THEODORE R. SIZER

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN
EMERITUS,
COALITION OF ESSENTIAL
SCHOOLS;
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR
EMERITUS, BROWN
UNIVERSITY

Theodore R. Sizer

Theodore R. Sizer is the founder and chairman emeritus of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national network of schools and Centers engaged in restructuring and redesigning schools to promote better student learning and achievement. He is University Professor Emeritus at Brown University where he served as chair of the Education Department from 1984 to 1989. Before coming to Brown, Sizer was professor and dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1964-72) and headmaster of Phillips (Andover) Academy (1972-81). Sizer earned a B.A. at Yale and a M.A.T. and Ph.D. in History at Harvard. Three of his books, *Horace's Compromise* (1985), *Horace's School* (1992) and *Horace's Hope* (1996), published by Houghton Mifflin, explore the motivation and the ideas of the Essential school reform effort. Sizer joined his wife, Nancy Faust Sizer, for the1998-99 school year as the acting co-principal of the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Devens, Massachusetts where he now serves as a trustee. He and his wife are co-authors of the recently published book, *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (Beacon Press). Currently, Dr. Sizer is teaching a course on education policy at Brandeis University as well as co-teaching a secondary school design course with Nancy Faust Sizer at Harvard University.

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Theodore R. Sizer

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Born, New Haven, Connecticut, 1932
Married to Nancy Faust Sizer, four children, three children-in-law, ten grandchildren

EDUCATION

Yale University, B.A. in English Literature, 1953
Harvard University: M.A.T. in Social Studies, 1957
Ph.D. in Education and American History, 1961

EMPLOYMENT

U.S. Army, 1953-55
Roxbury Latin School, teacher of English and mathematics, 1955-56
Melbourne (Australia) Grammar School, teacher of history and geography, 1958
Harvard University: Assistant Professor of Education and Director, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, 1961-64
Dean, Graduate School of Education, 1964-72
University of Bristol (U.K.), Visiting Professor, 1971
Phillips Academy (Andover), Headmaster and Instructor in History, 1972-81
A Study of High Schools, Chairman, 1981-84
Brown University: Education Department – Visiting Professor, Spring 1983;
  Professor of Education, 1984-1996
  Department Chairman, 1984-89
  Walter H. Annenberg Professor, 1993-94
Coalition of Essential Schools, Chairman Emeritus, 1984-
Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Director, 1994-1996
University Professor, 1994-1996
University Professor Emeritus, 1996-
Harvard University, Lecturer; Visiting Professor, 1997-98; 1999; 2000-
Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School: Trustee, 1995-
Acting co-Principal (with Nancy F. Sizer), 1998-99
Brandeis University; Visiting Professor, 2000-

PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS

Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century (Yale University Press, 1964)
(ed.) *The Age of the Academies* (Teachers College Press, 1964)
(ed.) *Religion and Public Education* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967)
(ed. with Nancy F. Sizer) *Moral Education: Five Lectures* (Harvard University Press, 1970)
Places for Learning, Places for Joy: Speculations on American School Reform (Harvard University Press, 1972)
Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, 1984; rev. ed., 1985; with new preface, 1992)
Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, 1992)
Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, September, 1996
(with Nancy F. Sizer) *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (Beacon Press, 1999)

HONORS

Ped.D., Lawrence University, 1969
Guggenheim Fellow, 1971
Litt.D., Union College, 1972
Anthony Wayne Award, Wayne State University, 1981

L.L.D., Connecticut College, 1984

L.H.D., Williams College, 1984
L.H.D., University of Massachusetts/Lowell, 1985
L.H.D., Dartmouth College, 1985
L.H.D., Lafayette College, 1991
Teachers College Medal, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1991
L.H.D., Webster University, 1992
L.H.D., Indiana University, 1993
L.H.D., Mount Holyoke College, 1993
L.H.D., University of Maine, 1993
L.H.D., Iona College, 1995
L.H.D., Long Island University, 1996
L.H.D., Bridgewater State College, 1996
L.H.D., Wheaton College, 1997
Litt.D., State University of New York-Potsdam, 1997
L.H.D., Brown University, 1998
L.H.D., Marymount Manhattan College, 1999

Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995-
Fellow, American Philosophical Society, 1996-
Gold Medal for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, CASE, 1988
Member, National Academy of Education, 1988-
Harold W. McGraw Prize in Education, 1991
James Bryant Conant Award, Education Commission of the States, 1992
Distinguished Service Award, Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992
Distinguished Service Award, Council for American Private Education, 1993
National Award of Distinction, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1993
Alumni Award, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1994
Member, National Advisory Council, Scholastic Inc., 1996
President's Medal, Brown University, 1996
President's Medal, Fitchburg State College, 1998
Claude M. Fuess Award, Phillips Academy, 1999
President's Medal, George Washington University (with Nancy F. Sizer), 2000

Citations from:
- American Federation of Teachers
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Phillips Exeter Academy
- Chambers of Commerce in Boston and Andover
- Lehigh University Education Alumni (1991)
- National Association of College Admissions Counsellors (1991)
- United Nations of Greater Boston (1999)

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Theodore Sizer

Biography

Ted Sizer is arguably the leading educational reformer in the United States. He is University Professor Emeritus at Brown University and chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, founded in 1983. Professor Sizer received his B.A. from Yale, his doctorate from Harvard and held several teaching positions before becoming dean of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard and, subsequently, the headmaster of Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass. He is the Founding Director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. After retiring from Brown University, Professor Sizer took a position as Head of the Francis W. Parker Essential School. Since the late 1970s, he has worked with hundreds of high schools, studying the development and design of the American education system. Professor Sizer has published widely, including his acclaimed Horace-Series: *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (1984), *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School* (1992) and *Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School* (1997). His most recent work is *The Students are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (together with Nancy Faust Sizer, 1999).

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Professional development for the future

Presentation (Edited)
Audio (Edited/RealAudio)
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Biography

I've been asked to talk a bit about professional development for the future. I want to make two definitions and provide a reservation. The first definition is mine of professional development. All sorts of definitions may have come up, and so this is, I'm taking a defensive stance in calling professional development for my purposes the deliberate activity which broadens and deepens educators' work. I'm going to say a few things about the future. What I see ahead, what I will describe as not necessarily what I would like to see ahead. It is rather an attempt to weigh what may be coming down toward us. And the reservation is the fact that I'm a high school person, is that my entire teaching career, and as a scholarly work, I've been involved with adolescents. And I have learned enough about elementary schools to know that I don't know enough about elementary schools. So in my comments, I am talking about schooling for adolescents.

Future. What ... what are the trends? I think one is that people in the developed world, and everybody in this room represents the developed world, are ever more mobile, is that we move. And therefore, we are breaking up in, across our nations, the deliberate multi-generational and therefore stable communities.

A second trend is that culture across the developed world is ever more common, homogenized, and commercial. Is that, it isn't just the lingo, the McDonald's stuff. It is a way we look at the world. It's easier for all of us to talk about these things today, than it would have been 45 years ago. And that is because we are subtly and in some cases, less subtly, that is deliberately, seeing the world through common lenses. We have an emerging developed global culture.

Third trend, that is that information in the developed world, information for all citizens, not just those in education and commerce, not just for the elites, the way everybody gets his or her information has profoundly changed even in the last ten years in the developed world. And part of that goes back to my second assumption, which is part of the cultural homogeneity that is emerging here. Secondly, this information is not moving hierarchically. In the United States, the immense cultural impact of three major networks has just been blown away. And that there's no way we can shut off or control or license the movement of information, even the movement of that information into very remote places or into the houses of people who are not part of the elite. That is, we are ceasing becoming as much a hierarchical culture, and increasingly becoming a lateral culture. And therefore the values, the values that this culture picks up are not modulated by the power elites. They are subject really to the market, not to a political or cultural leadership.

It's the notion that a deliberate education in technology which in the short range may be a necessity, will be in the long range a necessity I think is highly challengeable. Now these trends, it seems to me, have many implications for secondary schools. Certainly schools are less likely to be community based. And thus, thereby losing the institutional attachments of local communities, and therefore their political and financial support. Schools are less likely, far less likely, already are far less likely, to be perceived as the principal knowledge dispenser of the culture. Knowledge information is coming in to us in different ways, in a flood. Furthermore, unless radically changed, schools that you and I know and love and work in will be considered increasingly irrelevant. And it seems to me the evidence of this is very much around us in the United States.

We are confronted with a massive contradiction, enormous political rhetoric, table pounding about low standards and this and that and the other thing as the top of the public agenda. But do not listen to what the politicians say. Let's look at how they spend their money. And the most interesting thing about this day of education reform is the amount of money is pitiful. And I think you tell more about a politician to see how she votes on a budget, than by what she says. And our leaders, frankly, have lost confidence in the system that we have. They may have some confidence in us, still. But the 1936 Ford that we're driving attracts from them limited confidence. And finally, into that vacuum of distrust and confusion on the part of our political leaders, new entities to provide schooling will emerge. They will fill a vacuum.

And a new school, I think, again, if you look at these trends, will be less a place. School isn't a place. I'm not the building principal. It will be more a program which is a reflection of an idea. And new schools will be less places and more small, supple communities of choice. And that the buildings, in so far that they are buildings will look more like architects' office, than like motels. Right now most of our schools look like motels. All the rooms, and great long corridors, all the same. The emphasis on the use of technology will be very heavy. And the secondary school students will be asked to work, not only, you know, flipping burgers in McDonald's, more than the pressure for their own learning will be placed on them rather than on their teachers. Which will lead to a dramatic increase of home schooling. The fastest growing educational school reform movement in the United States is, you know, in numbers, if not in percentage yet, is parents pulling their kids out of school and schooling them at all. And so you won't visit a school. It won't be a site as much as it is now.

Such schools will be performance, not age based. I mean the standards movement has driven this in. It's the way it used to be in the 19th century. Re-captured the United States, the 19th century. It will be performance based, not age based. So you won't have a ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade. You will have work for kids who are preparing to meet certain kinds of standards. And so school will no longer a march over a prescribed and standardized program, but rather a series of exercise to demonstrate the meeting of standards. So these schools will be messy. We'll have to know the kids very well indeed, to know whether they know what they need to know, rather than to say, well they took eleventh grade U.S. history. There will be in this country and I can only speak in this regard from this side of the Atlantic, a growing variety of operating authorities. There won't be one single operating authority. There are already, this is already emerging. There will be public schools run by localities. There will be public schools run by states, long tradition of state wide vo-techs. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts where I work, our charter schools are state schools. They're not local schools. There will be public independent schools again, like the Massachusetts charters, is that we control many of the things which those in the narrowly defined public sector do not control. Higher authorities tell the principals what to do.

Continue with *Professional Development for the Future*

AaBb ------Theordore Sizer---------

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From the Connecticut Post, June 2, 1999
Principal intriques ed board
By Jarret Liotta

A special visit Tuesday night by a renowned educator gave the school board plenty of new food for thought.

Author and charter school principal Theodore Sizer came to offer his opinion about whether the town should create a separate ninth-grade school to ease overcrowding. His philosophy on education held the board members and public spellbound.

Sizer is principal of Parker School, which draws students from 22 communities in northeast Massachusetts. His books include "Horace's Compromise."

"You should see your faces," parent Dorothy Domeika told the board. She said later that Sizer's comments had the members "leaning forward" in their seats.

"He was really hitting all the buttons that made them run for the Board of Education for six bloody years," she said.

**Regarding a freshman campus, Sizer said:
"I would have deep misgivings
to isolate an age group."**

He said he would prefer four or five small high schools. He said that some activities, such as an orchestra, could be communal.

"House plans are great as long as the people in them have real authority, budgets, power," he said. "I prefer going all the way and making them separate schools.

"If you are growing, you have to start new things, so don't start them like the old things."

Because of the range of knowledge among students, a comprehensive high school never is truly comprehensive. Fewer offerings, effectively taught, is a more valuable approach called teaching "selection," he said.

"Do a few things very well indeed," he said. "Do the essentials very well indeed, in an exciting powerful way that grabs kids."

Ted Sizer's Essential Principles

Many people are now familiar with Ted Sizer and his efforts and ideas in redesigning the American high school. At MNCS we will informally adopt the following nine common principles in an effort to create the most responsive, caring and successful school possible:

1. Schools should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be comprehensive, if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple; that each student should master a limited number of skills and areas of knowledge. "Less is more!"

3. The school's goals should apply to all students, although the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed to a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students.

5. The governing metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services.

6. Students entering the secondary program should demonstrate competence in language and elementary mathematics. Intensive remedial assistance should be provided to meet rigorous standards. The diploma is awarded when earned, and after a successful final demonstration of mastery.

7. The tone of the school should stress values of high expectations (devoid of threats); of trust (until abused); and of decency (values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Appropriate incentives should be emphasized and parents treated as essential collaborators.

8. The principals and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and specialists second. The staff should expect multiple obligations and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Administrative and budget targets should include substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that of traditional schools by more than 10 percent.

Education Week on the Web December 4, 1996

The Essential Ted Sizer By David Ruenzel

America's most famous education reformer is ready for a rest. After a decade of leading the charge to radically change the nation's schools, he's battle weary but as idealistic and hopeful as ever.

It's 8 a.m., and Theodore Sizer, the nation's most famous school reformer, looks like he's just punched out of the third shift. Wearing walking shoes and an open-collar shirt, the 64-year-old Sizer is boyishly handsome, with a smile out of a crew team photo. Still, weariness is etched into his face. After all, for years he has held down two of the most difficult jobs in American education--as the chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools and the director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform--not to mention his professorship at Brown University. And he just wrapped up work on *Horace's Hope* , the third volume of his school-reform trilogy.

But Sizer is about to get a rest. Or as much of a rest as the peripatetic Sizer will permit himself. On this flawless spring morning, he is on the eve of announcing his resignation from the Annenberg Institute, the school-reform and research organization he has directed since it was launched in 1993 with an extraordinary $50 million gift from publisher Walter Annenberg. And while Sizer will remain chairman of the coalition, one of the nation's most prominent education-reform initiatives with more than 1,000 member schools, he is removing himself from its day-to-day operations. "The coalition should not be led by a person who has worked in a school no more recently than 1981," he says. "My title of chairman may mean little more than when I arrive at the airport, someone will meet the plane."

Indeed, Sizer may be removing himself from the rat race, but he won't be in hiding. He will still serve as the coalition's ambassador, crisscrossing the country, preaching--as he has for more than a decade--the by-now-familiar gospel of "less is more," "student as worker," "diploma by exhibition." Between trips, he plans to dig in the garden at his home in central Massachusetts and work on a book he is writing with his wife, Nancy, on moral education.

But this morning, at Annenberg's second-annual Research Symposium, held at the University of Rhode Island in May, Sizer isn't doing any preaching. He's as placid as the lake outside the window, offering only a few gentle queries and crystallizing remarks. For the most part, Sizer is simply listening. And he can't, it would seem, be too happy with much of what he's hearing.

The discussion about present and future institute projects and the ways they dovetail is "fuzzy"--an adjective even some of Sizer's admirers use to describe the efforts of both the institute and the coalition. Some of the trouble has to do with the lack of a clear distinction between the two organizations, which are supposed to be separate. "It's all very confusing, trying to explain the difference," Sizer says.

"The coalition is a project that has focus; the institute is by design a program that is to serve a reasonable number of masters. But until the institute is established as an independent entity, this confusion will continue. My departure will help because my involvement with the coalition makes it very difficult to talk about the institute. And there's the pressure of numbers with the coalition--the mail, the phone calls."

A handout for the symposium explains that the Annenberg Institute supports dozens of projects designed "to promote, sponsor, study, and protect a variety of efforts to rethink and to reform schools for American children," and it seems as if the meeting's participants--more than 70 teachers, scholars, researchers, and administrators--are hearing about them all. There is "The Fifty Schools Project Evaluation," "The Advanced Digital Environments Project," "The Dollars Following the Child Project," "The Teaching Repertoire Project," and on and on. The work of each is presented in five- or 10-minute bursts. It's overload--like running through the Louvre, a guide steering you from room to room so you can take in as many paintings as possible and still catch the tour bus. Many of the projects are intriguing and well thought out, such as a study on how college-admissions procedures, with their emphasis on SAT scores and grade-point averages, impede thoughtful K-12 school reform. But others raise eyebrows. They lack definition, a clear purpose.

A case in point is the upcoming "Conference on North American School Reform and Research," which will, according to the handout, "promote a comparative look at school reform in Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. contexts."

"I fail to get the point," says scholar Seymour Sarason, the author of numerous pessimistic tomes, including *The Predictable Failure of School Reform*. At 77, Sarason, who is attending the symposium as a "critical friend," is the grand curmudgeon of the reform movement.

"That may be because I failed to communicate it and because I inherited the project," says presenter Nancy Hoffman. "It's policymakers and practitioners coming together to have conversation to inform each other about what goes on in their countries."

"Then the goal would be?" someone asks.

Hoffman says a few words about ethnicity and culture, about what migrant workers might have in common with American Indians on the Canadian border, and then she surrenders. "I don't know if I can say anything more," she says, "because I don't know anything more."

Sarason shakes his head. "The question is, 'Hey, should Annenberg put its marbles into something like this?'"

