito since the late 1960's when he was the dean of the New School at the University of North Dakota. The New School was an innovative teacher education program. He developed the New School, shaped its programs and guided it to national prominance. The design and practice of the New School and its unique programs for teacher education, bachelors degree through the doctorate, generated nationwide attention in professional publications as well as in the national media such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, CBS television, etc. The success of the New School brought Vito to national attention. The University of North Dakota was later to merge the New School and the more traditional College of Education into a new college which was named the Center For Teaching and Learning,. It was in the process of this merger and conceptualizing the Center for Teaching and Learning that I began working closely with Vito Perrone. He was the dean of the new college and I was his associate dean for 14 years.

During his professional career, beginning with his innovative New School, to Carnegie and then to Harvard, he has been an articulate voice for thought and practice in education always with a vision of educational practice which would result in improved learning. He has been very effective at communicating excellence to those who work with and for children - professional eduators, school administrators, parents, researchers, and political leaders. Vito has addressed a wide variety of audiences, published extensively, and supported the work of others who have worked with him whether as colleague or student.

Vito understands fully and believes completely in the potential of education, a quality education, for the individual and for expanding the general welfare of a society as well as providing the basis for societal and cultural renewal and enhancement of those socio-cultural values which will result in the nurturing of human potential. His view of human potential is unburdened by anything other than equality - equality of potential for learning and growth regardless of gender, race, or socio-economic condition provided that nurturing conditions exist in schools and the socio-cultural community in which the school exists.

A unique ability to stimulate and foster pertinent research in education practice and theory is one of Vito's great strengths. His work with universities, professional organizations and foundations attest to this ability. In addition to the many universities, state governments, and foundations with which he has worked, Vito has created and fostered the North Dakota Study Group which was composed of a wide variety of educators with national prominance and reputations which has met regularly for several years to consider issues of educational concern. He is able to perform these functions because Vito is a man of vision with a unique ability to communicate with others a need, a perspective, and a vision.

Vito is a man of outstanding personal, as well as professional, qualities. His intellect, breadth of knowlege and vison, and personal ethics in his views and personal practice are outstanding. I have always appreciated my contacts with this man and the compatible personal friendship through these many years.

Sincerely,

Ivan J. K. Dahl

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased and honored to support Vito Perrone's nomination for the BROCK INTERNATIONAL PRIZE IN EDUCATION.

I worked with Dr. Perrone during his tenure as Dean of the New School of Behavioral Studies in Education and later as the Dean of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Dakota.

During this period of nearly twenty years Dr. Perrone contributed significantly to substantive issues in the field of education through his many often quoted publications, his involvement in and major addresses to various professional groups and his work as a mentor to many younger professionals who in turn have made significant professional contributions.

Dr. Perrone's leadership nationally through the North Dakota Study Group provided the basis for a number of exemplary publications that documented enightened practice in the field of education while also opening new paradigms for thoughtful examination. This documentation along with his other writings, still provide what many believe to be the most balanced and intellectually honest discussions of the tension between Teaching (and Learning) as art and Teaching (and learning) as science.

Many of the prevailing issues in education continue to have roots in the sometimes overly polarized though often unrecognized view of education as either Art or Science. Dr. Perrone's very strongly held view in the liberalizing effects of the Liberal Arts continues to inform these discussions.

Dr. Perrone's work in Native American communities in several Western states has also been exemplary . Schools in these communities were commonly staffed entirely by non Native American teachers using a school curriculum and teaching methods inappropriate for the students in these communities. In North Dakota for example there were only a hand full of teachers teaching in Native American communities who were themselves Native American. Over a relatively few years a significant number of Native Americans received teacher certification through the Future Indian Teachers (FIT) Program at UND and now provide a majority of the teaching staff in these Native American communities.

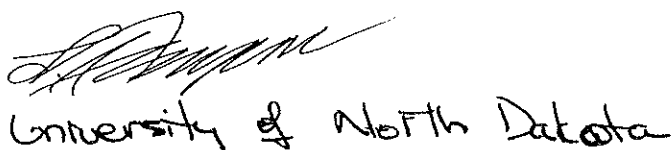
Dr. Perrone had always objected to labels and it does seem to me inappropriate to narrowly classify his contribution to the field of education but I think he may forgive me for saying his work has contributed enormously to making education a more humanizing and liberalizing experience for both students and teachers and communities around the world that embrace a more democratic public education ethos.

I am less familiar with Dr. Perrone's work at Harvard and Princeton but know it continued on the cutting edge of educational reform.

Last but clearly not least, Vito and Carmel raised a large, wonderful family and were loved by all who had the opportunity to know them personally or professionally. .

Thank you for this opportunity to share my highest regard for Vito Perrone.

Lowell Thompson



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION • DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1034

Dear Committee: I am delighted to write on behalf of Vito Perrone for the Brock Prize. I write as an activist and scholar in education who has been influenced by Vito and his work. I am one of the faculty leaders in the teacher education program at Michigan State University. On our team, Vito Perrone is a household word. The problem is fitting in all that I would have to say in one letter. Vito is a towering figure in international education, who has touched dozens of fields, and reached thousands of scholars, teachers, and trouble-makers; more than any other person alive on the planet today he has kept alive through good times and bad a vision of what wise parents would want for their children. In particular Vito has been a scholar, activist, and organizer on behalf of three interwined ideas: 1. children's active participation in learning, including the learning we associate with the arts and creativity, 2. democracy in education, and teaching for social justice and peace around the world. The corollary of these two ideas is a third: 3. The lifelong development of teachers and others committed to education as practical intellectuals and social activists—the teacher as combination of artist, scientist, student of childhood, and organizer.

I choose the last word carefully, because although Vito has written much (on teaching, teacher education, the abuses of standardized testing, and the history of education) in some ways he joins a distinctive group in US tradition that has played a particular intellectual and cultural role in organizing networks and creating institutions and networks and publics for democratic ideas and teaching practices. Like John Dewey, W.E. B. DuBois, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Leonard Covello, Myles Horton, Lillian Weber, and Deborah Meier, Vito has been an organizer throughout his long career.

1.North Dakota Study Group. His greatest role as organizer has been as the founder and ongoing catalyst for the North Dakota Study Group, a national (despite its name) network of

scholars, activists, and teachers, who have met in various places for 32 years. This organization and its members have had a big influence on US and international education, and have contributed much to ongoing debates and the reform of teaching. It is always difficult to measure influence; but through this group Vito has had an enormous impact.

This spring the North Dakota Study group held its meeting at Harvard so that Vito could attend without travel to hear, among other things, a panel deliver Harvard's Askwith Lecture in his honor. "Teachers never stop teaching," Vito wrote in *Letter to A Young Teacher.* His remarkable recovery after a debilitating stroke three years ago left him near death and without speech. . Vito courageously stood before the gathering to deliver hard-practiced remarks while the audience followed along with a text. He greeted friends, came to all sessions, managed to make himself clear when he took issue with content, and rejoined the long conversation he has generated and kept passionate and alive and full of hope for so many years.

The group began in 1972, when Perrone, then Dean of the University of North Dakota, brought together educators from many parts of the U.S. to discuss common concerns about accountability of schools and assessment of children. Many in what became the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation were concerned about the narrowness of the visions of accountability and assessment that were becoming popular with policy makers and reformers; they wanted to share what they believed were more useful, fair, and democratic ways to document and assess children's learning. They also held a closely related vision of actrve learning, and what constituted good classroom practice. The group was especially concerned about an issue that remains relevant 30 years later, the impact of ill-judged schemes of quantitative assessment on good early childhood programs and the primary years of school. They were afraid that good environments for young children were increasingly at risk.

Since then, the group has amounted to an ongoing seminar on democratic possibilities in U.S. and world education, branching out to include related issues such as racial tensions and problems in schools and classrooms, issues of culture, class. immigration, and gender, but always returning to the themes of

accountability and assessment. In effect, the NDSG has been the democratic conscience of U.S. education, constantly reminding the mainstream of alternatives and possibilities, and offering a criticism of educational reform and alternative examples of practice in the light of its enduring concerns with democracy and the estate of childhood. In some reform periods, the 1970's and 1990's, for example, the ideas of the group have profoundly influenced the educational mainstream—its progressive, democratic ideas have had what the Chinese call "the mandate of heaven."

In other periods, when the US reform pendulum has swung away from children's minds and equality and justice, the group has been a voice for thoughtful criticism of mainstream trends, and a supporter of alternative paths and thinking. The group meets yearly. Vito has often reminded the group to serve "large purposes," and it has. Over the years, members have provided ideas and materials for researchers, teachers, parents, school administrators, and policy makers (within state education agencies and within the U.S. Office of Education, and abroad for progressives in many countries). Members have linked educational thought to many wider currents of democratic activism in and out of education. Over the years, the NDSG has encouraged many people to re-examine a range of issues about schools and schooling and childhood and race and class and ethnicity. Meetings and publications and informal conversations within its networks ranged over issues of children's thinking, children's language, curriculum, support systems for teachers, inservice education, teacher education, the school's relationship to a wider community, and, increasingly, issues relating to the diversity of America's schoolchildren, immigration, language issues, and the problems of racism in U.S. society. The roster of names linked with the group reads like a Who's Who of democratic thinkers and activists. Among the central figures have been Vito Perrone, Ken Haskins, Lillian Weber, Deborah Meier, Patricia Carini, Eleanor Duckworth, Joseph Featherstone, Bill Ayers, Hubert Dyasi, Linda Nathan, Sharon Feiman Nemser, Richard Gray among others. Increasingly , Latino, Asian, and immigrant classroom teachers from city schools have made the meetings more and more diverse. Early on, Joseph Suina and his Native American colleagues from the University of New Mexico enlarged the conversation beyond a discussion of Blacks and Whites. Latino voices include Francisco Guajardo and David Rice,

who have added their community perspectives from the Llando Grande Center for Research and Development in Elsa, Texas; this group has also been the vehicle for video documentation of the meeting for the last several years.

Those listed above have been to many meetings in the course of 30 years. Over time, the group has also invited many distinguished speakers to link the agenda to important currents or points of view not generated within the group. In many ways the NDSG is livelier now than ever as we attempt to deepen and broaden the national dialogue on education and social justice in our classrooms, schools, and communities, and across the world.

The written records of the group reflect an extraordinarily thoughtful, passionate, ongoing conversation about the possibilities of democracy in education, and the changing climate of three decades of turbulent educational history.

Monographs have been distributed all over the world; many have been repeatedly reprinted. The last monograph was published in 1996, not for lack of funds, but because the increasingly clear voices of the members along with greater technological ease produced more options to publish in other places. For example, Teachers College Press frequently publishes the work of NDSG members—Joseph Featherstone and Patricia Carini, to name two in the current TC Press catalogue.

The NDSG is, after all, a study group; conversation predominates over plenary session lectures. The tone of meetings is usually serious, intense—the group often addresses a particular text or question—and yet informal and even raucous. The group undertakes close textual readings in small groups, ranging widely, for example from W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* to Vito Perrone's *Teacher With a Heart: Reflections on Leonard Covello and Community* which is interwoven with Perrone's own autobiography. Small groups also meet to tell stories of their own experiences with assessment and standards and immigration, in order to, as Patricia Carini reminds us, to create a public record - positioning our storytelling and school evaluation in wider society.

The meetings began in the early 70s with about 30 attendees. Now the meetings are kept to roughly about 100 people to keep the sense of intimacy and enable conversation and an opportunity to participate, though this year the meeting was larger,

as Harvard honored Vito Perrone. Not only the size has changed, but the composition of the group. Classroom teachers were few until the early 80s, when invited teacher panels became a feature each year. Now many teachers at all levels attend. Until the early 80s, the group was primarily White. Now about a fourth of the group is of color, with people of color taking roles as leaders and roles as speakers in plenary sessions. The group has struggled and continues to struggle as it tries to have frank conversations and deepen understanding of race and ethnicity and to solidify the connections with attendees of color—difficult but unfinished work as the US continues to take halting steps backward and forward on what Gunnar Myrdal called the American dilemma. This ongoing hard institutional work on race and racism is one of the best tributes to Vito's leadership.

The network of friendships and professional connections is strong and grows stronger each year for those who attend regularly. Home groups welcome and create a place for newcomers, often young teachers. Those who participate currently include new teachers, veteran teachers, university professors, community activists, independent scholars, undergraduates, deans, foundations program officers and principals. This yearly national (and at times international) three-day gathering is the energy source for further national, local, and international efforts.

The work of the NDSG has never been more timely. In the US there is an attack on the very idea of public, democratic education. Across the planet, the issues of social justice in education and peace in the world have never been more urgent. Vito's gift to us all looks less and less like a dated legacy and more like a call for action today.

2. Reform in Teacher Education. Vito has spent his professional career creating and sustaining good teacher education. His work at the University of North Dakota in the 1970's is one of the great shining chapters in the often dim record of US teacher education. Vito created a reformist model of teacher education at a public state university which was intertwined with an ambitious reform of schools in the state. This intertwining of schools and teacher education—the way Vito in effect used education to "organize" the entire state of North Dakota and make it into an educational model for the nation—has often been on my

mind and those of other faculty leaders and colleagues at Michigan State and around the country as we struggle to make teacher education more democratic, more ambitious for children's minds, and more connected to classrooms in schools. (It may seem immodest to note that Michigan State University, where I lead a team in teacher education, is ranked number one in the US in teacher education (according to *US News and World Report.*) It may also be worth noting that Vito is an alumnus of Michigan State.) Vito's ongoing passion for the work of teacher education in his years at Harvard has been a legend and an inspiration to all of us in the field. Vito's grass roots work in Boston has continued to serve as an example for all of us, but especially those of us in big and bureaucratic research universities, not to stray too far from teachers and kids and classrooms and communities as we struggle to make a field-based teacher education program work on behalf of democracy.

3. Scholarship. Vito has written a vast list of books, ranging from the popular and influential *Letter to A Young Teacher* to the significant Carnegie reports on high schools and early childhood education, all of which have had a large impact on US education. In terms of depth of scholarship, my own nomination for a favorite work of Vito's would be his astonishing introduction to Leonard Covello, *Teacher With A Heart* (Teachers College Press, 1997). If there were such a thing as an instant classic, this would fit. Covello, a brilliant educational organizer (like Vito), was the activist principal of Benjamin Franklin High School in New York city in the 1930's. Singlehandedly, Vito has introduced Covello's depth of appreciation of democracy and teaching practice to a new generation of teachers and scholars—an example never more timely, since Covello's main focus was on the creation of schools as democratic communities able to welcome and do justice to immigrant families and children of many races and cultures. My account of the North Dakota Study Group, above, leaves out the many, many scholarly and popular works that Vito has promoted in his role of organizer. One classic example of his constant influence will have to suffice. Vito played a big role in bringing about *Inquiry Into Meaning*, (1976) the path-breaking study of reading by

Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel, that set standards in inquiry that have still to be met: the participation of teachers as researchers, a "natural" and "naturalistic" focus on the meaning of reading in young children's lives, and a sense of the living complexity of life in classrooms.