Sizer says nothing about this project, but he expresses his doubts about a later one titled "Leadership, Race, and Gender." The presenter, Nancy Mohr, has the group read a three-page transcript of a white principal and a Hispanic school director talking about race and leadership. After the group has skimmed it, Mohr says, "I

want to have a dialogue with people. How effective are these voices?"

For Sizer, the system—and the destructive impact it can have upon children—should always be a prime topic of conversation.

There's a pause; people sneak glances at one another. Then an obviously bemused Sizer asks how the three elements in the topic relate. "I don't know yet," Mohr says. Several participants throw jabs: "There's so much rhetoric about this topic already"; "There are so many words about race"; "In all these projects, there is an absence of parents." Sarason, with his customary frankness, adds, "I know of no evidence that there is a high correlation between race, gender, and leadership--I mean, so what?"

Finally, Robert Hampel, a professor at the University of Delaware and the author of *The Last Little Citadel*, says, "All of these projects are very ambitious--some would keep you busy for years and years. Do you have time, energy, money?"

Sizer's face shows no sign of perturbation, but he must be gnashing his teeth. After all, Sizer is the big-picture guy, the pristine thinker who argued in his popular 1984 book, *Horace's Compromise*, that school reform didn't mean a damn thing if it didn't change the ways teachers and kids think about learning. He must find the nagging, make-busy aspects of these projects maddening, and he seems to say so in a rambling summation of the morning session that appears, upon close inspection, to be a very diplomatic reprimand.

"The Annenberg Institute is not governmentally related," Sizer says. "It doesn't have the responsibility of preparing people for schools as they are. Our responsibility is to fill the silences, and when someone says something wrong to respectfully assert the contrary." None of the projects, he continues, addresses "accountability, the responsibility of the larger political system to provide adequate funding, the issue of fairness. The silence is fascinating as well as horrifying."

For Sizer, the system--and the destructive effect it can have upon children--should always be a prime topic of conversation. In fact, the system, that remote amalgam of politicians, administrators, and education schools, is a virtual obsession. Sizer sees it as having so conventionalized the educational madness that we hardly notice: bureaucrats defending standardized tests, think tanks insisting that class size doesn't matter, politicians cutting funds for already desperately poor schools. "Hierarchical bureaucracy stifles initiative at its base," Sizer writes in *Horace's Compromise*, "and given the idiosyncrasies of adolescents, the fragility of their motivations, and the needs for their teachers and principals to be strong, inspiring, and flexible people, this aspect of the system can be devastating."

None of the Annenberg Institute's projects deals with larger issues of accountability, responsibility, and fairness of political systems. "The silence," says Sizer, "is fascinating as well as horrifying."

At the end of the day, Sarason and a number of other critical friends offer the assembled participants their assessment of the symposium and the institute's work. They are respectful but less than flattering. Their common complaint is "fuzziness."

Steve Seidel of Harvard University's Project Zero says the sessions reminded him of the children's books with panels that kids flip to create funny, composite pictures of animals. "That's what I saw this morning, a funny animal," he says. "Is there a central core to the direction of the research?"

David Smith, the co-director of Central Park East Secondary School in New York City, speaks along the same lines. "The mission was not clear," he says. "If we're going to have papers put out by the institute, we ought to say this is why we're putting our money and reputation behind it."

Sarason speaks last. He says he admires the Annenberg Institute for its unprecedented willingness to let outsiders examine its efforts. Then he lists his criticisms with a hint of relish. The institute has no list of priorities, he says, and as a result is trying to do too much. There is no "underlying view" unifying its multipronged initiatives. Finally, he says, no project calls for major change in the system; the projects amount to difficult repair jobs, which means the institute will always be going "uphill on a treadmill." Sarason ends the day with a Jewish joke: "Things could be worse; I could be in your shoes."

Sizer laughs harder than anyone--perhaps because he knows someone else will soon be standing in his shoes.

"during times of duress is able to keep his balance and not let life get the better of him." Horace, whom we first meet in *Horace's Compromise*, endures trouble with calm circumspection, rising above petty squabbles to bring bickering colleagues together. He's by nature a conciliator. Students trust him and seek his counsel outside the classroom.

As goes Horace, so goes Sizer. Paula Evans, the director of professional development at the Annenberg Institute and someone who has taught classes with Sizer at Brown, says, "Some of the students would characterize me as 'mom' and Ted as 'God.' They're almost reverential in their respect for him. He has an open-door policy for everyone who wants to talk with him, and he can actually carry on a conversation with 150 students."

Sizer is an unusual public figure in that he seems to have no enemies, even among those who strongly disagree with his views. For this, Evans credits his ability to listen to ideas different from his own. "It's not that Ted feels that all ideas are equal or that he's about to change his stripes," she says. "It's rather that Ted has a respect for others that makes it very difficult for people to see him as an enemy. I've never, ever, heard him call anyone stupid. I think it has to do with his sense of the human condition, his belief that he has a basic responsibility to other people."

Patricia Wasley, an author and researcher for the Coalition of Essential Schools, says, "Ted has an amazing ability to tolerate criticism. It has to do with his inherent optimism. He allows people to raise negative aspects because he feels they can be worked through. He's just not self-protective as so many people are." She recalls a meeting at which the conservative education critic and gadfly Chester Finn attacked the coalition for its "softness." His invective made everyone squirm but Sizer, who sat in a corner with an amused smile on his face.

Yet as similar as Sizer and Horace may be in temperament, they have different backgrounds. For starters, Horace is a creature of the public school. When we first meet him in *Horace's Compromise* , he's 53 (about the age of Sizer at the time), an "old pro" who has spent 28 years trying to get his students to grapple with the likes of Shakespeare. To make ends meet, he works part time at a family liquor store. His daughter, a first-year associate at a law firm, out-earns him. Everything about Horace's daily environment is classic public school: the bells, the announcements over the public-address system, the vinyl-covered sofas and chairs in the faculty lounge, the teacher chitchat.

Sizer, on the other hand, is quintessentially prep, as befits someone who has spent much of his life in elite boarding schools and Ivy League universities. He has a way of looking tweedy even when he is not wearing tweeds. He has been described as "Kennedyesque," which isn't much of a stretch. He is erudite and charming and has a great capacity for putting people at ease.

A self-described "faculty brat," Sizer is the son of a Yale University art-history professor, the last of six children. He was born in New Haven, Conn., but was raised on a family farm in northern New England by his mother and a German refugee when his father went off to serve in World War II. Later, after attending the Pomfret School, a small boarding school in Connecticut, and then Yale, Sizer also served in the military--during the Korean War. Stationed in Germany, he was an artillery training officer. It was his first experience teaching, and he learned something about the importance of high expectations. "The idea that you could use an excuse for not learning was unthinkable," Sizer says. "No one would think of saying, 'Well, he doesn't speak much English, only Spanish, so go easy on him,' or 'He doesn't know how to add.'"

After his discharge, Sizer taught in Australia for a year and then returned to the United States, enrolling at Harvard where he eventually received a Ph.D. in education and American history. Sizer's thesis, perhaps more than anything else, launched him on his current path. It was on late 19th-century school reform in general and the work of the Committee of Ten in particular.

> **"Make an argument on philosophical grounds, and it won't get into the newspaper. Talk about test scores or how many teenage mothers wear size 6 shoes, and it will end up on page one."** Ted Sizer

Chaired by Harvard President Charles Eliot, the Committee of Ten released an influential report in 1893 arguing that high schools should develop and

discipline the minds of their students by focusing on academic subject matter. Students, the committee stated, should take at least four years of English and foreign language and three years each of history, mathematics, and science. All students should take college-preparatory coursework, even though the committee acknowledged that only a small percentage would go on to higher education. The goal was for all youngsters to be exposed to the same demanding subjects, all taught in more or less the same way. "The argument in the report itself is pedestrian," Sizer says. "It's not a sonorous, persuasive argument."

The report included a chart of the ideal high school curriculum, listing, with a watchmaker's precision, the subjects and the number of periods per week each course should be taught. "What school people did is take this chart and put it into place so that this thing called 'the period' begins to reign," Sizer says. "A subject taught five periods a week is supposedly more important than one taught three periods a week."

The Committee of Ten had a double-edged goal: It wanted to promote academic rigor, but, more important, it wanted to bring order to a rapidly developing national school system lacking uniform standards. The committee's report was, in essence, a war against chaos. But along with the rage for order, Sizer asserts, came "the mechanizationof schooling, the reduction of serious schooling to the mere passage of time. They thought if you studied Latin five days a week, something good will come out of it."

The legacy of the committee and its chart and periods, Sizer says, is that no one in education today takes anything seriously unless there's a number attached. "Make an argument on philosophical grounds, and it won't get into the newspaper," he says. "Talk about test scores or how many teenage mothers wear size 6 shoes, and it will end up on Page One."

The experience of the Committee of Ten showed Sizer that the impact of specific reforms is often far different than what is envisioned. The committee had hoped to initiate a more intellectual approach to schooling, but many schools, Sizer says, simply became "clones of the committee's detailed report."

As far as Sizer is concerned, any blueprint for reform is almost hopelessly contingent. The penthouse may end up looking like a basement apartment, just as the committee's goal of rigor and standards ended up as seat time. This is why Sizer has always insisted that teachers should be involved in the creation of the blueprint; if it's handed down to them, they'll treat it like a court summons. It is also why Sizer is fearful of the current movement toward national education standards.

After earning his Ph.D., Sizer became an assistant professor of education at Harvard. Then in 1964, at the age of 31, he was named--thanks to what he modestly characterizes as a "stroke of fortune"--the dean of the Harvard graduate school of education. It was, Sizer says, an extraordinary time; he shared the coffeepot with such intellectual heavyweights as Daniel Moynihan and Nathan Glazer.

But toward the end of the '60s, Sizer was already thinking about moving on. Being dean during that turbulent decade was exhausting. Besides, he wanted to get out of the ivory tower and into the trenches--that is, into a real school. Academic work couldn't substitute for real experience. "I felt utterly spurious as a dean," Sizer says. "I'd get these phone calls from newspapers asking me what I thought about 'x' or 'y' in schools. I was supposed to know, but I didn't."

Sizer wanted to become a high school principal, in part because his wife taught high school and his kids were about to enroll. "I had this romantic idea about how our family would be going to high school together," Sizer says. First he thought about becoming a public school principal but found he lacked the appropriate credentials. So he did the next best thing: He became headmaster of a private school--the elite Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass.

Theodore R. Sizer

Theodore R. Sizer is the founder and chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national network of schools and Centers engaged in restructuring and redesigning schools to promote better student learning and achievement.

He is University Professor Emeritus at Brown University where he served as chair of the Education Department from 1984 to 1989. Before coming to Brown, Sizer was professor and dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1964-72) and headmaster of Phillips (Andover) Academy (1972-81).

Sizer earned a B.A. at Yale and a M.A.T. and Ph.D. in History at Harvard. Three of his books, Horace's Compromise (1985), Horace's School (1992) and Horace's Hope (1996), published by Houghton Mifflin, explore the motivation and the ideas of the Essential school reform effort.

Sizer currently joins his wife as Acting Principal of the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, one of the first Massachusetts Charter schools authorized under the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993.

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Dr. Theodore Sizer

Dr. Theodore Sizer has been professor of education at Brown University since 1984, serving as chair of the Education Department from 1984 to 1989. Before coming to Brown, Sizer was professor and dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1964-1972) and headmaster of Phillips (Andover) Academy (1972-1981). Sizer earned a BA at Yale and an MAT and Ph.D. in History at Harvard. Two of his books, *Horace's Compromise* and *Horace's School*, explore the motivation and the ideas of the Essential school reform effort.

How did CES come to be out of *A Study of High Schools*?
What are the principles behind CES?
Who manages CES?
Tell me about CES membership.
What forms of research are conducted by CES?
Tell me about CES' professional development activities.
I'd like to learn more about CES' collaborative work.
How can I learn more about CES?
I'd like to examine other reform styles.

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The Nine Common Principles

THE COALITION and its member schools are guided by nine "Common Principles." These Principles grew out of the *Study of High Schools*. They call broadly for schools:

- To help students focus their minds towards learning well
- To set clear and simple goals about the intellectual skills and knowledge to be mastered by all the schools' students
- To guarantee that all students are included within the process
- To lower teacher/student loads, personalize teaching and curriculum and make student work the center of classroom activity
- To operate on a "student-as-worker" metaphor
- To award diplomas based on students exhibition of their mastery of the school's program
- To create an atmosphere of trust and respect for the school, faculty, students and parents
- To emphasize general education ahead of singular expertise in a specific discipline
- To accomplish such changes with no more than a ten percent increase in the school's budget

How did CES come to be out of *A Study of High Schools*?
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News From Brown

The Brown University News Bureau

Distributed May 29, 1996
Contact: Tracie Sweeney

Education reformer is retiring from faculty

Theodore R. Sizer receives President's Medal at Commencement

Theodore R. Sizer, University Professor and professor of education, received the President's Medal - the highest honor a Brown president may bestow - for his commitment to education reform. Sizer is retiring from Brown and stepping down as director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform on June 30, but will remain chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, which he founded in 1983.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- Brown University President Vartan Gregorian has awarded a President's Medal, the highest honor a Brown president may bestow, to Theodore R. Sizer, who will be retiring as University Professor and professor of education at Brown University effective June 30, 1996. The presentation was made during Commencement ceremonies on The College Green Monday, May 27.

Sizer, arguably the nation's leading educational reformer, is retiring from Brown to work exclusively on education reform projects. He will step down as director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, but will continue to serve as chair of the national Coalition of Essential Schools, founded by Sizer in 1983 and headquartered at Brown. His work with the Coalition will center around an extensive schedule of school visits that will give him an opportunity to assess the state of the Coalition and its future agenda. The Coalition, which now includes more than 1,000 affiliated schools, currently is restructuring to vest authority in a dozen or more regional centers. Representatives of these centers will form a national governing body, which will elect an executive committee that will oversee the work of a small national staff to be based at Brown.

The Annenberg Institute for Education Reform was founded in October 1993 as the National Institute for School Reform. It was renamed in recognition of a $50-million gift from Ambassador Walter Annenberg in conjunction with his half-billion-dollar Challenge to the Nation. The Institute promotes and advocates the serious redesign of American schools through research, professional development and collaboration with educators to reshape teaching, learning, school structure and culture. It also strives to engage the public to become advocates for and participants in the redesign of schools within their communities. Approximately one-third of the Institute's work in school redesign occurs with and in Coalition schools.

Since the late 1970s, Sizer has worked with hundreds of high schools, studying the development and design of the American education system. His research was first published in 1984 in the acclaimed *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School.* The book was followed in 1992 by *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School.* The third of the series, *Horace's Hope,* is due to be published later this year.

Sizer received his B.A. from Yale University, and his M.A.T. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He held several teaching positions before becoming dean of the School of Education at Harvard and subsequently headmaster of Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass. He joined the faculty at Brown in 1984.

The President's Medal honors a person who has achieved distinction in a particular field, including education, scholarship, public service, the arts or philanthropy. Awarded at the president's discretion, the medal recognizes individuals for their achievements without regard to their service or relationship to Brown. It has been awarded three times before.

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Learning Curve

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Education Issue

Expert Critiques

Theodore Sizer, a professor emeritus at Brown University, is the acting principal of the Parker Charter School in Devens, Mass. Sizer has written three books on redesigning high schools. He is also the founder and chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a high school reform movement started in the 1980's.

You have had a lot of contact with the education press over the years. What trends, if any, do you see in the reporting?
It's certainly a lot better than it used to be, for reasons having to do with the political emergence of schooling as an issue. So you get more coverage, and the articles are toward the front of the paper. The *New York Times* even has a few right-hand columns devoted to education stories now, which would've been unthinkable ten years ago. A lot of educators have said, "The press never pays any attention to us, that's why we're having so much trouble." Now they say, "The press is paying so much attention to us, that's why we have so much trouble."

Has the quality or sophistication of the reporting improved also?
Yes, but what has struck me most are the silences, what isn't being written about. The agenda is pretty much being controlled by the education establishment. That means the systemic reform efforts get big play, and the newsworthy engine for those articles are test scores, or anything you reduce to numbers, such as truancy rates, dropout rates, violence statistics. So of course, all of that is a distortion if it's not balanced with something else.

How is the educational establishment driving these stories?
To oversimplify a bit, it's a policy approach that goes like this: We will set general goals and objectives for education, then we will create curriculum frameworks that reflect the goals and objectives, then we will create assessments that measure the frameworks, and then if the students do well, we will have met this high standard. So it's a strategy that is very

rational, and bipartisan, and very dominant -- there is not a state now that doesn't have a testing program. So that's what gets the news. But I think it is quite a challengeable strategy.

You think reporters are not challenging the standards and testing movement enough?
I think, by and large, the press is far too trusting. I see few articles that show the reporters have looked carefully at what the test score's record is on the ability to predict. Very few test scores predict much, and the testing community knows that, but the public doesn't. So people have drifted into the view that a rigorous education is the same thing as a high test score. A high test score is one part of it, but it's only one part. We don't hear about the other parts, so we trivialize serious education as a result.

How should reporters be scrutinizing testing more thoroughly?
Tests tend to test how one individual performs on that kind of test. In our school, we've learned that our kids do so much better on multiple choice than on free writing. The reason for that is ironic, because we emphasize writing a lot in these schools, but not formulaic writing. These tests call for answers in which you state a problem, then answer the question. So our kids, who are quite artful in their writing, score quite low on writing. So you always have to ask, "What's the test?" Very few articles give any independent evaluation from educators about the value of these tests -- the kind of evaluation you would get in medical research, for example. So it's like taking a temperature in a hospital. It's one important index, but it's only one. We're judging kids on the basis of their temperatures.

You mentioned dropout and truancy rates. Do you think this is another area where reporters are not challenging the data?
Having spent a lot of time at a lot of schools over the past 20 years, I can say there are a lot of schools where I would be a dropout. There are some schools where it would be a rational act to drop out. It sounds flip, but it's deeply troubling to me how academically boring and weak is the work in some high schools, how much wasted time there is.

In some situations, in extreme situations, where schools are physically dangerous, dropping out is a rational act. So simply getting more truancy officers misses the point.

So reporting on the figures may have more to do with the school than the students.
It's not for nothing that some inner-city high schools are very

safe and demanding and interesting schools. The bad-kids explanation may be very incomplete and unfair.

For a more meaningful analysis, reporters need to be at the schools.
All too few policy people or active journalists hang around schools long enough to get away from the well-orchestrated visits over coffee with the principal, and I say this having been a principal who served coffee many times. But if a student is picked at random and you shadow that student for a day, you can learn a lot, much of it very upsetting.

What will reporters find in this manner that is not available in the hard numbers?
The City of Chelsea, in the Boston area, is one of these little cities which is really a part of Boston, but has the lowest cost housing stock in greater-Boston. So if you are an immigrant, that is where you start. Twelve of you occupy six rooms in a walk-up and six of you get jobs and in six months you move out. Chelsea High School has this horrendous turnover rate. And test scores in June don't show any jump in September. But reporters who report exclusively on that have not done their homework.

Is this story of class difference one of the "silences?"
Reporters are missing the stories about social class and the implications of social class. The poorer child is more likely to have 35 kids in his class. If you're rich, you're more likely to have 18. The chances, if you're poor, of being taught by an ill-prepared teacher are higher. In some contexts, the media has shown the growing gap between rich and poor in this country, but it is visible in bold relief in the school systems.

You are an acting principal at a charter school. How would you evaluate journalism's coverage of the charter school movement?
The media's been fascinated by charters as a political reality. They see them as ends in themselves because there are strong political currents that view them as ends in themselves. But there has been far more attention to charter schools than they deserve. They've been looked at as a coherent entity, like "charter schools are this," or "do charter schools work?" And they should be handled as apples and oranges.

That also seems to be an issue of digging more deeply into the story. Would that be your basic prescription for education reporters?
Yes, and again, I think it's the silences. You get these Sunday pieces about some kid in school, and they're fine, but

it isn't hard reporting, it tends to be portraiture. And then on the hard end you have test scores. And there's a real gap there between portraiture and test scores, and I wouldn't know how to fill it, but it's got to be filled.

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Volume 57 Number 1 September 1999

Personalized Learning

No Two Are Quite Alike

Theodore R. Sizer

We cannot teach students well if we do not know them well. At its heart, personalized learning requires profound shifts in our thinking about education and schooling.

People differ. Thank goodness they do. How boring the world would be if we were all the same—clones, predictable in our progression through life. Much of the progress of humankind has come because of the restlessness of persons who have stepped beyond the predictable mold. The differences among us have provided the pepper upon which modern society depends.

Those of us who have made our careers in secondary education are daily confronted with a cacophony of difference. Yesterday's little, dutiful William is today's sprawling, sloppy BillyBoy. The noisy kid over there used to be a quiet cherub. The shy, intense girl over here used to be fascinated with science but today seems fascinated with nothing at all. The distracted, tough-talking kid in the corner used to be a bouncy little boy endlessly looking for attention. Hormones cause sprouting of all sorts, the sprouts changing not only how an adolescent looks, but also how that adolescent perceives himself or herself. The dutiful in October become the rude in April. The gigglers of September become the sirens of May.

So has it always been. The load is heavy on each young person to decide which mask to wear for which audience, which ideals to care about, what to believe in and whom to believe, what to aspire for, or even whether to "aspire" at all. No one wants to be a clone. We have our role models, but each of us wants to be someone special. We insist upon our difference, and it is right that we do so. Without difference, our culture and our economy would shrivel. Without citizens who feel that each has something special to offer, we would have a culture without vitality.

A Rigid System

Ironically, for a century, secondary schools in the United States have been built on the assumption that all children should, save those at the carefully defined "special" margins, be treated more or less alike.

Students are catagorized by their ages. You were born in June 1985, you are 14 now, so you are a 9th grader. If you were born in December, you are an 8th grader, still in middle school. That is, unless you are in a school district with different cut-off dates.

Grade level counts, socially and academically. There is 9th grade social studies and 10th grade history. There is honors history, but you have to be a 10th grader to get into it. Yes, a few 10th graders take AP classes along with 11th and 12th graders, exceptions that prove the rule. Age relentlessly counts. Anything special beyond that is a matter of exceptional negotiation.

If you are a 10th grader in Massachusetts, you take the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) tests. If you had been born but a few months earlier, you took that test last year. The MCAS is administered in a rigorously consistent way to all students of a certain grade, this in the name of fairness. Of course, one student may feel ill on examination day. Another might be intellectually adept but less able to express that power in a timed, carefully channeled testing routine than in another sort of setting. Yet another glories in the orchestrated, hushed pressure that the testing site reflects, a seriousness often lacking in class discussions. However, such differences make no dent in the testing "instrument." One size fits all; one score makes or breaks one's reputation.

The hold of age grading on the consciousness of the education system is ferocious. The metaphor of steps on a ladder dominates: Learning is always to be a sequential act, block building on block. One must travel up those stairs. There must be no "social promotion."

There is, of course, logic in some of this. You cannot do well at calculus without algebra. It is unlikely that you will create a persuasive 10-page essay unless you can craft a persuasive paragraph. However, such sequencing does not always hold in every field, most obviously in the arts. And sometimes people leapfrog, seemingly serendipitously—a student "gets" a connection among characters in a play, a proof in mathematics, a sophisticated legal argument arising from a historical incident. Such a student doesn't fit in.

The traditional high school confines itself in other ways, including pigeonholing the members of its staff. All of us have specialties. I am a teacher of mathematics. I am a counselor. I am a Dean of Students. I teach physical education and coach lacrosse. I teach art. No one of us, save the students and the librarian, is to express and be held accountable for a general education—even as a "general education" is the ultimate goal for the students. As a science teacher, I do not have to show any interest, much less competence, in the arts; indeed, I can be audibly contemptuous of them.

The school routines through which the student passes reflect this confinement. Little has much to do with anything else. Success at high school is measured by an accretion of scores in subjects taught largely in isolation from one another. A student can have a personal style or a consuming interest as long as it fits the prescribed pattern, but there is precious little room for the student who might harbor interests not reflected by a particular school's division of faculty labor. Again, in many schools, exceptions are made. They remain exceptions, however. Unless an aggressive student or his or her parents or an influential teacher pushes for an exception, nothing happens. There is little incentive for intellectual idiosyncrasy or social idiosyncrasy.

Authentic Options

Does this sound familiar? There are explanations for each piece of the enormously complicated comprehensive high school. Ironically, one reason for the complexity is to accommodate "individual differences"—to make various curricular paths (however age graded and compartmentalized) available for students to match with their likely destinations in life. The school decides the worthy options to be available for all students and then counsels each one (usually advisors who carry loads of 100 to 300 students do this) to take what appears to be the most sensible path. Each path is carefully demarcated and usually age graded (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985).

Something for everybody is the ideal of the U.S. high school. But options are different from personalization, from taking each young person where he or she is and imaginatively using that understanding. Personalization requires knowing each young person well. If we can achieve that goal, then flexible options among programs make sense. However, options offered without knowing the students well are not authentic options at all.

We all understand this poignantly when we fall ill. If our physician does not know our condition well, how can he or she prescribe a proper treatment? By the same token, if our counselor does not know our minds and dispositions well, how can he or she prescribe a likely regimen?

Facing up to the rigidities of high school is fiercely difficult work. It is not that most educators do not know that "whole school change," especially at the secondary level, is compellingly needed. It is because everything important in a school affects everything else that may be important. When one tries to refashion one part of a school, most other parts unravel. As a result, most reform efforts avoid that prospect and settle for tinkering, often very imaginatively, at the margins—a revised course here, an alternative program there, great gobs of professional development.

However, such tinkering never gets to the heart of the matter, especially if the goal is to know each student well and to use that knowledge in shaping and directioning that young person's education.

Realistic Student Loads

I cannot teach students well if I do not know them well. Each of my adolescent students is in the midst of a growth spurt and the struggle for independence that characterizes every person's route from childhood to adulthood. Each is a complex and evolving human being. Each learns in a somewhat different way; there are discrete "styles" and "intelligences," Robert Sternberg (1997; 1999), Howard Gardner (1983; 1999), and others tell us; their research squares with our experience in classrooms.

How many young people can I know and serve well at once? Assume that I meet with my students in groups each day, this absorbing the majority of my school-time hours. How many minutes a week, either sandwiched amid regular obligations into the school day or spent after school and at home, do I need to read and comment on each student's work and, periodically, to meet with him or her one-on-one? What would happen if I, on average, set aside 10 minutes a week for each student for this personal attention? That works out to an hour a week for every six students. If I have 120 students, that's 20 hours. Impossible.

If I have 50 students, that's a bit more than eight hours a week. Let's say that I, on average, see each student and his or her work every other week. That brings the load down to between four and five hours a week, assigning an hour (in snippets of time, at school or at home) each day to "personalization." Given my other obligations, that is a stretch, but, if I am reasonably experienced, an acceptable one.

But, I think, that is impossible! I then look at the number of students in my (typical) high school for each full-time equivalent professional staff person. It is 14:1. Given that ratio, I conclude, 50:1 for each teacher is possible, at least arithmetically. However, everyone at school is now working flat out. Something has to give. The only recourse is to simplify the school; to narrow its options; streamline its routines; and increase the number, authority, and responsibility of classroom teachers. But won't these narrowed options decrease the possibility of "personalization"? They will only if we do not define "personalization" as access to a set of free-standing separate programs.

A choice clearly emerges. "Personalization" can be a student's choice among a variety of special programs, but that forces most teachers to carry loads in excess of 100 students. Or "personalization" can start with loads half that size in a school where we can accommodate adaptations to individual needs within a simple, common program.

A Hobson's choice? Not necessarily. Paradoxically, simple, focused schools can provide more opportunities for individual students than can the more typical comprehensive high school.

Time and Scale

So I have my 50 students. I see them daily in groups, usually in classes of 15 to 25. My homeroom is largely drawn from this same group. I *know* these young people. They are not quick studies before me, two-dimensional characters. I hope to know their minds and dispositions well, so well that I can sense a change in mood, from engaged to disengaged, or from loneliness to joining in with friends—or whatever—when such appears to emerge.

"Knowing" young people this well results (perhaps paradoxically) in the realization that I never know them well enough: They are too complicated and changeable for that. To help me get the fuller picture, I need, at the least, the counsel of teachers who share these same kids. That means time to talk with those teachers and time to coordinate approaches to help each of the students and their families.

Impossible? It is possible if the design of the school is simple—and thus flexible—and common to all. Time for "talk about our kids" needs to be part of the schedule. If it is not, such talk will rarely happen.

The Authority to Act

All this "personalization" will come to naught if I and my colleagues who share students do not have the authority to act upon our conclusions about an individual or a group of students. Within the basic course of study (one kept sufficiently flexible to allow individual variations), we have to control our time and that of the students. Our decisions have to stick.

If we must always ask for permission or refer every change to higher authorities, there is no "personalization." The people providing the permission are those who, in fact, know the affected students the least. Higher authorities can monitor us (that is, surely, part of their job), and they can help us when we need help (also a part of their job). However, if we cannot control our own piece of turf within our school, we cannot readily act upon judgments arising from "personalization."

Complexity Within Simplicity

Few Americans would disagree with the proposition that each child should be exposed to the worlds of language, science, mathematics, the arts, and history. Within each discipline are a plethora of topics to study. A number of equally engaging topics cut across the disciplines. There is much to learn, far more than time to learn it. Further, we forget most of what we "cover" in school, retaining only that which we use or fragments that appeal to us. The important residue is an understanding of how a discipline works and habits in its use.

Understanding something—and being able to use it in unfamiliar situations—takes time. Engendering the habit of its use requires enough engagement with a discipline, on one's own terms, to be so persuaded of its efficacy that its use becomes almost second nature. Beyond the rudiments, what, in particular, one studies is less important than that it sparks legitimate interest in each learner. Without such interest, most adolescent students will not engage (and do not deeply engage, even as they may appear dutiful and as they may churn out "work" that gives evidence of immediate, limited engagement but not understanding).

My task as a teacher is to cajole each learner into an essential discipline both on the terms of that discipline and on the student's terms. I must interest the student in something that the society deeply believes is important and that the individual adolescent also senses—or can be persuaded to sense—is important. I must ram what is essential down the kid's throat and at the same time pander to his or her immediate interests.

To be successful at this, I must settle on some crucial common knowledge—reading *Romeo and Juliet*, watching *West Side Story*, and studying mid-20th century south Asia and the late 20th century Balkans, for example—as a way of addressing human conflict. Concurrently, I must find any and all means to gather into each student's consciousness and conscience a conflict that may deeply move that child, asking him or her to write about it, argue about it, understand it. If such a ploy works, it is an easy step, for example, to the reasons for and the design of democratic governments, including bills of rights. There are crucial connections here within history and the humanities. With different material, there are analogous ones in every domain. From the connections that I the teacher push forth and those that may energize a student can come serious learning.

Such activity takes time, more time than allotted in most high schools, where coverage is king. Grotesque coverage—Cleopatra to Clinton by April 1, three Shakespeare plays in six weeks, evolution as one of 36 chapters in an eight-pound biology textbook—is a recipe for teacher frustration, academic trivialization, and student detachment. Yes, we all "covered the material." We passed the test at the end. But, if such were ever given, we could not pass that test 18 months from now, and we could not explain what the purpose of the time we had earlier spent together might be. For most—all save those engaged by the standardized lesson—the time would have been largely wasted.

Give me the smallest defensible number of the absolutely most critical matters, disciplines, and skills that I should teach. Give me time, autonomy, supportive colleagues, and few enough students so that I can understand each one well enough to tailor some of my teaching to him or her—and I will show you students who perform well, today and tomorrow.

A simple program allows complex learning. A simple program makes possible the adaptations in teaching that arise from authentic personalization.

It is inconvenient that students learn in different ways and that they are attached to differing enthusiasms. But, unless we face up to that inconvenience, we will not teach well.

Progress by Performance

If strict age grading flies in the face of the commonsense experience of teachers and researchers, what is to replace grade levels? The only alternative is progress by performance. It means an individual educational plan for each student, not just the "handicapped" or the "precocious."

This approach is as difficult to accomplish as it is easy to embrace. Its practice demands that the school be clear on the shape, standards, and character of the "performance" and on the basis upon which such performance will be judged. Being clear on this is very hard and very unfamiliar work for teachers. We are more used to "U.S. History up to the Civil War" in the 10th grade or "Physics" in the 12th grade. The state frameworks or district curriculums are usually an amalgamation of "content" and "skills" to cover over a defined period of time. They rarely address—beyond necessarily constricted standardized paper-and-pencil tests—how the student expresses mastery or uses that mastery over time.

Further, few schools insist on the regular "cross grading" of papers by staff. In most schools, each teacher is assessment king in his or her classroom. "Cross grading"—the collective assessment of pieces of work by a variety of teachers, students, and parents—is very rare. So if a *B* does not mean the same to Ms. Schmidt as it does to Mr. Saginaw, what does a *B* at their school really mean? If Ms. Schmidt and Mr. Saginaw don't take the time to tune their standards, inequitable fuzziness will be the rule.

There must be agreement on what a student puts forth for consideration of the quality of his or her "performance," agreement that participants and outsiders constantly monitor. For obvious reasons, the students and their guardians must also understand the criteria for this performance. When "What is good enough?" is a question on the table, all sorts of issues emerge. Is what is appropriately good enough for Jose precisely the same as what is good enough for William? If not, how can the same ultimate standard be applied to different expressions of that standard (for example, Jose depending heavily on written work and William using oral and artistic devices)?

Personalization—meaning fundamental fairness arising from the differences among students—requires the expression of common, general "standards" in a variety of forms. Creating such standards is difficult work, far more difficult than saying that "high standards" are to be assessed by one "instrument" in one way and at one time. Time has to be made for it—the same sort of time that each of us prays happens among our physicians when they caucus to decide on a treatment for our disease.

Leadership to Personalize Learning

A school or school system that resolutely accepts the lively but annoying diversity among its students must break away from many deeply ingrained notions about the keeping of school, from One Best Curriculum to One Best Test to One Best Schedule. Something far more complex and more fluid must take their places. Schools must adapt to the legitimate differences among students; these adaptations will themselves be in constant flux.