4. Rural Education. I hope this committee has a more complete account than I can give of Vito's work in rural education. He has been an enormous influence in that field, and his concern for rural communities and schools has been a reminder to many of us of a forgotten piece of what needs to be the US and international agenda.
5. Assessment—The Abuse of Tests. I covered some of this history in talking about the North Dakota Study Group, but it bears singling out now toward the end of this letter: Vito's long list of works amount to a critique of standardized testing and high stakes tests that might have appeared in scholarly and popular venues yesterday morning. A growing number of alarmed US and international observers are saying what Vito and the NDSG have been saying all along: that the poor science and bad effects of ill-judged schemes of assessment are catastrophic for children, teachers, and the prospects for genuinely high standards in education. Vito was an early witness to the proposition that an undue emphasis on tests singles out the most vulnerable students—the poor, the working class, children of color, immigrants, disabled kids—for special punishment. The tests end up, not redeeming the poor, as their proponents hope, but making them into scapegoats and dumbing down aspirations for achievement. I think it's clear that Vito has been a prophet on this issue. To do him honor, read the chapters on testing in Deborah Meier's new book (*In Schools We Trust,* 2003), which is dedicated to Vito, as well as the works of organizations like Fair Test that have, in effect, built on Vito's long and thoughtful scholarly work in this weirdly-neglected area. If high stakes testing begins to falter and speak with less authority in the US and the world today, this will owe something to Vito's tireless crusade for better, more democratic, and more thoughtful methods of assessing learning and schools.

6. Peace. Lastly, this letter would be incomplete without a reference to Vito's lifelong efforts to link the reform of world education and democracy to the cause of peace. From a time even before the Vietnam War, Vito has taught the rest of us that our children's lives are framed by the possibilities for peace. He has taught several generations of teachers and activists that those of us working for democratic schools cannot ignore the consequences for our work of our nation's stance toward the great issues of peace and war. Does anyone now doubt that this is one of the most significant issues not just for education and not just for the US, but for the world today?

Thanks for considering this great man and his work, which has never been more relevant.

yours,

Joseph Featherstone
professor of education Michigan State University
faculty leader, MSU teacher certification program

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Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-3704

Programs in Administration,
Planning, and Social Policy

June 12, 2003

To Whom It May Concern,

It is a pleasure to write a letter of support for Vito Perrone who has been nominated for the Brock International Prize in Education. I have known Vito since he came to Harvard in 1988. At the time, I was Associate Dean of the School and was heavily involved in recruiting him. Later as Dean of the School, I had the pleasure to work with him as a fellow professor and leader of the School.

I'm sure that other letters will list Vito's various positions and describe Vito's exemplary service at Harvard—he has made an extraordinary contribution to his students and colleagues. Rather than duplicating these efforts, I would like to concentrate on three overlapping reasons why Vito is so special and why he is such an outstanding candidate for the prize.

First, there are few educators who have been so influential in both the practice and scholarly communities—working both sides of the street—as Vito Perrone. He has gained widespread respect in both communities because of his penetrating scholarship and because of his deep and profound understanding of the nature of educational practice.

Second, there is no one in the academy who has written so beautifully, and with such deep understanding, about the challenges and opportunities of teaching in public schools today. As a former teacher and historian, and as a knowledgeable observer, Vito tells us what it means—and what it takes—to be a schoolteacher. His ideas about the nature of the work, emphasizing its moral and intellectual content, and its key role in the pursuit of social justice, have been instrumental in shaping thinking about teaching as a calling. Vito's writings have influenced and inspired novices and sophisticated teachers around the world.

Finally, and put quite simply, Vito is unique among those I know in the academy in being a scholar who schoolteachers think of as a teacher's teacher. It's hard to imagine a higher tribute to a scholar from those in practice.

With enthusiasm, I support Vito Perrone's nomination for the Brock Prize. It would honor a wonderful educator whose ideas and values have changed the world.

Sincerely yours,

Jerry T. Murphy

Jerome T. Murphy
Harold Howe II Professor of Education & Dean Emeritus

The Workshop Center **Hubert M. Dyasi, *Director***

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June 14, 2003

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

re: Nomination of Prof. Vito Perrone for The Brock International Prize in Education

I am writing in support of the nomination of Professor Vito Perrone for the award of The Brock International Prize in Education. Professor Perrone's innovative work has been in the development, nurturing, and dissemination of evaluation in education. In November 1972, he brought together a small number (fewer than 80) of outstanding college professors, school teachers, school leaders, and parents from different parts of the country for a two-day meeting at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, "to deal with the issue of evaluation as it relates to more open processes of education." Thus began the North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation (NDSG) - a unique national and now international innovation in a fundamental aspect of education that had hitherto been a preserve of test makers and a few specialist scholars.

Dr. Perrone's approach to evaluation ran counter to the prevailing popular notions that standardized achievement tests or the testing of narrowly defined competencies portrayed the only accurate, educationally worthwhile picture of a student's educational development, and were also the best predictors of future educational achievement. Dr. Perrone and his NDSG had serious concerns about this "narrow accountability ethos." Believing that there are "more sensible means of both documenting and assessing children's learning" that deserve wider attention by, and sharing among "teachers, parents, school administrators and governmental decision-makers (within State Education agencies and the U.S. Office of Education)," they proposed a "re-examination of a range of evaluation issues and perspectives about schools and schooling" that provided a more comprehensive approach and practice to assessment of children's learning.

Even before the 1972 meeting, Dr. Perrone had put forward a broad view of assessment of children's learning in his addresses at a variety of national and State education associations (e.g. the Association for Childhood Education International); and several of the people he had invited to the NDSG's inaugural meeting had been similarly engaged at local levels; for example, Patricia Carini (Bennington, Vermont), Deborah Meier (New York City), George Hein (Cambridge, MA), Lillian Weber (New York City), Ann Cook and Herb Mack (New York City), Ted Chittenden (Educational Testing Service, Princeton), Eddie Klausner (School in the Valley, Pennsylvania), to mention only a few. Others who were not at the meeting, especially Professor Eleanor Duckworth (now at the Harvard Graduate School

of Education) had independently expressed similar views in their outstanding international work on evaluation.

The NDSG has produced numerous well-researched publications that demonstrate possibility and impact of Vito Perrone's innovative ideas, approach, and practice. They include demonstration of the innovation in theory and in practice; for example, handbooks on documentation of children's learning, archives of children's work, educational life histories of children, descriptions of teachers' documentation of children's learning and development, and impacts of the approach on students' interests, attitudes, and achievement. Descriptions and case studies based on the approach have been published in articles in refereed journals and in books published by nationally and internationally respected publishers, e.g. Teachers College Press.

One of the most useful contributions of the NDSG has been to consistently make clearer the distinction between evaluation that aids student learning and classroom practice on the one hand and accountability on the other. The latter (usually synonymous with tests) serves purposes beyond the classroom.

The NDSG's views on evaluation flew in the face of widely popular views that equated evaluation with grading, and which focused on educationally limited and easy-to-measure student attributes. General use of students' portfolios, teachers' interpretations of students' work and of other kinds of descriptive accounts of students' learning favored by the NDSG, was a rarity. It, therefore, took more than belief and deep knowledge to talk and write publicly and with evidence-based conviction about the NDSG's approach to evaluation; it also took immense courage. Now that the NDSG's approach and practice have been widely adopted, it is easy to overlook this aspect of the innovation.

In addition to being the visionary leader and most articulate spokesperson of the NSDG's view of evaluation that serves the advancement of student learning and teacher leadership, Dr. Perrone has played leadership roles in the professional education of teachers and in the provision of educational opportunity for all children. His many books, articles, and speeches address teachers directly and provide informed, scholarly, experience-based, and illustrated advice and guidance. He belongs to education groups that focus on issues affecting the education of children in general and of immigrant children in particular.