Idiosyncrasy is an obvious fact: Those of us who are parents of at least two children and who thereby see daily the variety of energies and enthusiasms emerging from the same gene pool and kitchen table are keenly aware of that. But accommodating those realities within a school system designed to be universal in its routines is intellectually very demanding and politically very dangerous work.

Some will find the implications of "personalization" so unsettling as to be far-fetched. Nothing can come of it, they will say. But today something is coming of it, most usually in small schools at the edges of big systems or in autonomous small-schools-within-big-buildings. Nothing that I have suggested is not being tried somewhere. And where the trying has gone on long enough, the results are beginning to show where it counts—on what is happening to the graduates of schools that have"personalized" (Meier, 1995).

Those of us who are struggling with personalization will be the first to say that the work is as difficult as it is unfamiliar and that the trade-offs necessary to get the time to do the job well are nerve-racking. At its heart, "personalization" implies a profoundly different way of defining formal education. What is here is not the delivery of standard instructional services. Rather, it is the insistent coaxing out of each child on his or her best terms of profoundly important intellectual habits and tools for enriching a democratic society, habits and tools that provide each individual with the substance and skills to survive well in a rapidly changing culture and economy.

It can be done. It is being done, however against the traditional grain. *

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Nancy, is *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (Beacon Press, 1999).

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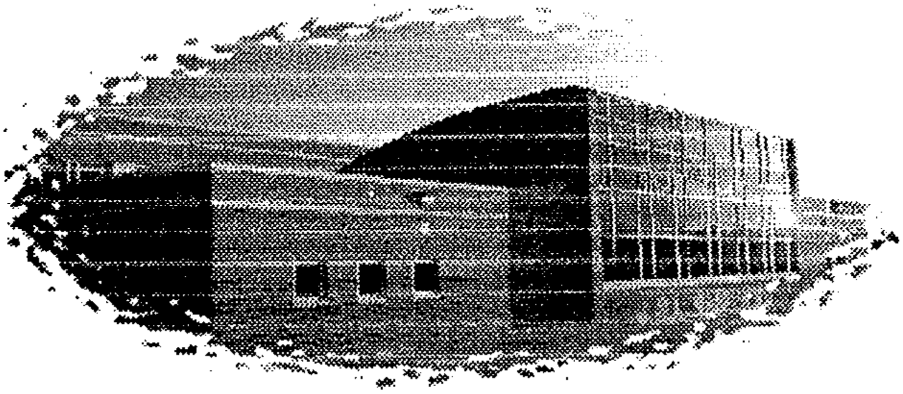

The Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools was first established at Brown University in 1984 by Theodore Sizer, a professor of education. It has grown from twelve "charter" schools in four states to more than 150 member schools in more than 30 states. Fundamentally, a school joins the Coalition when it has committed itself to improve student achievement by redesigning the school according to a set of ideas put forth by founder Theodore R. Sizer in his book, Horace's Compromise.

The Founder

The founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools was Theodore Sizer. Before coming to Brown University, Sizer was professor and dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education from 1964-1972 and headmaster of Phillips (Andover) Academy from 1972-1981. He earned a BA at Yale and an MAT and Ph.D. in History at Harvard. He has also written two books, Horace's Compromise and Horace's School, exploring the motivation and ideas of the Essential School reform movement.

The Central Staff

Along with Sizer, a central staff of about 40 professionals in education work

coordination of the national Challenge effort. Its work also now emphasizes the needs in urban communities and in schools serving disadvantaged children.

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About the Institute

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Establishment and History of the Annenberg Institute

A National Institute for School Reform was established at Brown University in October 1993 through an anonymous gift to the University of $5 million. In December of that year, the fledgling Institute received additional operating and endowment funding of $50 million from the Annenberg Foundation as part of Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg's $500-million "Challenge to the Nation" to improve its public schools. In recognition of the Ambassador's gift, the Brown Corporation renamed the Institute in his honor.

The Institute's founding director was Theodore R. Sizer, who was also Professor of Education at Brown and chairman of the Brown-based Coalition of Essential Schools. During Sizer's tenure as director, the Institute drew heavily upon the school-based programs of the Coalition, expanding them to address the needs of the newly forming Challenge initiatives. In addition, the Institute played a role in defining the parameters for Challenge grant awards and began its work in coordination and evaluation of the national Challenge effort, hiring Barbara Cervone to oversee that work as National Coordinator for the Challenge.

Upon Theodore Sizer's retirement from Brown in mid-1996, Brown President Vartan Gregorian assumed the role of Acting Director of the Institute, in addition to serving as chair of its Board of Overseers. Over the next eighteen months, until Gregorian's own departure from Brown, the Institute broadened its program focus to include public engagement, while expanding its work in both professional development and accountability. Also during this time, the Coalition of Essential Schools formally separated from the Institute and from Brown, eventually moving its offices to California.

When Brown's seventeenth president, E. Gordon Gee, took office in January of 1998, he appointed Ramon Cortinez, former superintendent of the San Francisco and New York public school systems and a member of the Institute's Board of Overseers, to serve as Interim Director. In the fall of 1998, Warren Simmons, then director of the Philadelphia Education Fund, was named Executive Director of the Institute.

Under Simmons's leadership, the Institute is again broadening its program focus to include the role of school districts and support for successful school reform designs, while continuing its work in professional development, public engagement, accountability and

at Brown University overseeing CES. Their work is divided into three categories:

1. research on school redesign

2. professional development to build local capacity for Essential school change

3. collaboration with other organizations to promote a receptive climate for school change

They also publish a journal, *HORACE*, five times a year, occasional newsletters, and a series of studies showing the results of their research.

"Less is More"

A common CES principle is that "less is more." According to "Less is More: The Secret of Being Essential", an article in the November 1994 issue of *HORACE,* by reducing the curriculum, students have the ability to think deeper about what they are learning. And although the teachers are teaching less, the demands are much higher. The teacher must think of ways to incorporate the same lessons into different subjects. For instance, in one school, a teacher "created a science course called the 'Human Organism and Energy' and within that topic taught biology, chemistry, and physics" at once. Once the teacher learns to value depth over coverage, most end up teaching their classes using cooperative learning or Socratic seminars to get their students deeper involved within their subjects. After lectures, teachers often link the lesson with a writing assignment or research project to expand the student's knowledge. The key to less coverage and more depth and focus is to make the curriculum apply in real life ways.

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of Essential Schools, Inc.**
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SOME WRITING BY THEODORE R. SIZER

1. The *Prologue* of Horace's Compromise (1984) which describes by means of a "non-fiction fiction portrait" the compromises that are forced on secondary school teachers by the design of their schools. These compromises shape the arguments in the Horace trilogy and, ultimately, the work of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

2. *An Exhibition: Emotions* from Horace's School (1992) which describes the sort of assessment toward which high school students and their teachers must strive within Essential schools.

3. *Chapter 7: Horace's Hope*, the final chapter of Horace's Hope (1996) which completes the trilogy and outlines some hunches for the future.

Sales of the three Horace books approach a quarter of a million copies and remain actively in print under the Mariner Books label of Houghton Mifflin publishers.

4. *The Ten Common Principles* of the Coalition of Essential Schools. There is no detailed Essential school design but, rather, a set of convictions – "principles" held in common – which are to drive the particular design of a secondary school in a manner consistent with and respectful of the character and expectations of its particular community. Today there are over 1200 schools across the country which are members of the Coalition. The Coalition, founded at Brown University in 1984 and now a freestanding not-for-profit organization, has its national offices in Oakland, California. The attached prospectus describes the network.

5. *Preface: Watching*, the opening pages of The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract (1999), co-written with Nancy Faust Sizer, which explains our approach to the issue of "moral education" in and by secondary schools.

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Books by Theodore R. Sizer

Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century
The Age of the Academies (ed.)
Religion and Public Education (ed.)
Moral Education: Five Lectures
(ed., with Nancy F. Sizer)
Place for Learning, Places for Joy
Speculations on American School Reform
Horace's Compromise
The Dilemma of the American High School

Theodore R. Sizer

HORACE'S COMPROMISE
The Dilemma of the American High School

The First Report from A Study of High Schools,
Co-sponsored by the National Association of Secondary
School Principals and the Commission on Educational Issues
of the National Association of Independent Schools

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston
1984

extend beyond any one high school, and I wish no reader to be encouraged to think otherwise.

More important, brief portraits such as these inevitably distort. One can describe faithfully, but in making choices of what to represent, one inevitably shapes a point of view. While I have struggled to be fair, I want no person or school identified with a particular portrait. My purpose is not to tell their special stories, but to use aspects of their experience to make some useful general points.

Some of my actors are composites, a blending of people and places. Horace and Mark in particular are handled in this way. All their classes are "real" classes, but their juxtaposition is invented. For them, my device ends up somewhere between precise journalism and nonfiction fiction.

Although I have a historian's training and experience in higher education, my point of view throughout has been primarily that of schoolteacher and principal, roles that force on one an intense awareness of the frailties and strengths of individual human beings. There is bias here that I recognize—that the craft of teaching is both art and science, and that the poetry in learning and teaching is as important to promote as the purposeful. Social and behavioral science, usually driven by purposeful ends, has dominated the way contemporary Americans view and administer their schools. Such science undoubtedly has its contribution, but the humanities' place deserves fresh emphasis. We deal with adolescents' hearts as well as brains, with human idiosyncrasies as well as their calculable commonalities. If I err, I hope that it is toward the humanistic side.

Prologue
Horace's Compromise

HERE IS an English teacher, Horace Smith. He's fifty-three, a twenty-eight-year veteran of high school classrooms, what one calls an old pro. He's proud, respected, and committed to his practice. He'd do nothing else. Teaching is too much fun, too rewarding, to yield to another line of work.

Horace has been at Franklin High in a suburb of a big city for nineteen years. He served for eight years as English department chairman, but turned the job over to a colleague, because he felt that even the minimal administrative chores of that post interfered with the teaching he loved best.

He arises at 5:45 A.M., careful not to awaken either his wife or grown daughter. He likes to be at school by 7:00, and the drive there from his home takes forty minutes. He wishes he owned a home near the school, but he can't afford it. Only a few of his colleagues live in the school's town, and they are the wives of executives whose salaries can handle the mortgages. His wife's job at the liquor store that she, he, and her brother own doesn't start until 10:00 A.M., and their daughter, a new associate in a law firm in the city, likes to sleep until the last possible minute and skip breakfast. He washes and dresses on tiptoe.

Horace prepares the coffee, makes some toast, and leaves the house at 6:20. He's not the first at school. The custodians and other, usually older, teachers are already there, "puttering around," one of the teachers says.

The teachers' room is large, really two rooms. The inner portion, windowless, is arranged in a honeycomb of carrels, one for each older teacher. Younger or newer teachers share carrels. Each has a built-in desk and a chair. Most have file cabinets. The walls on three sides, five feet high, are festooned with posters, photographs, lists, little sayings, notes from colleagues on issues long past. Horace: Call home. Horace: The following students in the chorus are excused from your Period 7 class—Adelson, Cartwright, Donato . . .

Horace goes to his carrel, puts down his briefcase, picks up his mug, and walks to the coffee pot at the corner of the outer portion of the teachers' room, a space well lit by wide windows and fitted with a clutter of tables, vinyl-covered sofas, and chairs. The space is a familiar, comfortable jumble, fragrant with the smell of cigarettes smoked hours before. Horace lights up a fresh one, almost involuntarily, as a way perhaps to counteract yesterday's dead vapors. After pouring himself some coffee, he chats with some colleagues, mostly other English teachers.

The warning bell rings at 7:20. Horace smothers his cigarette, takes his still partly filled cup back to his carrel and adds it to the shuffle on his desk, collects some books and papers, and, with his briefcase, carries them down the hall to his classroom. Students are already clattering in, friendly, noisy, most of them ignoring him completely—not thoughtlessly, but without thinking. Horace often thinks of the importance of this semantic difference. Many adults are thoughtless about us teachers. Most students, however, just don't know we're here at all, people to think about. Innocents, he concludes.

7:30, and its bell. There are seventeen students here; there should be twenty-two. Bill Adams is ill; Horace has been told that by the office. Joyce Lezcowitz is at her grandmother's funeral; Horace hasn't been officially told that, but he knows it to be true. He marks Joyce "Ex Ab"—excused absence—on his attendance list. Looking up from the list, he sees two more students arrive, hustling to seats. You're late. Sorry . . . Sorry . . . The bus . . . Horace ignores the apologies and excuses and checks the two off on his list. One name is yet unaccounted for. Where is Jimmy Tibbetts? Silence. Tibbetts gets an "Abs" after his name.

Horace gets the class's attention by making some announcements about next week's test and about the method by which copies of the next play being read will be shared. This inordinately concerns some students and holds no interest for others. Mr. Smith, how can I finish the play when both Rosalie and I have to work after school? Mr. Smith, Sandy and I are on different buses. Can we switch partners? All these sorts of queries are from girls. There is whispering among some students. You got it? Horace asks, abruptly. Silence, signaling affirmation. Horace knows it is an illusion. Some character will come up two days later and guiltlessly assert that he has no play book, doesn't know how to get one, and has never heard of the plans to share the limited copies. Horace makes a mental note to inform Adams, Lezcowitz, and Tibbetts of the text-sharing plan.

This is a class of juniors, mostly seventeen. The department syllabus calls for Shakespeare during this marking period, and *Romeo and Juliet* is the choice this year. The students have been assigned to read Act IV for this week, and Horace and his colleagues all get them to read the play out loud. The previous class had been memorable: Juliet's suicide had provoked much mirth. *Romeo, I come!* The kids thought it funny, clumsily melodramatic. Several, sniggering, saw a sexual meaning. Horace knew this to be inevitable; he had taught the play many times before.

We'll start at Scene Four. A rustle of books. Two kids looking helplessly around. They had forgotten their books, even though in-class reading had been a daily exercise for three weeks. Mr. Smith, I forgot my book. You've got to remember, Alice . . . *remember!* All this with a smile as well as honest exasperation. Share with George. Alice gets up and moves her desk next to that of George. They solemnly peer into George's book while two girls across the classroom giggle.

Gloria, you're Lady Capulet. Mary, the Nurse. George, you're old man Capulet. Gloria starts, reading without punctuation: *Hold take these keys and fetch more spices Nurse.* Horace: Gloria. Those commas. They mean something. Use them. Now, again. *Hold. Take these keys. And fetch more spices. Nurse.* Horace swallows. Better . . . Go on, Mary. *They call for dates and quinces in the pastry.* What's a quince? a voice asks. Someone answers, It's a fruit, Fruit! Horace ignores this digression but is reminded how he doesn't like this group of kids. Individually, they're nice, but the chemistry of them together doesn't work. Classes are too much a game for them. Go on . . . George?

Come. Stir! Stir! Stir! The second cock hath crow'd. Horace knows that reference to "cock" will give an opening to some jokester, and he squelches it before it can begin, by being sure he is looking at the class and not at his book as the words are read.

The curfew bell hath rung. 'Tis three o'clock. Look to the bak'd meats, good Angelica . . . George reads accurately, but with little accentuation.

Mary: *Go, you cot-quean, go* . . . Horace interrupts, and explains "cot-quean," a touch of contempt by the Nurse for the meddling Capulet. Horace does not go into the word's etymology, although he knows it. He feels that such a digression would be lost on this group, if not on his third-period class. He'll tell them. And so he returns: George, you're still Capulet. Reply to that cheeky Nurse.

The reading goes on for about forty minutes, to 8:15. The play's repartee among the musicians and Peter was a struggle, and Horace cut off the reading-out-loud before the end of the fifth scene. He assigns Act V for the next period and explains what will be on the *Romeo and Juliet* test. Mr. Smith, Ms. Viola isn't giving a test to her class. The statement is, of course, an accusing question. Well, we are. Ms. Viola's class will get something else, don't you worry. The bell rings.

The students rush out as the next class tries to push in. The newcomers are freshmen and give way to the eleventh-graders. They get into their seats expectantly, without quite the swagger of the older kids. Even though this is March, some of these students are still overwhelmed by the size of the high school.

There should be thirty students in this class, but twenty-seven are present. He marks three absences on his sheet. The students watch him; there is no chatter, but a good deal of squirming. These kids have the Wriggles, Horace has often said. The bell rings: 8:24.

Horace tells the students to open their textbooks to page 104 and read the paragraph at its top. Two students have no textbook. Horace tells them to share with their neighbors. *Always* bring your textbook to class. We never know when we'll need them. The severity in his voice causes quiet. The students read.

Horace asks: Betty, which of the words in the first sentence is an adverb? Silence. Betty stares at her book. More silence. Betty, what is an adverb? Silence. Bill, help Betty. It's sort of a verb that tells you about things. Horace pauses: Not quite, Bill, but close. Phil, you try. Phil: An adverb modifies a verb . . . Horace: O.K., Phil, but what does "modify" mean? Silence. A voice: "Darkly." Who said that? Horace asks. The sentence was "Heathcliff was a darkly brooding character." I did, Taffy says. O.K., Horace follows, you're correct, Taffy, but tell us why "darkly" is an adverb, what it does. Taffy: It modifies "character." No, Taffy, try again. Heathcliff? No. Brooding? Yes, now why? Is "brooding" a verb? Silence.

Horace goes to the board, writes the sentence with chalk. He underlines *darkly.* Betty writes a note to her neighbor.