He is an excellent example of the kind of scholar who should receive the prestigious Brock International Prize in Education. I have no reservations whatsoever in nominating him.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hubert M. Dyasi, Ph.D.
Director and Professor of Science Education

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Deborah W. Meier, Co-Principal

67 Alleghany Street, Roxbury, MA 02120
617-635-6384 Fax 617-635-6419

Brian Straughter, Co-Principal

June 14, 2003

To whom, it may concern,

I've known Vito Perrone for over forty years. We met first in North Dakota, shortly after he became head of its new school of education. The meeting was part of a national effort to explore the impact of standardized testing as a means of assessment for head start and follow-through programs. Parents at a national meeting of Headstart had vociferously objected to this approach by the federal government, and Vito-with his eyes on the connections between families and schools-responded by bringing together some of the leaders in early childhood education. The meeting was a fateful event for me-as it brought me into contact with his circle of friends and colleagues who shared my concerns. The group eventually became known as the North Dakota Study Group, and continues to meet (rarely in North Dakota) yearly. The last event was in Boston and Vito Perrone's life and work was the center of its agenda. It was ironic that it took place at a moment that our original concern was once again at the center of national attention.

At every twist and turn since the early 1970s I knew that I could turn to Vito for advice, ideas, and general wisdom. He would send me (and many others on his list) occasional relevant articles, pass on interesting tips, and help us make connections between people who were doing similar work. His wide view of the world, both in terms of who he connected with and what he kept up with, meant he could bring together often unlikely networks of -people, and unlikely ideas whose connection turned out to be invaluable.

He had a way of making almost every "category" of people involved in the educational world feel important, valued and comfortable. Everyone felt he was listening to them closely, and finding a way to move their work onwards. A parent at Mission Hill-without advanced degrees and wise daily work was as a postman-- noted that he was that rare Harvard professor who made him feel that his knowledge was valued.

Vito was in the midst of the work wherever he was. He was both an amazing scholar, and also right there in the schoolhouse talking, plotting, planning with us. He served on various on-site councils for schools in Boston, and always did the work needed, committee-work, writing up reports, etc. If one needed a phone call made, if there was someone at headquarters, at city hall or the statehouse Vito would rack his brains to find

a way to get us through to the right person. He usually knew someone, or knew someone who knew someone. And he was never too busy!

I taught a course at Harvard with him twice, and that was a great experience. He gathered together an amazing collection of articles, books, etc. and organized them in ways useful to our course and students. The course was huge, but he had techniques for breaking the students down into "home groups" that allowed us and them to have the advantage of our presentations at the larger lectures, and opportunities to meet and talk about the readings and ideas in a smaller setting-sometimes with one of us and sometimes on their own. It was fascinating to watch him reorganize that large crew into intimate circles focus on serious discussion. He always had a way to make his beliefs realizable even under unlikely circumstances.

His presence was bigger than life and critical at every turn of my career. No one has been more important to me personally-and I suspect I am but one of ever so many who would say the same. .

Sincerely,

Deborah Meier

Coalition of Essential Schools, Inc.
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15 June 2003

To whom it may concern:

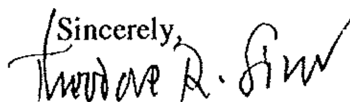
Re: Nomination of *Vito Perrone* *for the Brock International Prize in Education*

Even as we worked in different parts of the country until he moved to Cambridge, I have known Vito Perrone for many years. A quiet man, not one to parade his views, a person whose world view has arisen from close observation of and experience in a variety of schools, Perrone can best described as a muscular Progressive. He has the stereotypic gentleness of a person who loves the differences among all sorts of children, who is wisely patient not only with those youngsters but with the adults who work among them; but he also has a sense of the shape and meaning of rigorous standards, not only for the children but also for the schools and systems which serve them. In a day when the extremes of these two positions are rampant, Vito's careful but discerning style is as precious as it is rare.

By training, Perrone is an historian. He understands the context in which we all work, and he has taken the long view; he is not prisoner of the enthusiasms of any particular moment. As an historian, he knows that influence follows people – and it is those people, now nationwide and numerous, that mark his special and profound influence. From the North Dakota Study Group to the scores of students in many universities, in recent years especially Harvard, he has profoundly changed the way they think about, and thus act about, education.

Education is full of noisy people whose nostrums flare brilliantly and then quickly fade. Vito is an important exception. He is a wise man, in the deepest meaning of that word; and his wisdom has influenced thousands of educators across the country. That wisdom arises from careful scholarship, well wrought and deeply felt ideas, and patient work among those of us who work daily among children.

Sincerely,



Theodore R. Sizer
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May 22, 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

I met Vito Perrone in 1997 in Granby, Colorado, when we both took part in an annual conference of the Annenberg Rural Challenge, a national education reform initiative that focused on revitalizing rural public education. I wanted to meet Vito because 15 year old Orlando Castillo, a student of mine at Edcouch-Elsa High School, told me about this Wonderful "older man" he had just met. "Mr. Guajardo," said Orlando, "I want you to talk to my friend Vito. I think he said he lives in Boston, but he's a really nice man, and I think he can help us with our oral history project back home." Orlando made no mention that Vito was a Harvard professor, nor did he say that Vito directed the Rural Challenge's Evaluation Program. Vito didn't share any of this with him. Instead, Orlando went into great detail describing the stories he had shared with Vito, because Vito chose to listen to this scrawny teenager from the rural Texas Mexican border town of Elsa. And Orlando also told of the terrific stories Vito shared with him about growing up in an Italian immigrant home in Michigan, and he told of how both the Mexican and the Italian family experiences were so similar.

It is also important to note that that meeting between Orlando and Vito changed Orlando's life. Up to that day, Orlando had been experiencing serious problems in his personal life. His father was in jail, his mother was having problems making ends meet, and he had turned to drugs and alcohol. I had taken an interest in him and was involved with him in a mentoring capacity. But the meeting he had with Vito seemed to have a special impact. Vito listened carefully to Orlando, and he gently suggested to him that he had lived a rich life, a life worth sharing with many others. I could see the excitement in Orlando's eyes when he approached to tell me about this man named Vito.

Clearly, I had to meet him. After having taught in public schools for about 10 years, I understood that 15 year old kids typically don't respond with this kind of excitement to a meeting with an "older man." I met Vito that day, and I immediately fell in love with his character and with what he represented. I continue to love him to this day, not just because of the impact he had on Orlando that day, but also because of the impact he has had on rural public education in many places across this country and even in places around the world.

I grew up on the Texas Mexican border and have taught in the same place during the past 14 years. As a youngster I recall the stories and other rich lore that enveloped my daily life as well as the existence of my brothers, my neighbors and my friends at school. Intuitively, I understood the tremendous cultural and historical richness that defined my

family and my community. But, I also recall being profoundly confused because none of these realities seemed to be discussed or dealt with in school. When I first began teaching in rural south Texas, I knew that my teaching and entire pedagogical approach would be based on the realities that my students brought with them to the classroom; that is, I was intent to focus on their stories, their experiences, and their families. The public school process, however, only begrudgingly allowed for such an approach.
The state standards, the state test, the traditionally developed curriculum, and the textbooks all stood as obstacles to learning and teaching in ways that we grew up in south Texas.

Vito Perrone helped us change all that in Texas, just as he has helped change rural public education in many other places. As director of the Evaluation Program of the Annenberg Rural Challenge, which subsequently became the Rural School and Community Trust, Vito has led an effort to exhaustively collect stories from rural schools that celebrate rurality in this country. Just as importantly, Vito's documentation effort has also helped to change the way many rural schools train their teachers and how public schools develop their curricula.

In my school, these changes have had a dramatic effect. Thousands of kids in rural south Texas schools are frequently seen engaged in place based social studies, science, and even math projects. Following the philosophy and principles of a pedagogy based on place, many school children are beginning to understand their community history, the composition of the soil and water in their communities, and the dimensions of the buildings and other physical structures in their towns. Much of this is happening because of the seminal efforts of the people of the Rural Trust, and Vito Perrone has been an essential leader in that regard.

In February of 2000 Vito invited two of my high school students, another teacher, and me to present our community based research work at the annual conference of the North Dakota Study Group. We presented then and have been welcomed members of the Study Group since. It is but another example of the kind of opportunities that Vito Perrone creates for others interested in rural education and public education in general. To this day, Orlando Castillo cherishes the time he spent with Vito in 1997, and to this day, Vito continues to inspire and create opportunities for others. I am grateful to Vito for his influence and impact on the way we run on schools, but I am even more thankful to him for helping turn Orlando Castillo's life around.

I wholeheartedly endorse Vito Perrone's nomination for a Brock International Prize in Education award.

Sincerely,

Francisco Guajardo

from A Letter to Teachers, Perrone, 1991

Eleven

The Importance of Historical Perspective

We work in a field that has a very long history. This may be obvious, but that history is not something we think about enough, make a part of our ongoing reflections about teaching, learning, and schools. At one level, if we are not well connected to our educational history, we can lose sight of the dignity of teaching and its larger social context. We need to know that committed men and women over many hundreds of years have seen in teaching the opportunity to build a safer, more humane, and economically productive world. Their stories, the ways they conceptualized their work, help connect us across time and place, enlarging our understanding of the roots of our work and providing us considerable personal and professional inspiration.

An another level, the lack of historical perspective leads us to interpret too much of what passes for reform—change in schools—as new when, in fact, much of the reform had an earlier history. It prevents us, as well, from learning from the previous history of reform. If, for example, we made a practice of reading older descriptions of school reform, learning about the ways school curricula, organizational structures, and instructional practices were affected, as well as the political, economic, and social factors that influenced them, we might have a better grasp of what educational reform demands, not only in historical terms but presently.

Much of the 1960s educational reform could have profited from a more significant connection to the earlier progressive literature and the reform movement that surrounded progressivism, particularly in relation to curriculum. It was surprising, for example, how obscure John Dewey's work was to so many 1960s educators.

A particularly critical value, for me, in staying close to the historical literature as I work with teachers to improve, even reconstruct, the schools that now exist, is understanding the shifting patterns of language that surround our work. It is valuable to know that the definitions that now prevail in critical educational constructs—vocational education, excellence, learning, time, memory—had at other times richer meanings, laden with larger possibilities. Because many of the words themselves have remained the same, there is a semblance of continuity when, in fact, the discontinuities are overwhelming.

When John Dewey spoke of vocations and work, for example, he was concerned about the development of constructive attitudes about the *value* of work, the need for children and young people to appreciate accomplishment borne of sustained effort, to attach personal meaning to their intellectual inquiries and practical activities. And given his understandings of the changes in the economic order, he wanted students to comprehend the complexities of an industrial age. But in relation to the economic system, he *did not* view vocational education in the schools as a means of preparing workers for American industry. And significantly considering how vocational education has developed, Dewey never envisioned vocational study separated from academic study, a separate track for those judged intellectually inadequate.

Further, when Dewey wrote about memory in relation to thinking, he wasn't discussing recall, the recitation of isolated facts. Memory was a larger construction, the fitting together of many images, many conceptions, something whole, and always in relation to the establishment of extended meaning. Moreover, the importance he attached to community studies and democratic participation meant more than walks to the fire station and the passive student councils that fill the schools.

Dewey is not the subject of this chapter. But in the spirit of this discussion on historical perspective, I want to provide a per-

sonal synthesis of his educational thought that helps me consider more fully my current work in and around schools, even as I recognize that such a reduction can't do justice to his original ideas. For this, we would all do well to reread, in particular, *The School and Society* (Dewey, [1989] 1956), *The Child and the Curriculum* (Dewey, [1902] 1956), *How We Think* (Dewey, 1910), *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, [1916] 1961), and *Experience and Education* (Dewey, [1938] 1963). Needless to say, I find Dewey particularly provocative as we turn increasingly to a belief that the schools need to change. His thought should be much more common in our contemporary educational discourse. Here is my beginning synthesis:

- Education and life are part of the same social continuity—not separate pieces.
- Education is growth.
- Continuity of experience is basic to growth, the thread that brings about consolidation of ideas, and their meanings.
- Experience is the basis for all genuine education—even though all experiences are not equally educative.
- The interests of children and the adult interest in curriculum are reciprocal.
- The development of intelligence and knowledge, whether for an individual or a culture, grows from cooperative exchange.
- The most effective learning comes from doing, acting on the world.

Dewey saw skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic as understandings derived from needs growing out of activities, not as skills to be taught apart from natural inquiry. We should revive that perspective in schools, especially as reading, writing, and arithmetic have become increasingly disconnected from any significant intellectual content. It is discouraging to see so much of children's education revolve around workbook exercises and simple text, materials that have meaning *only* in school, that are so unrelated to our larger cultural heritage.

A lack of historical perspective is particularly evident in the "reform" era that was set off by *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Many of the discussions that occurred around this report called on us to believe that there was a time when *all* students could read and write easily and well, studied foreign languages, completed coursework in physics, possibly calculus, understood political processes at relatively high levels, and were steeped in classical literature and American history. Many in the schools were, unfortunately, put on the defensive by such claims; they themselves came to believe that "the schools *used* to be *good.*"

We should know, however, that such an implied golden age didn't exist. We didn't even get the majority (51 percent) of students through high school until 1950, and our peak in terms of high school completion—77 percent—was reached just twenty years ago (during the 1960s, no less). As things now stand, we will be hard pressed to reach that level again for many years to come. And even that level is inadequate to today's social and economic needs. Having said that, however, it is discouraging to note in recent surveys of teachers (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987, 1990) that a significant number *don't* believe it is even realistic to expect more than 75 percent of students to complete high school (graduation rates are now below 71 percent).

Consider foreign languages and physics, supposed exemplars of quality: never in the twentieth century were they studied by more than 25 percent of high school students across the nation. A special reason why "golden" ought not to be a part of our description of the past is that in spite of our longstanding rhetoric of universalism, we have lived for most of our educational history with enormous social, economic, ethnic, and racial inequities, leaving a tragic legacy of broken promises.

I raise all this only to suggest that we would do better not trying to make such qualitative comparisons across time. The generalizations seldom hold up—and they also don't help our children much. They certainly don't need our gratuitous reminders about how poor their education is compared with ours.

There are other features of this current reform movement worthy of examination. The kind of reform being promoted by the current movement—characterized by greater standardization and uniformity through legislative and regulatory action—tends, for ex-

ample, to coincide historically with periods of economic insecurity and decline in confidence about the future: the early aftermath of the Civil War, the depression years of the 1890s, the pre–World War II Depression years, and the recessionary period of the 1970s (which continues in many respects today).

It is not surprising, within this particular historical formulation, that *A Nation at Risk* focused so heavily on our perceived losses in the economic sphere, building on a belief that we stand in danger of being eclipsed in the international arena, and that its most prominent metaphors were framed around competition and nationalism. It is also not surprising, given the powerful emphasis on loss, to see the previous reform period of the 1960s set off as being at the root of our "current dilemmas" and "fall to mediocrity," even if such charges falter greatly under close examination.

In these periods of reform, which I have characterized as similar to the present reform movement, "returning to basics," "raising standards," and "establishing common requirements" became the dominant definers, the code phrases. Correspondingly, there was a growth in student competency and promotion testing as well as serious concerns about the quality of teachers. That such responses didn't yield particularly positive results earlier seems not to have been considered much in this current wave of reform. Competency tests, or "certifying exams" as they were once called, had, for example, an earlier history. And that history should have taught us about the negative potential—that retention and failure would fall disproportionately on children from minority and poor families and that the tests would come to define the curriculum, narrowing it to minimalist terms.

In contrast to this particular style of reform, which narrowed the boundaries of acceptable practice, providing more technological precision in its definitions, and operating from a premise of scarcity and competition, we have also had reform periods that encouraged considerable diversity in standards and practices, operating from a premise that unlimited possibilities existed. This contrasting direction has generally coincided with periods of economic growth and prosperity and increasing levels of confidence about the future: the Jacksonian democracy years, which extended into the 1840s, the progressive years at the turn of the century, extending somewhat

into the 1920s, and the civil rights, socially activist years of the 1960s. These were times when standardization was often seen as debilitating and oppressive, and tightly defined regulations were viewed as obstacles to high-quality education. In these periods, there was more talk about the needs of the child, inquiry-oriented teaching and learning, and equity than about particular curriculum content and learning objectives, direct teaching, and uniformity of standards. Not surprisingly, these were years when teacher education programs attracted particularly able candidates.