The class proceeds with this slow trudge through a paragraph from the textbook, searching for adverbs. Horace presses ahead patiently, almost dumbly at times. He is so familiar with the mistakes that ninth-graders make that he can sense them coming even before their utterance. Adverbs are always tougher to teach than adjectives. What frustrates him most are the partly correct answers; Horace worries that if he signals that a reply is somewhat accurate, all the students will think it is entirely accurate. At the same time, if he takes some minutes to sort out the truth from the falsity, the entire train of thought will be lost. He can never pursue any one student's errors to completion without losing all the others. Teaching grammar to classes like this is slow business, Horace feels. The bell rings. The students rush out, now more boisterous.

This is an Assembly Day, Horace remembers with pleasure. He leaves his papers on his desk, turns off the lights, shuts the door, and returns to the teachers' room. He can avoid assemblies; only the deans have to go. It's some student concert, in any event.

The teachers' room is full. Horace takes pleasure in it and wonders how his colleagues in schools in the city make do without such a sanctuary. Having a personal carrel is a luxury, he knows. He'd lose his here, he also knows, if enrollments went up again. The teachers' room was one happy consequence of the "baby bust."

The card game is going, set up on a square coffee table surrounded by a sofa and chairs. The kibitzers outnumber the players; all have coffee, some are smoking. The chatter is incessant, joshingly insulting. The staff members like one another.

Horace takes his mug, empties the cold leavings into the drain of the water fountain, and refills it. He puts a quarter in the large Maxwell House can supplied for that purpose, an honor system. He never pays for his early cup; Horace feels that if you come early, you get one on the house. He moves toward a clutch of fellow English and social studies teachers, and they gossip, mostly about a bit of trouble at the previous night's basketball game. No one was injured—that rarely happens at this high school—but indecorous words had been shouted back and forth, and Coke cans rolled on the gym floor. Someone could have been hurt. No teacher is much exercised about the incident. The talk is about things of more immediate importance to people: personal lives, essences even more transitory, Horace knows, than the odors of their collective cigarettes.

Horace looks about for Ms. Viola to find out whether it's true that she's not going to give a test on *Romeo and Juliet.* She isn't in sight, and Horace remembers why: she is a nonsmoker and is offended by smoke. He leaves his group and goes to Viola's carrel, where he finds her. She is put off by his query. Of course she is giving a test. Horace's lame explanation that a student told him differently doesn't help.

9:53. The third-period class of juniors. *Romeo and Juliet* again. Announcements over the public address system fill the first portion of the period, but Horace and a bunch of kids who call themselves "theater jocks" ignore them and talk about how to read Shakespeare well. They have to speak loudly to overpower the p.a. The rest of the class chatter among themselves. The readings from the play are lively, and Horace is able to exhibit his etymological talents with a disquisition on "cot-quean." The students are well engaged by the scene involving the musicians and Peter until the class is interrupted by a proctor from the principal's office, collecting absence slips for the first-class periods. Nonetheless, the lesson ends with a widespread sense of good feeling. Horace never gets around to giving out the assignment, talking about the upcoming test, or arranging for play books to be shared.

10:47, the Advanced Placement class. They are reading *Ulysses,*

a novel with which Horace himself had trouble. Its circumlocutions are more precious than clever, he thinks, but he can't let on. Joyce is likely to be on the AP Exam, which will put him on a pedestal.

There are eighteen seniors in this class, but only five arrive. Horace remembers: This is United Nations Week at the local college, and a group of the high school's seniors is taking part, representing places like Mauritius and Libya. Many of the students in the UN Club are also those in Advanced Placement classes. Horace welcomes this remnant of five and suggests they use the hour to read. Although he is annoyed at losing several teaching days with this class, he is still quietly grateful for the respite this morning.

11:36. Lunch. Horace buys a salad on the cafeteria line—as a teacher he can jump ahead of students—and he takes it to the faculty dining room. He nods to the assistant principal on duty as he passes by. He takes a place at an empty table and is almost immediately joined by three physical education teachers, all of them coaches of varsity teams, who are noisily wrangling about the previous night's basketball game controversy. Horace listens, entertained. The coaches are having a good time, arguing with heat because they know the issue is really inconsequential and thus their disagreement will not mean much. Lunch is relaxing for Horace.

12:17. A free period. Horace checks with a colleague in the book storeroom about copies of a text soon to be used by the ninth-graders. Can he get more copies? His specific allotment is settled after some minutes' discussion. Horace returns to the teachers' room, to his carrel. He finds a note to call a Mrs. Altschuler, who turns out to be the stepmother of a former student. She asks, on behalf of her stepson, whether Horace will write a character reference for the young man to use in his search for a job. Horace agrees. Horace also finds a note to call the office. Was Tibbetts in your Period One class? No, Horace tells the assistant principal; that's why I marked him absent on the attendance sheet. The assistant principal overlooks this sarcasm. Well, he says, Tibbetts wasn't marked absent at any other class. Horace replies, That's someone else's problem. He was not in my class. The assistant principal: You're sure? Horace: Of course I'm sure.

The minutes of the free period remaining are spent in organizing a set of papers that is to be returned to Horace's third junior English class. Horace sometimes alternates weeks when he collects homework so as not totally to bury himself. He feels guilty about this. The sixth-period class had its turn this week. Horace had skimmed these exercises—a series of questions on Shakespeare's life—and hastily graded them, but using only a plus, check, or minus. He hadn't had time enough to do more.

1:11. More *Romeo and Juliet.* This section is less rambunctious than the first-period group and less interesting than that of the third period. The students are actually rather dull, perhaps because the class meets at the end of the day. Everyone is ready to leave; there is little energy for Montagues and Capulets. However, as with other sections, the kids are responsive when spoken to individually. It is their blandness when they are in a group that Horace finds trying. At least they aren't hell raisers, the way some last-period-of-the-day sections can be. The final bell rings at 2:00.

Horace has learned to stay in his classroom at the day's end so that students who want to consult with him can always find him there. Several appear today. One wants Horace to speak on his behalf to a prospective employer. Another needs to get an assignment. A couple of other students come by actually just to come by. They have no special errand, but seem to like to check in and chat. These youngsters puzzle Horace. They always seem to need reassurance.

Three students from the Theater Club arrive with questions about scenery for the upcoming play. (Horace is the faculty adviser to the stage crew.) Their shared construction work on sets behind the scenes gives Horace great pleasure. He knows these kids and likes their company.

By the time Horace finishes in his classroom, it is 2:30. He drops his papers and books at his carrel, selecting some—papers given him by his Advanced Placement students two days previously that he has yet to find time to read—to put in his briefcase. He does not check in on the card game, now winding down, in the outer section of the teachers' room but, rather, goes briefly to the auditorium to watch the Theater Club actors starting their rehearsals. The play is Wilder's *Our Town.* Horace is both grateful and wistful that the production requires virtually no set to be constructed. The challenge for his stage crew, Horace knows, will be in the lighting.

Horace drives directly to his liquor store, arriving shortly after 4:00. He gives his brother-in-law some help in the stockroom and helps at the counter during the usual 4:30-to-6:30 surge of customers. His wife had earlier left for home and has supper ready for them both and their daughter at 7:45.

After dinner, Horace works for an hour on the papers he has brought home and on the Joyce classes he knows are ahead of him once the UN Mock Assembly is over. He has two telephone calls from students, one who has been ill and wants an assignment and another who wants to talk about the lighting for *Our Town.* The latter, an eager but shy boy, calls Horace often.

Horace turns in at 10:45, can't sleep, and watches the 11:00 news while his wife sleeps. He finally drifts off just before midnight.

Horace has high standards. Almost above all, he believes in the importance of writing, having his students learn to use language well. He believes in "coaching"—in having his students write and be criticized, often. Horace has his five classes of fewer than thirty students each, a total of 120. (He is lucky; his colleagues in inner cities like New York, San Diego, Detroit, and St. Louis have a school board–union negotiated "load" base of 175 students.) Horace believes that each student should write something for criticism at least twice a week—but he is realistic. As a rule, his students write once a week.

Most of Horace's students are juniors and seniors, young people who should be beyond sentence and paragraph exercises and who should be working on short essays, written arguments with moderately complex sequencing and, if not grace exactly, at least clarity. A page or two would be a minimum—but Horace is realistic. He assigns but one or two paragraphs.

Being a veteran teacher, Horace takes only fifteen to twenty minutes to check over each student's daily homework, to read the week's theme, and to write an analysis of it. (The "good" papers take a shorter time, usually, and the work of inept or demoralized students takes much longer. Horace wonders how his inner-city colleagues, who usually have a far greater percentage of demoralized students, manage. Horace is realistic: even in his accommodating suburban school, fifteen minutes is too much to spend. He compromises, averaging five minutes for each student's work by cutting all but the most essential corners (the *reading* of the paragraphs in the themes takes but a few seconds; it is the thoughtful criticizing, in red ballpoint pen in the margins and elsewhere, that takes the minutes).

So, to check homework and to read and criticize one paragraph per week per student with the maximum feasible corner-cutting takes six hundred minutes, or ten hours, assuming no coffee breaks or flagging attention (which is some assumption, considering how enervating is most students' forced and misspelled prose).

Horace's fifty-some-minute classes consume about twenty-three hours per week. Administrative chores chew up another hour and a half. Horace cares about his teaching and feels that he should take a half-hour to prepare for each class meeting, particularly for his classes with older students, who are swiftly moving over quite abstract and unfamiliar material, and his class of ninth-graders, which requires teaching that is highly individualized. However, he is realistic. He will compromise by spending no more than ten minutes' preparation time, on average, per class. (In effect, he concentrates his "prep" time on the Advanced Placement class, and teaches the others from old notes.) Three of his sections are ostensibly of the same course, but because the students are different in each case, he knows that he cannot satisfactorily clone each lesson plan twice and teach to his satisfaction. (Horace is uneasy with this compromise but feels he can live with it.) Horace's class preparation time per week: four hours.

Horace loves the theater, and when the principal begged him to help out with the afternoon drama program, he agreed. He is paid $800 extra per year to help the student stage crews prepare sets. This takes him in all about four hours per week, save for the ten days before the shows, when he and his crew happily work for hours on end.

Of course, Horace would like time to work on the curriculum with his colleagues. He would like to visit their classes and to work with them on the English department program. He would like to meet his students' parents, to read in his field, and, most important for him, to counsel students as they need such counseling one on one. Being a popular teacher, he is asked to write over fifty recommendations for college admissions offices each year, a Christmas

vacation task that usually takes three full days. (He knows he is good at it now. When he was less experienced, the reference writing used to take him a full week. He can now quickly crank out the expected felicitous verbiage.) Yet Horace feels uneasy writing the crucial references for students with whom he has rarely exchanged ten consecutive sentences of private conversation. However, he is realistic: one does what one can and hopes that one is not sending the colleges too many lies.

And so before Horace assigns his one or two paragraphs per week, he is committed for over thirty-two hours of teaching, administration, class preparation, and extracurricular drama work. Collecting one short piece of writing per week from students and spending a bare five minutes per week on each student's weekly work adds ten hours, yielding a forty-two-hour work week. Lunch periods, supervisory duties frequently, if irregularly, assigned, coffee breaks, travel to and from school, and time for the courtesies, civilities, and biological necessities of life are all in addition.

For this, Horace, a twenty-eight-year veteran, is paid $27,300, a good salary for a teacher in his district. He works at the liquor store and earns another $8000 there, given a good year. The district adds 7 percent of his base salary to a nonvested pension account, and Horace tries to put away something more each month in an IRA. Fortunately, his wife also works at the store, and their one child went to the state university and its law school. She just received her J.D. Her starting salary in the law firm is $32,000.

Horace is a gentle man. He reads the frequent criticism of his profession in the press with compassion. Johnny can't read. Teachers have low Graduate Record Examination scores. We must vary our teaching to the learning styles of our pupils. We must relate to the community. We must be scholarly, keeping up with our fields. English teachers should be practicing, published writers. If they aren't all these things, it is obvious that *they don't care.* Horace is a trouper; he hides his bitterness. Nothing can be gained by showing it. The critics do not really want to hear him or to face facts. He will go with the flow. What alternative is there?

A prestigious college near Franklin High School assigns its full-time freshman expository writing instructors a maximum of two sections, totaling forty students. Horace thinks about his 120. Like these college freshmen, at least they show up, most of them turn in what homework he assigns, and they give him little hassle. The teachers in the city have 175 kids, almost half of whom may be absent on any given day but all of whom remain the teacher's responsibility. And those kids are a resentful, wary, often troublesome lot. Horace is relieved that he is where he is. He wonders whether any of those college teachers ever read any of the recommendations he writes each Christmas vacation.

Most jobs in the real world have a gap between what would be nice and what is possible. One adjusts. The tragedy for many high school teachers is that the gap is a chasm, not crossed by reasonable and judicious adjustments. Even after adroit accommodations and devastating compromises—only *five minutes per week* of attention on the written work of each student and an average of ten minutes of planning for each fifty-odd-minute class—the task is already crushing, in reality a sixty-hour work week. For this, Horace is paid a wage enjoyed by age-mates in semiskilled and low-pressure blue-collar jobs and by novices, twenty-five years his junior, in some other white-collar professions. Furthermore, none of these sixty-plus hours is spent in replenishing his own academic capital. That has to be done in addition, perhaps during the summer. However, he needs to earn more money then, and there is no pay for upgrading his teachers' skills. He has to take on tutoring work or increase his involvement at the liquor store.

Fortunately (from one point of view), few people seem to care whether he simply does not assign that paragraph per week, or whether he farms its criticism out to other students. ("Exchange papers, class, and take ten minutes to grade your neighbor's essay.") He is a colorful teacher, and he knows that he can do a good job of lecturing, some of which can, in theory at least, replace the coaching that Horace knows is the heart of high school teaching. By using an overhead projector, he can publicly analyze the paragraphs of six of his students. But he will have assigned writing to all of them. As long as he does not let on which six papers he will at the last minute "pull" to analyze, he will have given real practice to all. There *are* tricks like this to use.

His classes are quiet and orderly, and he has the reputation in the community of being a good teacher. Accordingly, he gets his

administrators' blessings. If he were to complain about the extent of his overload, he would find no seriously empathetic audience. Reducing teacher load is, when all the negotiating is over, a low agenda item for the unions and school boards. The administration will arrange for in-service days on "teacher burnout" (more time away from grading paragraphs) run by moonlighting education professors who will get more pay for giving a few "professional workshops" than Horace gets for a year's worth of set construction in the theater.

No one blames the system; everyone blames him. Relax, the consultants advise. Here are some exercises to help you get some perspective. Morphine, Horace thinks. It dulls my pain . . . Come now, he mutters to himself. Don't get cynical . . . Don't keep insisting that these "experts" should try my job for a week . . . They assure me that they *understand* me, only they say, "We hear you, Horace." I wonder who their English teachers were.

Horace's students will get into college, their parents may remember to thank him for the references he wrote for their offspring (unlikely), and the better colleges will teach the kids to write. The students who do not get the coaching in college, or who do not go to college, do not complain. No one seems upset. Just let it all continue, a conspiracy, a toleration of a chasm between the necessary and the provided and acceptance of big rhetoric and little reality. Horace dares not express his bitterness to the visitor conducting a study of high schools, because he fears he will be portrayed as a whining hypocrite.[1]

Books by Theodore R. Sizer

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Theodore R. Sizer

HORACE'S SCHOOL

Redesigning the American High School

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cils in their appointed row in the plastic case in his shirt pocket, known to be scrupulously fair: "I give them problem sets. They get word problems. I know what they're supposed to be able to do in mathematics. I don't see where you're taking us, Horace."

Margaret, finally: "The coach knows best of all, when his team plays a game well and wins." Coach gave it back: "And the French play lets the kids show their stuff too."

Horace tried again. "Let's try to get beyond our specific subjects. Sure, we give a handful of the kids, like some of the honors track and voc ed kids, plenty to do, to show off, in our classes. But what about all those other kids? Is Franklin High the sum of our departmental parts? If we care about more than that, and we do, what questions would we ask these kids about how they think and act in some general, broader way? That's what's on my mind."

More silence. Clearly the committee was on unfamiliar ground.

"Give us an example, Horace. You've obviously been thinking about this."

"OK. Like any of us, I'm a creature of my subject. But let me try an idea that goes well beyond English, to the arts generally and the typical graduate's ability to use them, both to appreciate and employ them. The kids ought to be able to Exhibit to us, talk with us about, and debate with us, some mastery of the use of the arts and humanities. I have some examples. They sound easy, but aren't . . . Let me try one on you . . . Now don't jump all over me before you reflect on what such an exercise would entail. Think what it would take for all of us here to prepare the kids to do this, and think how *we'd* have to change. Think whether this sort of skill and knowledge is needed and respected out there in the big, wide world . . .

"Let me try on you an example from the arts and humanities in general, about emotions . . ."[1]

An Exhibition: Emotions

Select one of the following familiar human emotions: fear, envy, courage, hunger, longing, joy, anger, greed, jealousy.

In an essay, define the emotion you choose, drawing on your own and others' experience. Then render a similar definition using in turn at least three of the following forms of expression: a written language other than English; a piece of drawing, painting, or sculpture; photographs, a video, or film; a musical composition; a short story or play; pantomime; a dance.

Select examples from literature, journalism, the arts, and history of other people's definitions or representations of the emotion you have chosen. These should strike you as important and arresting, even if they do not correspond with your own definition.

Be ready in four months to present this work and to answer questions about it. The Exhibition — a portfolio collected by you over the next months — will be judged on the basis of its vitality and overall coherence as well as the quality of its individual components.

Here is an educational target.

This Exhibition is a valid one. We ourselves are creatures of our emotions, and we make judgments about others' emotions every day. Actions follow from such judgments. All students realize that.

It is important. Being reflective and self-conscious about fundamental human characteristics is a mark of a thoughtful and civil individual. People who are known to *understand* the emotions of others, and the actions that may follow on them, are universally admired. The ability to recognize emotions is a requisite for such understanding.

It raises issues that are at once highly personal and universal. While there is no one crisp all-purpose definition of, say, anger, every one of us, without exception, employs one, consciously or unconsciously. Thoughtful people from all walks and conditions of life ponder not only their own practical definitions but those of others, in the present and from the past. We hope that people will act in principled ways on the basis of their considered, practical definitions.

It cuts across traditional scholarly disciplines in a respectful way while it demonstrates practice in the use of knowledge in a palpably "real" sense. Further, it puts matters raised independently in a variety of subjects into a sensible context, powerfully affirming the work in each discipline.

It asks each student to speak in several voices, through several media. While all students are expected to display clear written English, beyond that each can present herself in the ways she personally finds most persuasive.

It gives the student a reasonable choice of topic — the specific emotion selected — thus allowing him to plumb an area of particular interest.

It requires reflection. Idle guessing will not work. The student must inform himself and be precise in transmitting what he means.

It requires persistence and organization.

It provokes the student to think about the *use* of her definition by means of "speaking the same message" through different media and searching out arresting examples from others' expressions.

It allows the student to display his ability to unearth examples from a variety of sources, his skills of description and communication, his mastery of a range of information, and his ingenuity and imagination.

It reinforces the modern habit of using in combination a variety of forms of expression to give power to meaning.

It allows time for serious work to be accomplished. Although all of some comprehensive list of emotions (if one ever could be created) are not "covered," the student will practice the complex thought that is required to get a fair handle on the meaning of any emotion. That is, she will have the happy experience of pressing a critical definition with the thoroughness it deserves.

It promises that the student's work will be taken seriously and respected: it will be viewed and heard publicly and subjected to questions.

For most students, such an Exhibition on emotions is an interesting exercise and for many, indeed, fun.

For teachers, it is a demanding exercise, requiring scholarly breadth, ingenuity (how to help a student connect various forms of expression around a common idea), and judgment (how to assay the time required for a particular student to complete the work; how to instill some self-confidence in a youngster hellbent on avoiding anything new).

For the school, it requires a rich library, or student access to a nearby and cooperative public library, with patient and knowledgeable librarians.

Why an *Exhibition*? The word clearly states its purpose: the student must Exhibit the products of his learning. If he does that well, he can convince himself that he can use knowledge and he can so convince others. It is the academic equivalent of being able to sink free throws in basketball. You may not ring all of them, but if you consistently hit a good percentage, you gain confidence in yourself, and the coach will have the confidence to play you.

To shoot baskets well one needs to practice. To think well one needs to practice. Going to school is practicing to use one's mind well. One does not exercise one's mind in a vacuum; one rarely learns to "think" well with nothing but tricky brainteasers or questions embedded in a context that is neither realistic nor memorable. One needs to stimulate its exercise with engaging ideas in an equally engaging setting. Such ideas require the grasp of fundamental information.

However, the heart of it is in the play. Merely "knowing" ideas is as inert as knowing that one has to sink the free throw from the foul line. One has actually to sink the shot, has to *use* the ideas, has be in the *habit* of using them, and *use* is always far more complicated than simple recall of propositions or rules or even an analysis of them. Fortunately, the use of ideas is the best vehicle for fixing their underlying information and skills into an individual's mind.

The Exhibition, then, is not only the target. It is also a representation of the way one prepares to reach the target. That is, school is about practicing to wrap one's mind around real and complex ideas, those of fundamental consequence for oneself and for the culture. It is not merely about "coverage," or being informed, or displaying skills. It is the demonstration of the employment of all of these toward important and legitimate ends.

The final Exhibition is a "test," yes; but it is really an affirmation for the student herself and for her larger community that what she has long practiced in school, what skills and habits she has developed, have paid off.

Exhibitions can be powerful incentives for students. Knowing where the destination is always helps in getting there, and if that destination is cast in an interesting way, one is more likely to care about reaching it.

Truly genuine Exhibitions may be difficult to "grade"; that is, it may be hard to render a precise assessment of the achievement of the student. This Exhibition on emotions will likely have to be judged by a team of adults, somewhat like that empaneled to judge a diving event at a swimming meet. For example, approval could be given for the clarity of written, oral, and other forms of presentation; for sophistication, the subtlety and perceptiveness of the student's definition, and his use of other people's definitions; for coherence and orderliness; and for appropriateness, the fitting of the definition to the examples the student puts forward. Grading will thus be time- and people-intensive. However, the effort will feed back into the school's habit of tuning its standards and assessing its own effectiveness. Grading must be

careful, but it can never be icily objective. It will rely on distributed judgment, but it will always be colored — and appropriately — by particular circumstances.

Exhibitions give focus to a school's program. Unless a faculty is clear about what a student must present in order to deserve the high school diploma, it is difficult to state what the curriculum, its pedagogy, the routines of school, and its standards should be. That is, it is difficult to prepare the players if one does not know what playing the game entails. The nature of the play must be presented in terms of the action of the players — and not of the coach, whose activities are only a means to the players' ends. A school's program presented essentially as what the teachers do is misdirected.

A mindful school is clear about what it expects of a student and about how he can exhibit these qualities, just as a mindful student is one who knows where he is going, is disposed to get there, and is gathering the resources, the knowledge, and the skills to make the journey.

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Horace's Compromise:
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Horace's School:
Redesigning the American High School

Horace's Hope:
What Works for the American High School

Theodore R. Sizer

HORACE'S HOPE

What Works for the American High School

Houghton Mifflin Company
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Horace's Hope

I RECENTLY shadowed a young man for a day in a well-regarded large suburban secondary school serving a stable, working-class and upper-middle-class, largely white community. His name was Will. I slipped into each of his classes in turn, sitting by prearrangement at the rear of each room, watching and listening.

"Will, do you agree with that?"

The question, about gays and straights, was asked during the second-period health class.

Will pondered. "Umm . . . Well, I guess so."

Though barely six feet tall, Will was the school's basketball star. He went through the day as a member of the second-level academic track, bound, he told me, for a nearby state college: "They've recruited me."

Short-haired and squeaky clean, Will was joined for three of his classes by his girlfriend, a striking junior with long black hair who was the star of the women's basketball team. In the halls during class breaks, they punched each other's arms and giggled.

"Will. Number twenty-three." Now it was algebra, seventh period.

"Umm . . . Twenty-seven . . . the square root of . . . yes, twenty-seven."

The teacher, unsatisfied, moved on. "Patricia?"

Will sat as he always sat in class, almost motionless, feet flat on the floor, unopened books neatly before him. For every class he had a separate notebook, each by this time of year tattered. In no class did he move to write, to gesture, to show any facial expression, to attract any attention. He was like a marble statue of a star athlete frozen in classroom time, an alabaster figure at a schoolboy Hall of Fame.

Will obviously liked that. Those two exchanges in health and algebra — quoted in full — were the only conversations he had in class on any academic issue during the entire seven-period day.

I know from personal experience that it is difficult to capture the interest of a marble icon like Will. His teachers' failure to do so would be okay, they might rationalize, since he would get into state college anyway. Many of them probably were happy to ignore him, as he was so obviously uninterested in what they taught and in them as people. Some surely felt twinges of guilt about this. Should every teacher like and get to know every one of his or her students?

Will did not make any trouble. He was considered a "nice kid." It was unlikely, though, that anyone actually knew what made his mind tick. Cruel stereotypers would say that he did not have a mind, just a jump shot.

Underneath all of this is the astonishing waste — of Will's time, of Will's chances for the future, of his teachers' time, of the community's resources. Will and his pals and his teachers spent the day going through the motions, covering the ground, getting the job done, playing out the routines of school. There was no engagement, no challenge, no insistence that Will (or many of his classmates in several classes; alas, at this school he was not alone) come to some decision or prove something or rise out of his controlled and elaborate lethargy. Indeed, there was no cost for such passivity. Will would make it, by that school's lights. He would do what he was told, and he was rarely told to think hard. If he was learning any habit, it was to keep quiet, to be orderly, to do nothing to attract attention, and to find something outside of class — outside of thinking hard about important things — that was fun and that earned public approbation, such as basketball.

It was Tillson High School all over again, this time in smart suburbia.

School was a warm but vacuous theater, a description that characterizes all too many American high schools, even places that are judged to be good and that students such as Will told me they liked a lot. Almost surely, however, all this inattention was just fine by Will. In other places it is not so appreciated.

In a working-class neighborhood high school I spent a school day shadowing Martha, an impassive but quietly gracious nineteen-year-old. She clearly had a struggle with life. Her father lived in Texas, a thousand miles from this school. Life with her mother was surely unsettling, or so I gleaned from what Martha wanted to tell me. I did not press. She had a heavy relationship (or so her teachers told me) with a man five years her elder.

We marched through the school day, from current events to business mathematics to gym to beginning Spanish to health and more. All the classes were orderly, to a fault: no gum chewing, no talking, sit where I tell you, be quiet. Martha behaved. She was not sullen in her manner, just carefully reserved.

There was no life in the classes, little give-and-take. In Spanish there was sentence drill ("Where is the railroad station?") and a vocabulary game that proceeded up one row and down another. The entire classroom (in which Martha was visibly the oldest student present) slouched, physically and mentally. In current events there was a CNN school service newsclip followed by a lecture by the teacher explaining the most elementary matters ("Ford makes cars outside of America"). In mathematics class mortgage rates were computed, using only rudimentary arithmetic. It was all easy basics, served up as pap.

There was no one event to identify as causing Martha's crisis. The disrespect was a gradual accretion. As we left her sixth-period class, she suddenly hissed intensely in my ear, "I am not stupid, I am not stupid, *I am not stupid.*" It stopped right there. Quickly the mask returned, but her face was flushed. I gave her time to say more. No words came.

This was not only waste. It was cruelty. No teacher or administrator was overtly hurtful. The school's adults simply had no idea what was going on, or if they did (and the mathematics teacher might have had a clue, given the way she once attended to Martha), they found no decisive way to address it. And this was a prize-winning, highly regarded institution, doing all the observable things "well."

Of course there is plenty of overt cruelty affecting adolescents in many communities, especially those containing low-income families. Deborah Meier highlighted this for me with a ghastly, ironic fact. A study of the graduates of the Central Park East elementary schools since their launching (by Meier and her colleagues) in the mid-1970s reported that all those young people, now mostly in their twenties, were still alive.[1] Not one had been struck down on mean streets. That fact had to be one measure of the schools' ability, she felt, to give their children something to live for and the smarts to watch out for themselves — to "cover their backs," as some high school kids have told me. They had hope. Life was not so kind to their peers. That such a fact is notable says worlds, about these schools, about our times, and particularly about us.

I leave schools where I have sensed waste and cruelty and find myself engulfed in the worst kind of self-righteous anger. It is fueled by frustration: I know that most of the adults dealing with the children are good and decent people, largely unappreciated by most other citizens and struggling in extremely difficult circumstances. In my head I therefore rail about the system (whatever it may be) that grandly tolerates routines that force good and decent people into disrespectful and ineffective practice.

My usual ultimate target is the currently popular policy rhetoric about how to improve things by changing the carrots and sticks administered by those at the top of the system and expecting those at the bottom, with meager assistance and with all the existing baggage of regulation and tradition, to reform their ways — or else. At my sourest I compare this with Vietnam War bombing strategies, measured with body counts. When bombing does not appear to win the war, just bomb more. When the test scores do not go up, just give "tougher" tests.

It is an ugly metaphor for the times. I am embarrassed by it, and I struggle to reject it. But it too often comes back after a day of shadowing in weak schools, especially those schools in which the authorities do not acknowledge the weakness. Or it follows a day with administrative and policy people who exhibit little awareness of the facts of being an adolescent and going to school in contemporary America, or after hearing a speech about how we Americans cannot spend any more money or political capital on public education.

It hurts.

And yet Horace Smith, to the surprise of many of his colleagues, is hopeful about the future of American public education. Horace has hope not because he believes that there will be a return to some purported good old days or that the status quo is fine, bedeviled only by a temporary public relations problem. Quite the contrary. And that is what his colleagues who cannot fathom his optimism do not understand.

I have learned to share Horace's hope, whatever the dismay I feel after contemplating the chances in life given to Will and Martha and their kind and however I absorb the sour messages abroad about schools and schooling, about incompetent teachers, rigid bureaucracies, embarrassing test scores, lazy and indulgent students, and high budgets.

Paradoxically, perhaps, all the public controversy itself provides a cause for hope. It is not that all the criticisms are well taken and all those at work in public education deserve the raking-over they are getting. It is, rather, that the invective, whether accurate or far off the mark, has legitimized a searching rethinking of what schooling is all about. What used to be unsayable now is being said — and listened to. No idea is peremptorily dismissed. The taxing ambiguities have brought a freshening of ideas.

For many, this is a frightening moment. It is also a highly promising one. Out of such turbulence can come better schools — or worse, Horace knows, if we blow the opportunity the times are providing us. To my eye, however, some of the trends are very much in the right direction.

Horace Smith is part of a grass-roots movement for reform, one given increasing running room by those very public authorities who are now so assaulted with criticism. It is not without hassle: the lurches of state legislatures, state departments of education, and school boards are a nuisance and often a barrier to the changes Horace wishes to make. Inappropriate regulations, poorly designed but influential assessment systems, and tighter and more paranoid collective bargaining agreements get in the way.

Nonetheless, school-level reform now has visible momentum. This momentum and the increasing public attention that it is receiving are important. As the reform quickens, Horace Smith can take its imperatives as much into account as he takes the dictates from above. Pressure to try new ways to do better has its own authority and public approval and is every bit as powerful as the pressure that says, "Do what you are told and toe the line." Horace is getting into the habit of saying that he won't do as he is told if he is told to do something mindless or ill-advised.

Today there is something for Horace to join, something to make cause with, something that is not wholly a creation of government and the corrosive politics that currently infests so much of it, something that speaks directly to the compromises that so dismay him. It is something more than mere talk, something with an edge, something to do. This something may be an identifiable enterprise, such as the Coalition of Essential Schools, or Dr. James Comer's School Development Project, or E. D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Foundation, or the Accelerated Schools Project, led by Henry Levin, or Harvard Project Zero. Or, more likely, it may be an informal but sustained gathering of earnest friends or a fresh attitude found in a faculty room or at the meetings of a regional professional group. It gives hope, and the energy to tackle persistent compromises that hope inspires. As a veteran teacher told his younger colleagues at a meeting which I recently attended, "I don't have to apologize anymore." Here and there, more and more, the compromises are being addressed from the grass roots, often in spite of the higher-ups.

Horace knows that the stereotype of the teacher is a crabbed one, and that many in his profession, which is devoted to the task of helping young people learn to use their minds well, have little idea what serious intellectual work in fact involves. They have rarely experienced it themselves, having been through an educational system, including college, that rewarded them for merely showing up and passing through, rather than for presenting serious, rigorous academic work. As a result, coming up with demanding intellectual work for the adolescents they teach is difficult, often poignant labor. It starts with the teachers themselves.

Many critics thus protest. Give authority to these school-level people, with all their well-documented limitations? They will botch it. This, however, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Tell people of any age that they are not to be trusted, and they will soon believe it and act accordingly. Give a job authority and accountability and able people will flock to it. They will especially gravitate to teaching, with its inherent excitement, variety, and legitimate sense of service — a phenomenon long seen in some private schools and prestigious public magnet schools (not all of which serve only well-scrubbed, academically inclined students) and increasingly seen today.

Horace also appreciates what so many far from the neighborhoods and their schools fail to see: the stubborn quality of decency in so many citizens. There are, as always, the complainers and the people who walk away from their responsibilities for their children. However, too much can be made of them: they are good newspaper copy. Many more people rally around in most communities, especially in an emergency.

Take heart from the school's neighbors? Some will think Horace is blind. The people care? Yes, Horace tells me, the parents and many parents by association (most of us older citizens) do give a damn, and if we see a way to help our public schools, we join in. True, if we are patronized or told that we can briefly "advise" and then "come aboard" when we have had little role in shaping a plan, we tune out. I have experienced happy engagement recently with parents and community members starting a regional public charter school. Meetings of its board of trustees, as provided by the state's legislation for all public schools, are open to all, but the engagement at this school is special. Parents — on the board and in the audience — raise issues, shape the agenda, insistently demand to be consulted, heard, involved, put to work, respected. All feel the power that comes with having chosen this school.