As a corollary to this historical review, I want to share one additional observation, which has to do with the involvement of academic scholars in school reform and currently occupies a good deal of my interest. It is another aspect of historical perspective that we should understand.

Academic scholars have, as it turns out, been most involved during the reform periods characterized by more openness, when the definitions were not too precise. A reading of *The Dewey School* (Mayhew and Edwards, [1936] 1966) is fascinating largely because of the work of historians, geographers, and physical scientists. And the materials produced in the 1960s by MIT and Chicago physicists, chemists, and biologists for elementary and secondary school science are exceptional in their inquiry orientation, in contrast to what is being used in most schools today. The same can be said for the history and social science materials produced by historians, economists, anthropologists, and sociologists from Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, Purdue, and the University of California, Berkeley.

The style of the 1960s reform attracted large numbers of academic scholars, not just in materials development but in summer institutes for teachers and inservice education programs, because it focused on inquiry, viewed questions to be more important than answers, understood knowledge to be embedded with more uncertainty than certainty, related more to uncoverage than coverage in regard to curriculum, and considered education to be more humanistic than technological. The current reform movement—characterized as it is by less openness, where learning objectives are framed more narrowly and behaviorally and where a premium is given to information and standardization of curriculum, alongside a more technical language—is alien to much of academic scholarship and

has proven less attractive and sustaining. We need ongoing reciprocity between academic scholars and classroom teachers—not the on-again, off-again circumstance that has existed.

I have reviewed these contrasting directions for reform as a means of acknowledging our historically diverse visions about how good education is to be promoted. But in spite of the many reform efforts and regardless of the public rhetoric, I think it's safe to say that the schools themselves, the places where teachers and students actually meet, have generally followed a middle path. They may lean in the particular direction of the reform at hand but seldom do they fully embrace it. As a result, in pedagogical practices and organizational patterns the schools have over time been more the same than truly different. They were, for example, never as child centered as the progressive reform discourse at the turn of the century would suggest, not as curriculum free as the 1960s reform literature might lead us to believe, and not now as rigidly structured, academic, or tough minded as a reading of state regulations might imply. This, too, we should understand. It also needs to be clear, however, that the schools have never been, on a large scale, as good as they should have been, and they are not now.

To speak of historical perspective is also to be attentive to the demographics of schools and communities over time, to understand the nature of the changes. The fact is that schools have become populated, especially in our urban centers, by increasing numbers of nonwhite and non-English-speaking children who are in today's economy living in poverty. As I noted earlier, in twenty-three of the twenty-five largest American cities, the majority of students are from minority backgrounds. Further, one of every five children of school age in our country is poor; in urban communities, where minority populations are particularly large, the figure is closer to one in two.

Given the changing patterns, schools are indeed *different* with regard to the students being served. But we shouldn't let the matter of difference cause us discouragement or resignation. In school after school, veteran administrators and teachers tell me that "the school used to be excellent." (They didn't say, but certainly implied, that the halcyon days were before integration.) At best, they were *different*. They weren't confronting seriously what it means to

live in an integrated, more fully democratic, socially just society. That is one of the important challenges of today's schools.

The social context surrounding schools has other historical examples that we should keep before us. We live, as you are aware from the media attention and your own observations, with a child-care crisis as women have entered fully into the labor force and as single parenthood has become so dominant. It is true that only in recent years have women been in the labor market in such large numbers, but women have been working out of the home for many years. Most black mothers, for example, were in the labor market long before "who is caring for the children?" became such a popular question. And in previous periods of heavy immigration, like that we are now going through, whole families were engaged in labor. The point is that there have been other periods when the social service needs of children and families were extensive.

At the turn of the century, Frederick Wirt, superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana, then a burgeoning industrial town filled with large numbers of immigrants, acknowledged that the schools needed to remain open long after the regular closing hours, on the weekends, and in the summers to ensure children and young people a safe and constructive place to be while their parents worked. The Gary schools became full-blown community schools. And there was an earlier history of schools serving as social service centers—providing breakfast for their students, medical and dental services for children and families, and job training for adults. This was especially true in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. I cite this only to place the controversies about school health clinics and other social service programs in schools in a wider historical context. It isn't only in recent years that schools have assumed these expanding but necessary responsibilities.

In many respects, the limitations in our historical understandings also keep the discussions about the interior of schools much too narrow in scope. The structures, curricular and pedagogical patterns, and relationships with communities that currently exist *appear* to be all there is, possibly all there ever was. Historical perspective would surely enlarge the discourse about what exists. We might come to understand better the circumstances that brought about graded structures and textbooks, Carnegie units and curric-

ulum order, possibly recognizing that such circumstances no longer exist, that what once might have appeared logical and appropriate may no longer be so.

In this vein, James Hernden in *How to Survive in Your Native Land* (1972, pp. 101–102) offers an apocryphal but nonetheless telling story. After describing his work in a junior high school teaching reading to students who lacked much confidence or proficiency in reading, he notes that the students completed their forty-minute period with him, then went for a forty-minute social studies class in "which they got Fs because they couldn't read," then to a forty-minute science class, "where they got Fs because they couldn't read." By the time the school day was over, the students had five or six *F* grades. Wondering why he didn't have the students all day so he could actually teach them to read, he posed the question: "How did the school get organized around these seven forty-minute periods a day, with students going from class to class?" After researching this question, he writes, "I learned that there is no one alive today who knew anyone who was alive when the decision was made." Chances are, whoever made the decision never expected it to be the last word a half century later.

It is certainly possible to have school with something other than seven forty-minute periods a day. Theodore Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, based at Brown University and now involving seventy-eight schools, is working toward a rethinking of the school day and the way content is organized. Many earlier progressives also experimented with diverse variations. Again, knowing more about the history of our work would help us to ask more penetrating questions about the schools and their structures, pedagogical formulations, and purposes.

As a final example, let's consider testing. Because testing is so commonplace, it has been seen as a part of schooling that has *always* existed. But in its multiple-choice, standardized form, it is a twentieth-century phenomenon, a recent development. For example, the Thorndike Handwriting Scale, the first popular standardized test used in the public schools, was produced in 1909. A wide variety of achievement and aptitude tests quickly followed. By the 1960s a majority of schools across the country were engaged in some form of standardized testing but the magnitude was *extremely* small

by today's standards. Few people who completed high school before 1950 took more than three standardized tests in their *entire* school careers. And the results of the tests were hardly ever discussed: parents didn't receive the scores, and schoolwide results never appeared in newspapers.

By contrast, those who completed high school in 1990 will have taken, on average, from eighteen to twenty-one standardized tests, and many will have taken many more. To understand the overall magnitude of the shift, we should note that since 1950 the volume of testing has grown at an annual rate of 10 to 20 percent (Haney and Madaus, 1989).

For these 1990 graduates, a considerable amount of attention was paid to preparation for the tests, including many days of completing a host of practice tests. Admonitions about "doing your best" and "how important this test is to you and your school" were common. Those not familiar with contemporary practices in schools would be surprised at how much time is actually spent on test preparation. During these test preparation times, as teachers know well, reading ceases being a matter of real books, writing that matters ends, math stops having a connection to the world, and the arts, if they exist at all, are shelved. Teachers I discuss this with are not pleased about what they are providing children, even as their children are scoring better each year on the tests.