A recent meeting dealt with the "tone of decency" (as the agenda put it) of the school, and it eventually spilled into the collective "tone of decency" of the school's larger community, including what happens at home. (Were rap CDs that are contemptuous of and vicious toward women tolerated at home at the same time that they were banned from school? If so, what does this teach?) This kind of involvement, while it leads to long meetings, will surely serve the children well. Of course, it is possibl y in human-scale communities, ones that have real

authority over their work. Roaring debates at meetings of school boards representing large constituencies are usually led by factions and special-interest groups. The voice of a parent of a particular youngster with a particular problem is rarely heard, and the energy and commitment of that parent is thus rarely energized.

If people of any age are treated with the dignity they deserve, they respond, in community after community. We see it daily. Often it takes a crisis — a flood on the Mississippi or a bombing on Wall Street or in Oklahoma City — to highlight it. It is patently there. It is a cause for hope.

Doomsayers say that democracy is dying. The number of registered voters who cast ballots drops. The pundits suggest to us, persuasively, that Americans are disgusted with their politicians, that they distrust the system and the government that is its agent. However, being disgusted with the status quo does not mean that we are giving up on democracy. Paradoxically, the opposite is true. So many are unhappy precisely because we believe in the system. We know it can work, and we believe that the alternatives are much worse than the system of government we now have, warts and all.

We complain when we see organized forces outside the democratic system seizing excessive influence. We are sick of being manipulated and lied to ("I merely misspoke . . ."), of being the subjects not of respectful persuasion but of an advertising campaign, of being targets of the same sort of sell that gets us to buy a deodorant or cigarettes. We believe that the American way is better than that and that blatant influence-peddling corrupts what we admire.

People do not want to be patronized and manipulated by their government. They want government to work. They want to admire their government. Is this naive, sentimental patriotism? Not entirely, and there is nothing necessarily wrong with patriotism. We should note the extraordinary surge of interest in local action that followed President Clinton's announcement of Ambassador Walter Annenberg's $500 million personal challenge to the nation for school reform. Annenberg's simple idea — that democracy is at risk of destruction through neglect and violence and that local public schools are the necessary and princi- al bulwark to resist this decay — struck a powerful chord. Senti tal? Perhaps. Purposeful? Certainly. Realistic? It has to be. What is the alternative, save more decay? People have stepped forward.[2]

There is a host of examples. For instance, I have seen an explosion of energy in parents and local citizens in support of a new district high school in which they will have a respected role and which is designed with their particular children, rather than some stereotype of a child of a certain age (hatched in a remote office building), in mind. A sense of community responsibility is latent in many American neighborhoods, I have found, even those that are racked by poverty and crime or awash in the entitlements of affluence. Too many Americans know that their worlds can be better, that with encouragement those worlds are theirs and they can take charge of them. Give people a cause worth following and the dignity of a necessary role for everyone of every age and they will respond — not quickly or easily, perhaps, but if patiently gathered, they will respond.

I am invited to graduations at Essential schools. Several in communities serving low-income families stick especially in my mind. Most of the young people at these schools have stayed the course, have not dropped out, and have publicly presented their final Exhibitions. Many who never dreamed of going to college are going to college.

Their families know this, and the atmosphere at these gatherings is electric. At one school, student after student gave brief remarks, one coming up after another, spontaneously. Their sustained theme was a poignant and powerful one: "We did what America did not believe we could do." The momentum of this message at this particular gathering — a sad message in its way, as it reminded those assembled that these adolescents knew they were perceived to be people of limited merit — gained force as the long ceremony, some of it colorfully out of control, seemed to burst forth in radiant optimism and determination. Such young people are the fuel of hope. Their schools have made a difference for them, a life-altering difference. Horace has good reason to be hopeful.

The likely shape of a different and useful system of American schools — one created in large part anew — is dimly visible. Key details are

still murky and still very much in play, but some outlines are there. The best of these follow.

There will be choice. Every family (not just rich families) will have the ability — indeed, the obligation — to choose among schools for their children. The state will assure that parents do in fact have meaningful choices among schools.

The substance, standard, and culture of each school will be shaped significantly by the families who choose it and the staff who elect to work at it rather than primarily by the deliberations of those families' and the larger communities' elected representatives. Schools will thus differ from one another, often significantly.

Finance will completely or largely be a state (rather than a local) responsibility, and the money will follow the child directly, the full per-pupil allotment going to his or her school. The drift toward state rather than local funding has been under way since the early 1970s. It will continue.

To be a truly public school, worthy of state funding, each school, wherever it is located, will admit every applicant from that state; if there are more applicants than places at the school, it will admit students by lottery. No public policy can more dramatically create the truly common school than this. Civil rights should not and do not need to be weakened by a system of parental choice.

Given general state funding, accountability by and for the schools will be due both to those who chose them — the families, who come first — and to the state. Given the rights of the former, each school should be accountable for the way in which it presents itself and the standard of its work. The state will regularly inspect that school on the basis of the school's own assessment design, objecting only in the most severe cases. The state's essential obligation will be to insist on frequent and public displays by each school of its progress, defined largely by the observable work of its students, which will help provide parents with an accurate picture of the schools. Wise schools will engage outside authorities of their choice to assist in their assessment and public display as they do today with both profit-making and nonprofit agencies, from test publishers to the College Board.

Gradually a spectrum between traditional schooling and formal home schooling will evolve, with what takes place in any one schoolhouse deliberately orchestrated with serious learning activity at home, usually at a computer or book, at a workplace, in an orchestra, as part of a team, as a member of a small neighborhood seminar that is an extension of a larger regional school. "Homework" will change its meaning. Rather than being only studies supplementary to classroom work, it will become activity that is largely independent of the daily, formal school routine, especially for older students. The standard to which the students are held will be met by work at and beyond the formal schoolhouse. The expectation will be that each adolescent will prepare for that standard beyond the immediate shepherding of his teacher in school.

As this configuration of deliberate education emerges, technology — and particularly software — will adapt. Programs will be designed not only to reinforce classroom activity or to entertain in some educational way. They will be freestanding ventures, designed to be used in a variety of ways and organized to prepare a student for an ultimate Exhibition.

In this way students will go to multiple schools, places that in planned combination provide for formal education. For most contemporary adolescents, this will at first appear to call for just a modest change in behavior, as their learning is now influenced powerfully by multiple sources of information. What will be starkly new for them, however, is finding that these sources can and must be taken seriously. Educators, parents, and the media and publishing industries will have to create incentives for students to use all of these sources resolutely — no mean feat. But it will happen, because that is the way the culture increasingly educates itself and because configurations make as much financial as educational sense. Better yet is the fact that these "beyond the schoolhouse" opportunities can at one leap transcend the boundaries of geography and thus of class, ethnicity, and race.

As a practical matter, *systems of schools will emerge,* each representing a particular educational style or opportunity and each governing itself within state authority. For example, one set of schools might emphasize a particular teaching approach, such as that arising from the work of Maria Montessori or from E. D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge

Foundation or from the Coalition of Essential Schools. Another might involve a substantial system of computer-driven connected instruction. Others might emphasize, for adolescents, substantial time and formal learning in a workplace other than a traditional school building. The momentum of tradition and expected practice will, at least for a generation, hold these approaches to substantial common ground, as they do today. The temptation of central authorities to micro-manage them, however, will have to be stoutly resisted. These systems of schools would overlap. The options available to families would appear much like those now represented by higher education.[3]

Choice. Variety. Truly open schools. Equitable finance. Power deliberately tilted toward the families of the children served and the professionals who teach them. The deliberate use of various orchestrated configurations of learning, not just the schoolhouse. All of these issues are more or less on the political table today. Over the past decade, interest in them has picked up substantial momentum.

These ideas are consistent with the drift of contemporary public sentiment as expressed in policy or, implicitly, by what is happening in practice. They reflect the prevalent view that centralized government is an inept and inappropriate tool to set and shape the substance and standards of school policy and practice. They reflect the view that disproportional authority for these purposes should be given to the families affected and the professionals to whom those families entrust their children. Centralized government is needed as a financier (that is, the dispenser of the people's money), as a documenter, persuader, supporter, advocate for neglected children, truth-teller, but not, except at the extremes, a director.

These ideas reflect the belief that a market — involving competition and real choice among schools — is a better, if not complete or perfect, regulator of schooling than the traditional educational and political authorities and their expert allies in the teaching profession.

They reflect a prominent view loudly expressed today in the context of the debate over national health care: I wish to choose my own doctor rather than be assigned one by the state. In like manner, I wish to pick my children's school rather than have the state do the choosing.

These ideas address reality, however painful or inconvenient that reality is. They are attuned to the extraordinary variety of communities and interests in this country, a variety that is ill served by centralized control, which usually demands standardization. What works well for a small town in northeastern Arizona might be inappropriate for a precinct in Pittsburgh. These ideas recognize and dignify our diversity.

They provide an end run around the *Milliken* decision of the United States Supreme Court, which ruled that the suburbs (usually wealthy and white) have no constitutional responsibility to join in racial integration with the school systems in the central cities (usually poor and disproportionately nonwhite).[4] If the money follows the child and if that child's family can enter him or her in its school of choice, *wherever that may be* — a school that must admit all applicants, using a lottery system if necessary, in order to receive public funding — the opportunity for more class and racial integration, where it is desired, can proceed. Currently it cannot proceed at all, at least for the poor, even if some families — poor and rich — wish that it could. Geographical boundaries, mostly reflecting the demographic and political priorities of the past, dictate current school policy. These boundaries will be pierced.

These ideas address the fact that there are deep and understandable disagreements not only among citizens but among experts on just what an excellent education might be and how we would know it when we saw it. In the emerging public school system, no one point of view dominates; the market of ideas allows both variety and contention among serious positions. This will be untidy, and those who believe that there is a virtue in cultural orderliness will no doubt be unhappy. Unfortunately, our world is untidy, free minds are untidy, and to be genuine and useful, our institutions must reflect that rather than present a spurious uniformity.

They address the compromises that so trouble Horace Smith, by providing channels and incentives for the creation of new schools or the redesign of existing schools that follow more sensible regimens than those now widely in use and largely cemented in place by regulatory practice. This encourages Horace, keeps him at his work, and attracts imaginative and talented people into the school business.

These ideas carry with them important side effects. They imply that school leaders must become more entrepreneurial than exclusively managerial, becoming leaders of schools that have a distinct character rather than agents of someone else's idea of what a school ought to be.

They put an extraordinary responsibility on the profession and the academic community at large to seek out and place before the public evidence of what is working in schools, by a variety of definitions, and what is not, and to define what kinds of investment different goals require, thus pushing into visibility the weaknesses and strengths of the diverse schools that citizens are choosing among. The watchdogs have to be the people themselves, not central governments (except at the extremes, such as when a school gives evidence of appalling neglect or has doctored evidence about its graduates' performance).

These ideas will challenge, directly or by circumvention, the elaborate thickets of educational regulation, certification, and accreditation, which more often than not reflect the vagaries of past academic politics and distrust of local authorities rather than considered and proven practices. They depend on persuasion rather than coercive control.

These systems will be messy, both in their diversity and in the confrontations that will result from their competition. Many will find this aggravating, undercutting the (spurious) spirit of togetherness expressed by main-line education groups.

But these ideas force a test of the proposition that healthy democracy depends on an ultimate trust in and of the people, no matter how small the unit in which the people are gathered for a particular purpose is. Either we trust the people or we don't.

These ideas challenge the notion that the primary purpose of the public schools is to teach a common culture, an American way, American ideals. Diversity is centrifugal, some will argue; the common school is the only way to give coherence to what it is to be an American. However, the reality is that we have in the media the most powerful common carrier of mass culture in history. It is so powerful that its existence changes the necessary role for schools from creators of the culture to respectful critics of that culture.

In this regard, the federal government has new and heavy responsibilities. The mass media must be seen as a fundamental piece of public education, a full participant with the schools. Federal responsibility might play out in a number of ways. The financing of useful programming and the maintenance of independent channels devoted to educational purposes is a clear governmental responsibility. Free access by all citizens to the artistic and intellectual treasures of the society must become an absolute right, like free public education itself. The electronic library is the lineal descendant of the public library and is crucial for the support of an intelligent people. Its costs should be wholly met by a tax on those making commercial use of the common good represented by the broadcast channels. There is growing public sentiment for these ideas, only just now powerful enough to affect federal policy.

The outlines of a new kind of public education, then, are visible. One danger is that government will adopt the easy parts and ignore the difficult ones, such as providing fair compensatory funding or access to technology for each poor or handicapped child, or providing access to any publicly financed school in the state, not only those within a historically established district. Another is that the leap from dependence on a rule-driven hierarchical system to trust of families is more than the political system can tolerate and the temptation on the part of the state to keep control will be too strong. Loosening control is always more difficult than tightening it. A third is the danger that removing education from the administrative status it now enjoys within government, weak though that is, will lessen leaders' interest in keeping an eye on the educational needs of its citizens.

All these concerns are real ones. Are they greater than those implicit in going along with the present system? We must always measure the risks of the new against those of the old. The reality is that the currents toward a new sort of American educational system are already flowing. There can be no turning back. The trick will be to understand those new currents and to ride, and thus direct, the best of them.

The traditional American system of schools was in large measure designed exactly a century ago. It has served us well, but times and conditions change. America in 1995 is not the America of 1895. Not surprisingly, a new system of schools is emerging, one that is more complex and potentially more powerful than the one we inherited. If wisely and resolutely shaped, such a system can serve the people and democracy well. Such is a source of Horace's hope.

My wife, Nancy, and I called at the office of the principal of a large city high school in the Southwest and found her coming out of her conference room with a mother and her daughter. Mother seemed weak, painfully shy, withdrawn. Daughter, probably sixteen or seventeen years old, was quiet but talked easily with the principal, Angelica Morales. Angelica showed them out before turning to us, with a final word to the daughter suggesting that "we should try this."

As we started on our ritual principal's office coffee, Angelica explained about this pair. Both had recently arrived from Mexico; they had only each other for support. The mother was sickly, unable to work, unskilled in English, frightened and disoriented by her new American surroundings. The daughter, Maria, was the family's sole source of income, in effect the head of the household. She worked every weekday afternoon immediately after school and into evening, up to shortly after midnight, as a cashier and usher at a movie theater. On Saturdays and Sundays the duties went from shortly after noon to midnight again. School and homework were tucked in around these obligations.

The problem at school was not Maria's performance. She was passing all of her courses. The issue was that she was habitually late in the morning and that she often fell asleep in class. For obvious reasons, this annoyed her teachers. Although some probably sympathized with Maria's situation, tolerating persistent early-in-the-day class-cutting set a bad example. And having a student sleep soundly in class does dull one's teaching style (to put it charitably). The teachers complained, out of concern for Maria as much as for the integrity of their classes.

We never learned just what Angelica did in this situation. Clearly some sort of accommodation was afoot — part-time enrollment, perhaps. Maria's situation, though, was transparent. Here was a teenager taking charge not only of her life but of her mother's. She was a young person of substantial fiber. She juggled two full-time lives and more, with gritty determination, but she could not always hide her exhaustion. Angelica's school would bend for her, we knew, in some sensible way. Maria would make it because she was already an adult, in the best sense.

There are many teenagers who are not like Maria, who mindlessly wander around the malls, live shamelessly off other people, and sleep their hangovers off in class. We hear endlessly about them. A branch of the film industry depends on them as the lead characters in teen movies. However, there are many Marias, and more can be recruited.

Serious secondary education requires the commitment of its students. They have to work hard; they are not merely genial empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. They need the commitment and determination of Maria. But the schools for them have to be committed and determined too. The temptation to pass the buck is almost irresistible. Look at Maria, people will say, she did it by pulling herself up by her bootstraps and not by depending on us. All other kids must do that too, and we adults can both back away from our responsibilities and feel smug about that withdrawal.

In this, one of the richest of all societies, Maria and her mother should not have to live on the precarious margin of survival. Further, for our collective benefit, Maria's obvious talents should be protected, nurtured, propelled. To allow her merely to pass her courses, to conspire with her to give little attention to homework, sells her terribly short. This is very likely a powerful young woman, one who could give a great deal to society. Society's neglect of her is costly, in every respect.

Public education is an idea, not a structure. The idea is that every citizen must have access to the culture and to the means of enriching that culture. It arises from the belief that we are all equal as citizens, and that we all thereby have rights and obligations to serve the community as well as ourselves. To meet those obligations, we must use our informed intelligence. Schools for all assure the intelligence of the people, the necessary equipment of a healthy democracy. A wise democracy invests in that equipment.

Public education, then, is not at all or necessarily the same thing as our current system of schools. Other means to give the people access and intelligence — new configurations of educating institutions — may be better, more appropriate to our time, more respectful of current exigencies. If we are wise, we will consider them, however much they may challenge the conventional ways of doing things.

To the extent that we embrace that challenge and the fundamental American philosophy behind it — that a free and powerful education is the absolute right of every citizen and that this education must be first and foremost seen as the mainspring of a democratic community — we can be hopeful.

For Horace Smith, the hope is also more personal, arising from the particular adolescents all around him — their color and brashness, their gawkiness, their risk-taking, their naiveté about the world, which sucks so many of them into optimism, however unrealistic. The high theater of the school hallway never ceases to amuse him, and the diversions of the kids' little passions tickle his love of fiction, creating tiny comic stories in his head. The dance of youth is timeless and beautiful in its awkwardness.