Further, the test scores of these 1990 graduates were the "talk of the town," filling many pages of newspaper space. But these newspaper accounts will probably do more to confuse readers—or confirm their biases—than inform. Proclaiming that "*only* 57 percent of our students at grade nine read above grade level," they will not explain that "grade-level equivalency" is a mathematical extrapolation and not a reading construct, that half of all test takers *always* score below grade level because grade level is nothing more than the midpoint on a scale, and that the scores might not be useful to teachers or students and might limit the possibilities of more substantive accountability.

Another measure of the changes in testing is instructive. Testing practices, as we noted earlier, began an upward spiral after 1950, and the tests were used more often for selection and retention purposes. But by today's standards, we would consider them rela-

tively benign, at least up to 1965. In addition, before 1965, the tests were not often used in the early grades. This is important to understand. There was a consensus associated with the traditions that gave rise to the kindergarten, and to the subsequent developmental beliefs guiding the primary grades as a whole, that the early years were "special," a time for natural growth and development. Where serious testing programs existed, they generally began in grade three or grade four.

Then after 1965, testing exploded, especially with regard to its uses. As evaluation demands grew with the influx of new federal and state resources on behalf of schools, the tests were quickly seen as inexpensive and easy measures for meeting the demands. And with the accountability movement of the 1970s, the tests became quickly the definers of standards in almost all curriculum areas. Yearly testing, beginning in grade three, became more the norm, though in many school districts accountability demands contributed to the use of annual fall *and* spring testing as a means of determining "gains" in achievement. By the mid-1970s, testing started to regularly invade the primary grades. Earlier developmental understandings began to erode. And early years' testing became a growth area. In the 1980s, testing of young children became commonplace. Increasingly, tests are being used to determine children's readiness to enter kindergarten and to leave kindergarten. Moreover, the tests are also being more commonly used for placement decisions, essentially early tracking. The inappropriateness of such testing should be obvious.

My appeal in this chapter is that we need to be more serious historians of education. That is part of what it means to be a professional teacher, a person able to speak authoritatively and confidently about matters that affect children and young people in the schools. Without a strong historical base for our work, we easily lose sight of the social context that surrounds schools. And we lose the potential for constructing serious reform.

From Teacher With a Heart, Perrone, 1998

9

Standardized tests have become so commonplace in the schools that we often believe they have been with us forever, possibly coming to us from classical Greece. They are, however, relatively recent aspects of schooling, dating back only to the beginning of the twentieth century. Their history is related in large measure to a desire to differentiate among people in regard to intelligence and academic achievement. World War I recruits and draftees provided an extremely large sample (some 1,700,000) on whom to try out the new testing instruments,

which became after the war a central feature of the schooling experience. Rather than seeing the differences between recent immigrants and those who were native born as differences in language and cultural familiarity, the testers saw differences in intelligence and aptitude. That 79% of Italians scored poorly—at the "feeble minded" level—was an indication that Italian immigration might have been a mistake, endangering the country.

After World War I, these tests came to affect Americans of all ages, in all fields; however, they came down most heavily on the young, those between the ages of three and twenty-one. But the larger burden fell on those who were poor and/or racially, ethnically, or culturally different, primarily because they have tended to score, on average, below others. Harvard psychologist David McClelland (1973) suggests that standardized tests have been so thoroughly ingrained into American schools that "it is a sign of backwardness not to have test scores in the school records of children." It would be good if we saw the continued use of these tests and the power we vest in them as the real sign of backwardness.

Covello viewed the tests, commonly used by 1920 in New York's schools, as a "plague." He noted:

> I will never forget one of those testing periods. Several hundred boys were tested at the lunchroom tables. The tests all had a time limit. The examiner stood on the platform with a stopwatch and a whistle, ready to signal the beginning and end of each test. . . . Even to those of us without specialized training in psychology, it was obvious these tests could not accomplish all that was claimed for them. (p. 150)

As I read Covello's account, I was drawn back to my first experience as a teacher having to give a standardized test. The "examiner" was at the schools' intercom mike, Oz-like, giving instructions to teachers and students in eighty classrooms. It was "1984" in 1957. We were all automatons. The students knew, I am sure, that I was extremely uncomfortable, visibly upset. It was about as unnatural as anything in a school could be. Who would take any of the results seriously? Yet the results went into the students' records, markers of their "innate abilities."

Noting that boys of Italian parentage scored lower than others, Covello exclaimed to his wife: "How is this? Do you mean to tell me that this [graph of results] is supposed to be conclusive evidence that

my boys have less brains? I don't believe it. My experience does not bear this out. I am not convinced" (p. 150).

Covello *shouldn't* have been convinced. The tests were flawed. Their claims should not have been accepted. Writing in *The Crisis*, W. E. B. DuBois (1920) suggested that the tests were just one more effort to prove "scientifically" that Northern Europeans were superior to all others. He notes, with regard to the Army tests related to "Negroes":

> For these tests were chosen 4,730 Negroes from Louisiana and Mississippi and 28,052 white recruits from Illinois. The result? Do you need to ask? . . . The intelligence of the average Southern Negro is equal to that of a 9-year-old white boy and that we should arrange our educational program to make waiters, porters, scavengers and the like of most Negroes. (p. 1183)

Walter Lippmann, writing in the *New Republic* (1922), wrote that

> Intelligence is not an abstraction like length and weight; it is an exceedingly complicated notion which nobody has yet succeeded in defining. . . . If the impression takes root that these tests really measure intelligence, that they contribute a sort of last judgment on the child's capacity, that they reveal "scientifically" his predetermined ability, then it would be a thousand times better if all the intelligence testers and their questionnaires were sunk without warning in the Sargasso Sea.

By 1924, in spite of all the doubts, the tests took hold. The testers presented their data to congressional committees, which were apparently convinced that the test scores meant something to worry about. Immigration was effectively stopped—with extremely low quotas for Southern and Eastern Europeans (who tended to score low on the various tests of the day and were labeled less desirable). It is bad enough that the tests affected immigration policy, but they have also affected negatively over many years the educational possibilities of large numbers of children, especially those who came from poor families, whose primary language was not English, or who were nonwhite. The recently published, surprisingly popular *Bell Curve*, by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1996), suggests that the matter of test scores and family background remains potent, which brings us back to the old arguments about genetic differences among racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, tests are again being used for purposes of promo-

tion and graduation. This should worry all educators, as there is little evidence that such directions enhance student learning and considerable evidence that poor children and children of color are negatively affected. The work of Fairtest, an organization devoted to reform in relation to testing practices, has been particularly important in raising critical issues related to educational testing. But reform won't come until teachers, school administrators, and parents join in the struggle to reduce the power of externally devised tests.

❖ 10 ❖

In our classrooms today, teachers are looking out increasingly at students of many racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. In many respects, our schools have never been as universal nor our population so varied. While Covello did not face as much diversity as currently exists, the issues were, nonetheless, not so different. Race, language, and cultural matters, alongside severe problems of housing, health care, and discrimination certainly dominated life in and around Covello's schools.

The discourse of multiculturalism is large at the present time, but it is played out mostly in the form of supplementary literature or regularly scheduled days, weeks, or months devoted to particular racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. This is clearly an advance, but it remains only a marginal response. What I have found most prevalent in the schools around race and cultural matters, however, is silence. Can we really believe that the barriers that now exist, that keep us from achieving the democratic ideals, the social justice, the economic progress that we hold out in our public discourse, will ever fall away without confronting more directly matters of race in the schools and in the society? How many more generations of silence can we endure? As it is, inquiries into matters of race in schools, colleges, and universities are awkward, guilt-ridden, sometimes hostile, but mostly absent. Where beyond schools and college classrooms are young people to learn to discuss matters of race with intelligence and sensitivity? How else but through active consideration of race will teachers and administrators in schools assume a higher level of awareness and take more seriously the effects of inequitable educational opportunity? I continue in this regard to be surprised by the denial of differential education for students of color—overplacement in special education and in lower-level courses, higher levels of suspension, lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates. When will such problems matter enough to actually do something about them? They don't exist by chance.

Covello was unusually sensitive to racial and cultural differences. He had heard enough of "wop" and "dago" to know that "kike," "nigger," and "spick" were closely related, that any effort to diminish another person was in itself diminishing. Race and culture were subjects to talk about, not hide.

One of the committees formed at the Benjamin Franklin Community High School was the Racial Committee. It had as a central purpose changing attitudes by constructing within the school more intercultural curriculum; assuring integrated clubs, committees, and social events; and encouraging in the community larger forums for discussion about issues relating to ethnicity and race.

By 1938, the school's curriculum, in every subject field, had intercultural content. It was a matter of genuine conversation in department meetings and in classrooms. Teachers assumed responsibility for learning more about their students and their cultural backgrounds. This is the kind of effort we should have more of today in every classroom and school.

Major conferences on racial and ethnic group relations were organized at the school. Two that received considerable public notice were the "Greater New York Conference on Racial and Cultural Relations in the United States" (in 1942) and "The Conference on Racial Conflict" (in 1943). Conference sponsors, beyond the Benjamin Franklin Racial Committee, were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the American Jewish Council, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the National Urban League and the American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born (Peebles, 1968).

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, currently New York's senior senator, provided as a high school student a set of resolutions to the 1942 Conference on Racial and Cultural Relations on behalf of the Benjamin Franklin Racial Committee. They were as follows: an end to racial segregation in the armed forces; the merging of Negro and white blood banks by the Red Cross; an increase in teachers representing various racial and cultural groups; and the appointment of a Director of Intercultural Education to support teachers in New York schools to promote intergroup understanding (Peebles, 1968). From a distance, it is hard not to be impressed by the fact that such issues were common enough to be discussed in the school setting and formulated as resolutions for debate. How many schools today are ready to examine racial attitudes in their schools and communities? or consider ways of assuring that teachers are more representative of local populations? or

Toward a Profession of Hope

May 6, 1998

Vito Perrone

After hearing from eight truly inspirational teachers, persons who are dedicated to their work, is there really much more to say? Yet, I am supposed to say something.

You should know that my intention of leaving an active life with the Teacher Education Programs has been personally conflicted as I believe that preparing the next generation of teachers is the most important work that an Ed. School can do. Everything else pales by comparison. In planning to leave the Teacher Education Programs, however, I have never thought of leaving my commitments to teachers, teaching and learning, schools and communities. That, after all, has been my professional life for what is now 42 years.

I want to conclude this celebration with some personal reflection on our collective work, though I will place that work within a large public context. This seems appropriate for the occasion, my way of adding to the previous presentations.

Teaching, as already noted, is a challenging profession with many inspirational aspects. It provides importantly a way to stay young at heart, to be forever an active learner, to be a special part of the world of the present *and* the future while having opportunities to delve into the past. It is in every respect a profession of hope. I feel privileged to be in such a profession and I trust all the teachers in the room have a similar sentiment.

We are rapidly moving toward the twenty-first century, the third millennium of our western calendar, something we are reminded of almost daily. I just wish we were ending the century in a better place socially and educationally. We haven't made sufficient progress around civil rights. There is still too much silence around matters of race and class. The languages and actions of fear and hatred, of self-consciousness and

guilt, of privilege and discrimination remain with us, still needing to be better understood. spoken about, moved away from. Our needs today, as they were at the beginning of the century, continue to rest around matters of equity, more supportive social and economic environments for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language or culture. The democratic society we need and desire is not yet with us. Education is not the whole of our future and the many imperatives that face us, but it is a central element. That understanding alone should keep us close to schools and other educating institutions.

In regard to schools, it seems clear that they are not yet on a large enough scale as good as they need to be, especially if we judge them against our largest hopes, the largest of possibilities. As a rule, students aren't challenged sufficiently, the materials typically available aren't rich enough in their potential, curricula are too often narrowly conceptualized, and the structures that dominate most of our schools tend to impede responsiveness to students, families and communities. Even as we know how to construct better schools, however, the commitments to do what is necessary to bring them about are not yet high enough.

Thinking about commitments to the better, I feel nothing but pain for the teachers present who started this week to administer a sequence of mandated state tests –16 to 18 hours in duration. And, of course, it can't be a joyful time for the students. Will the schools be better for the tests? I can't imagine why this would be the case.

Our need - - yesterday, today, and most likely tomorrow - - is to continue to see and understand teaching and learning and schooling in intellectual and moral terms, that belief that we ought not settle ever for limited technical ends. And all the testing represents one of those technical ends. I say this knowing well the complexities of the world we live in. The cynicism that exists about teaching and schools and adolescents is high and the boundaries which keep emerging certainly seem endless. Yet, that can't be the house any of us wants to inhabit and settle into. Our ongoing need is to seek more, to

keep laying out as articulately as we can the largest purposes – the most enriching and responsive schools, the most just and democratic society we can imagine. And we are all capable of imagining in large ways - - no matter what we currently see in our various school settings, no matter what we see in the streets and in our legislative halls. Remember that our moral imperative as teachers is always asking "What will be better for the students? How can their learning be enlarged? How can this school be more productive? More human in scale? More inspiring? More connected to the world? And lastly, to paraphrase Piaget, how are we helping our students to be in a position to change the world?

While the struggle for a universally generative and democratic education is great everywhere, the difficulties are most apparent in the cities. There is no doubt that many of the dilemmas of urban schools are connected to the seemingly intractable problems associated with poverty, overcrowding, inadequate housing, unemployment, insufficient health care, and drugs – but there are still ways of ensuring that these schools become far better. Why, for example, should children in our cities be in schools so poorly maintained, so shabby? Why should they be in classes of thirty to thirty-five when their needs for personal attention are so profound? Why don't they have well-stocked libraries and working laboratories? Why are arts programs viewed as a luxury? Why must the teachers and principals who are close to children and young people be limited by so many bureaucratic constraints that they have difficulty achieving their best work? Why must these schools have such limited fiscal resources? And why do we persist with all the school district boundaries that keep a form of aparteid so visible. We need to ask these questions over and over again. And we should not be satisfied with answers that keep the status quo intact.

I do not mean, by my previous comments, to ignore or minimize needs of schools in our midsize cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural communities. Children and young people, wherever they are, need our best efforts. I think we all understand that.

What is the possibility of change. For the construction of schools that serve students, families and communities at high levels? There are days when I have doubts about getting out from under the barriers that exist. But those days are actually few. It is hard not to have a genuine sense of possibility kept alive when faced each day by the TAC, MCMS and UTEP students that I am privileged to work with. When I add to that the many thoughtful mentors in our various partnership schools my optimism soars.

Moreover, I need to acknowledge that I have not been in a school where I didn't meet teachers wanting to reaffirm in active ways the commitments that originally brought them to teaching, and build more constructive and democratic learning environments for their students. Such energy needs to be reinvigorated and actively supported. That, of course, is one of the purposes of Harvard's programs in teacher education.

I have used on several occasions the language of democratic education. That means something large for me. When John Dewey was asked about the purpose of schools and the ongoing interchange of teachers and students, he had little trouble responding. It was always about democracy. Keeping that view before us helps us consider a much more powerful education than we see day in and day out.

In the world of early-twentieth-century progressivism, school meetings were often closed with a ritualistic reading of Walt Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth" (Whitman, [1855] 1973). That was a good, uplifting tradition. Helen Vendler chose to read this Whitman poem a year ago at one of our forums. It was inspiring to hear her. I want to close with a few of the lines as a way to remind us, as well, that our work is always about children, young people and development.

> There was a child went forth every day,
>
> And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
>
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
>
> Or for many years, or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,

And grass, and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird.

....

And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became part of him.

And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him, and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb, and birth'd him,

They gave this child more of themselves than that;

They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and swelling heart,

....

The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,

The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless in,

The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,

These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.