Most of the young people are resilient in the face of either the lures of affluence or the savagery of neglect. Horace worries more about them than they do about themselves, and he is ashamed when it dawns on his students how little American culture actually values them. Most of the kids, however, sweep this away, not so much with anger as with tacit rejection. *To hell with you, old-timer. We'll go it on our own, and we'll make it.*

Horace knows that some will and many won't. But the energy is there, fueled as much by inexperience as by grit. With all its unreality, it yet insistently radiates the strength and inventiveness of humankind. In dark days, such light brings hope.

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) is a national network of schools and centers engaged in restructuring schools to promote better student learning and achievement.

> **CES envisions a future where all American schools are places where intellectual excitement animates every child's face, where teachers work together to get better at their craft, and where all children flourish, regardless of their gender, race, or class. To reach this goal, we lead the reinvention of schooling through transformations of school design, classroom practice, leadership, and community connections.**

The work of CES schools is supported by 19 regional centers and CES National, located in Oakland, California.

What is a CES School?

Despite the great diversity of schools in our network, CES schools share a common set of beliefs about the purpose and practice of schooling. These ideas are known as the CES Common Principles (see back page). This set of simple but powerful ideas reflects more than two decades of careful research and examined practice and is used to guide whole-school reform efforts in the areas of school design, classroom practice, leadership, and community connections. The Common Principles call broadly for schools to set clear goals about the intellectual skills and knowledge to be mastered by all the school's students; to lower student/teacher ratios, personalize teaching and curriculum, and make student work the center of classroom activity; to award diplomas based on a student's "exhibition" of his/her mastery of the school's program; to create an atmosphere of trust and respect for faculty, students, and parents; to demonstrate democratic and equitable practices at all levels of the work; and to accomplish such changes with no more than a ten percent increase in the school's budget. The Common Principles do not provide a fixed approach to change. Rather, they are used to focus each school's effort to rethink its priorities and redesign its structures and practices. Each school develops its own programs, suited to its particular students, faculty, and community. Hence, no two CES schools are exactly alike.

CES recognizes that fundamental reform is a lengthy process. Schools interested in the Coalition begin their work by exploring the ideas promoted by the Common Principles. Teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members are invited to discuss school reform and the potential effects that the enactment of the Common Principles might have on school programs. If the work of the Coalition fits with the school's needs, the planning stage begins. At this point, a school develops a vision statement that aligns the CES Principles with school goals and develops action plans for translating the vision into practice. Furthermore, they demonstrate evidence of school-wide commitment to the CES Principles and agree to share their learning with other schools and communities.

How are CES Schools Supported?

Now over sixteen years old, CES is still growing in a grassroots fashion, as teachers and community members learn about CES and seek support in implementing the Common Principles.

Regional Centers

Regional centers are designed to provide technical assistance to schools that have embraced the Common Principles and have made a commitment to raising student achievement for all children. A CES regional center is an independent organization guided by the mission of the Coalition of Essential Schools, as understood through the Principles. Centers are responsive to the needs of their schools and are of a size and scale that allows members to know each other well. Each center has the autonomy to create policy appropriate for the schools it serves.

Schools work with centers to develop a plan for change consistent with the Common Principles. To ensure effective implementation, these schools must demonstrate faculty and governing board support for extending the plan to the entire school. The exact requirements of membership vary from center to center and are responsive to the needs of local schools in their reform efforts.

National Staff

CES National, based in Oakland, California, consists of fourteen education professionals and support staff. CES National supports and enhances the work done by CES schools and regional centers by providing national networking opportunities; by promoting public engagement in issues of school reform; by conducting research; and by providing professional development. CES National seeks to ensure that successes in one region of the country are relayed and adapted in other areas of the country. Specific initiatives of CES National are as follows:

- **CES University** provides professional development institutes in the areas of school design, classroom practice, leadership, and community connections.
- CES **researches and publishes studies about** the effectiveness of CES schools in promoting student achievement.
- CES **advocates** for the power of CES Principles and builds partnerships to strengthen our advocacy.
- Through the **CES Web site**, www.essentialschools.org, CES practitioners share tools, resources, and best practices and collect and report on school data.

The Common Principles

(Elementary and Secondary School Inclusive)

1. The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be comprehensive if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation - an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of credits earned by time spent in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Parents should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils on the high school and middle school levels and 20 or fewer on the elementary level, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional schools.

10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

- CES' **Fall Forum** gathers educators, policy-makers, parents, and students from around the world to exchange strategies and practices.
- With a brand new look and expanded format, *Horace*, the CES journal, provides "hands-on" resources and engages readers in examples of best practices from around the country.

How is CES Directed?

The CES Executive Board supports the work of the national staff, provides counsel and leadership to CES, and appoints and works closely with the Executive Director. The Board also takes primary responsibility for identifying and addressing long-term organizational and financial needs and provides direction in assuring CES a strong and confident national voice. The Board consists of 18 members, nine of whom are nominated by centers and schools. Six other members are CES "allies" neither directly affiliated with a member school or center, nor part of the national staff. In addition, the Executive Director, CES Chair, and Vice Chair serve *ex officio* as members of the Board.

Theodore R. Sizer is the founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools and Chair Emeritus of the CES National Board. He is Professor Emeritus at Brown University, where he served as chair of the education department from 1984-1989. Three of his books, *Horace's Compromise*, *Horace's School*, and *Horace's Hope*, explore the motivation and ideas of the CES school reform effort. His most recent book, co-authored by Nancy Faust Sizer, is entitled *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract*. Currently, Dr. Sizer is teaching a course on education policy at Brandeis University as well as co-teaching a secondary school design course with Nancy Faust Sizer at Harvard University.

Hudi Podolsky, the Executive Director of CES National, provides overall organizational leadership, develops the programmatic agenda, collaborates with CES regional centers, advances the research and professional development agenda, assures availability of resources, and represents CES in a variety of contexts. Previous to this position, Hudi had a 23-year career at the Hewlett Packard Corporation where she held a variety of positions involving planning, decision-making, project management, and instructional design. Additionally, Hudi has extensive experience in non-profit management, as she has been a board member of non-profit organizations for many years.

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Places for Learning, Places for Joy: Speculations on American School Reform (1973)
Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (1984)
Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School (1992)
Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School (1996)

THE

Schools and the Moral Contract

STUDENTS

Theodore R. Sizer

ARE

Nancy Faust Sizer

WATCHING

Beacon Press · Boston

PREFACE: *Watching*

A MIDDLE-CLASS teacher and her working-class student face each other in a large, drafty, grimy high school. The walls had been a bilious green once, before they acquired so many smudges that they took on a dappled look. The stairs are basically sturdy, but broken-off linoleum makes them unsafe. The floors have not been swept thoroughly in a long time.

The student says, "You have been to college and stuff. What are *you* doing in a dump like this?"

He has accepted the message that such a high school conveys: You kids deserve to be neglected, to be surrounded by a blatant lack of respect. Besides an ugly, out-of-date building, you will have inadequate supplies, large classes, and many transient or substitute teachers who have been given the impression that it is their job to babysit rather than to teach. He sees no way out of such a "dump" for himself. But he can not see why she would choose even to come to such a place, let alone to work in it. He's a bit suspicious. Is she here just to spy on him, to criticize the school? Another "hit and run" visitor interested only in research or some kind of exposé?

What can the teacher reply to a question like this? That she considers him her fellow American, her fellow human being? That she feels that by working in a "difficult" high school she will be able to help to make it better? That it matters less to her what the walls are like than what the people are like? That she needs, for her own sake, to find out if she has what it takes to teach him?

He is watching her, waiting for her answer, and she had better not be patronizing, but she had better not be dishonest either. She had better put not just words but also deeds at his disposal. She had better work not just as a teacher but as an activist within the school to create the kind of environment which would indicate society's respect for such a young person as he is.

While she will not achieve a miracle, she will make a difference. She will try to help him to grow into a decent and knowledgeable and principled person, thoughtfully weighing his options and choosing the ones which lead to long-term benefits for himself and others. Many of her colleagues will work in the same spirit, and as teachers they will overcome, for some of the students some of the time, the dappled walls and lack of books. Students such as this young man will notice their testament, and appreciate it, some for all their lives. Mr. Holland's Opus: corny but true.

Still, how long will the middle-class teacher last in such a school before she thinks about her other options? How long before she comes to feel as if she, too, is a piece of trash? How long will the nation tolerate the fact that so many of its children are being educated in "dumps"?

Even more than idealistic individuals and adequate money are needed, however. People teach, but the institutions which people build also teach. If the high school is impersonal, if its message is boring and its goals are out of date, if its methods seem heartless and even vindictive, the students will learn from that too. It is the mores, the routines, the ways of schools which we want to consider in this book. The adults in American high schools are bad and good, sensitive and inhumane. Indeed, many are generous on Wednesday and stingy on Thursday, and such will always be. It is not enough to recruit better teachers. We must insist on a high school design which will help all the high school's people to reach for the best version of themselves.

What we need—as teachers, as parents and grandparents, as citizens and taxpayers—to consider and then to create is the kind of environment which will hold its best teachers by convincing youngsters like this young man that he is in a place which believes in him—and from which he can, therefore, learn well and deeply. What he can learn is Spanish and biology, algebra and literature, but also to be a young man who believes in his own moral agency, his capacity to make wise decisions and then act on them even when he is faced with all the temptations life will inevitably provide.

RAISING UP decent and principled children has been the desire of humankind for millennia. The great texts in most traditions have been moral tracts, guidebooks to inform and storybooks to inspire the young with worthy models to emulate.

Many of these tracts arise from terror of the unknown, from the uncertainty of why we exist, what will happen to us, what the meaning of our fragile living signifies.

Rarely is the terror forthrightly admitted. The focus of energy is on the mechanisms a society erects to protect civilization, mechanisms which reflect and project the social norms that guard against (or are believed to guard against) a descent into what literal seventeenth-century settlers on these shores called barbarism. Three such mechanisms have characterized most civilizations—the family or clan, religion, and education. A fourth is the mass media, so new in its extraordinary reach that there are few norms for its conduct.

Modern American society tinkers with families and clans only at the extreme margins. The life of a family is largely protected and private, with the community invading only when it suspects intolerable neglect or cruelty. The American church is both neglected—it too is protected space—and idealized. Religion is sanctioned; for example, our coins tell us that "In God We Trust." The media are still considered primarily a business, and thus are left "free" of cultural regulation and required to defend their existence by means of a monetary rather than a cultural bottom line.

That leaves education. American young people must by law attend a state-sanctioned school for at least ten years, a requirement—utterly accepted as a norm by contemporary Americans—that is the most remarkable imposition of state power that most citizens ever experience. With the family and the church largely off limits and the media left to commerce, public attention focuses on the schools. They become a sturdy vehicle for community cohesion, a cultural battleground, and often both at once.

Every decade yields its particular crop of books on "moral education." Most arise more or less from the discipline of philosophy. Increasingly we study as a matter of behavioral science the ways that young people apparently develop their values and the habits that reflect these values. "Moral education" has become its own scholarly discipline, involving detailed analyses of means as well as ends. In and around the schools, while the sermon on morality persists, it has been joined by more psychologically tailored approaches. Educators and public philosophers tinker incessantly with the ways that schooling can shape enduring moral habits.

A problem with "moral education" as it is presently undertaken, especially in middle and high schools, is that the matter

is most often framed as a collection of nouns. Impressive nouns. Absolutes, even. There is a shimmering intensity and a fixed quality to concepts such as respect, integrity, and honesty which make them hard to reach for, let alone attain. Paradoxically, they gain sturdiness from this elusiveness. Either one tells the truth or one doesn't. Good character is personified by George Washington and the done-in cherry tree. Start here, and you will not go wrong.

But for other reasons good character often involves shaving the truth. "Mom, I can't go to the party with this big zit on my nose. Everyone will notice it. They'll make fun of me . . ." "Oh no, it's not so bad. Put some cream on it. No one will notice . . . You'll be just fine." Reality is that the zit will shed the cream, it is large and ugly, some people will notice it and look beyond it, others will notice it and sympathize, and yet others will make cruel fun of it. Mom knew this would be the case. She was deliberately dishonest, making a judgment because of her belief in a greater good: people have to learn to live with physical imperfections, however trifling; to get her daughter to the party to learn this fact required knowingly making an unrealistic prediction of what might happen there; the costs to the daughter's ego would likely be less than the gains in the daughter's realization that zits don't make the woman. Few would say that Mom was immoral in her deliberate (however trivial) deceit.

But deceit is still deceit. Situations do not always dictate principled conduct. Seriously considering nouns and adopting the most compelling of them as one's guideposts are laudable goals, surely; but such a strategy may also seem an impossible dream to those starting out, one so impossible that it is jettisoned in all but rhetoric. Too many of us just say the words and, confronted with the enormity of their meaning, wink away their application in practice. We honor truth until it suits us to keep a secret; we honor the highway laws until it suits us to speed. Nouns alone clearly don't work.

We have come to prefer verbs. They offer perspectives not seen in nouns. *Morality* itself, for example becomes *to moralize* when it is turned into a verb, and the differences are striking. There is superiority and condescension in the verb, and yet it still turns on the usefully rigid meaning of its parent noun.

There is wisdom to be found in examining differences such as that between "morality" and "moralizing." Nouns are treated as completed statues lined up on the top shelves of a person's character. Verbs are active, no less demanding but requiring constant engagement. They are not structures but, rather, engines. Reaching after morality needs to be a reflective process, built into the activities of each young person and the activities of that person's community, including the school—a process of stretching, of defining, of putting into context, of recognizing patterns, of testing, of feeling exhilaration or remorse. As Zen Buddhists say, it is the quality of the journey more than its destination which is to be celebrated. The destination is represented by a worthy noun. The journey functions as a verb. Both are essential. This book is primarily about the latter.

Between the two of us we have almost forty years of experience as teachers and administrators in public and private secondary schools here and in Australia. In addition to those schools where we have worked, we have visited hundreds of others over the last twenty years, here and abroad. We have listened and watched carefully and our experience informs this book. It reflects seasoned judgments rather than "findings" per se. It depends heavily on stories, all of which as rendered here are fictional but draw from a single or a clutch of actual experiences. Our depictions are not "real" but to our eyes they are not only "realistic" but helpfully representative. The book also

builds on over four decades of conversation about a subject of intense joint interest between wife and husband. We respect the enormity of our topic; our hoped-for contribution is but a sliver of the matter.

THEY *watch us all the time.* The students, that is. They listen to us, sometimes. They learn from all that watching and listening. Be quiet. Don't cheat. Pick up. Don't lie. Be nice. Don't fight. They attend to us, more than we usually realize. We yell to get the cafeteria quiet—a delicious irony, not lost on them—and we whisper to a child who is embarrassed but who needs to talk. We assign books that we have not read carefully ourselves and waste our students' time, or else together we discover an exciting new resource. We can be messy—just try to find last week's tests on the top of my desk—or as well organized as we ask our students to be.

We, who ask our students to use their minds well, can be pretty sloppy thinkers ourselves. Of course the valedictorian is smarter than the salutatorian: can't you see it in their course grades and test scores? Yet we realize that who is "smart" is a very controversial matter. And it is we who convince the student who believed that she was dumb that, in fact, she can write a convincing essay.

Some of us are unprofessional. We talk down our colleagues within earshot of the students, or even directly to them. "Oh, wow, you have Mrs. Graham [rolled eyes]. Can you switch out next term?" Yet in our isolated "egg-crate" profession, more and more of us are learning how to help each other and to create schools which have a lasting commitment to a better way of running themselves. The students are watching that too.

We can be selfish. If an institution claims to be responsive to a variety of constituencies but essentially serves only one, then it becomes hypocritical. Many teachers think of what their students need, but others have come to be content with thinking of what they need. It is true that teachers need to feel comfortable in order to serve children well, but how comfortable?

We are fallible, and should not pretend that we are anything else. But we ought to be aware of what we are doing. We have a profound moral contract with our students. We insist, under the law, that they become thoughtful, informed citizens. We must—for their benefit and ours—model such citizenship. The routines and rituals of a school teach, and teach especially about matters of character. A revealing way to observe those routines and rituals is through the lens provided by verbs, more specifically gerunds. Modeling. Grappling. Bluffing. Sorting. Shoving. Fearing.

They describe the actions of humans over millennia. The fear of barbarism which so animated our forebears is still there, even though we today may mask it with easier, softer language. All of us still struggle to be "civilized," and we need institutions which will nurture our humanity.

In the end, we teachers and other adults who care about children should attend to even the humblest of these actions and these dangers, so that we may teach our students—and ourselves—a worthy way of life.

The Students Are Watching

July, 2002

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Born, New Haven, Connecticut, 1932
Married to Nancy Faust Sizer, four children, three children-in-law, ten grandchildren

EDUCATION

Yale University, B.A. in English Literature, 1953
Harvard University: M.A.T. in Social Studies, 1957
Ph.D. in Education and American History, 1961

EMPLOYMENT

U.S. Army, 1953-55
Roxbury Latin School, teacher of English and mathematics, 1955-56
Melbourne (Australia) Grammar School, teacher of history and geography, 1958
Harvard University: Assistant Professor of Education and Director, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, 1961-64
Dean, Graduate School of Education, 1964-72
University of Bristol (U.K.), Visiting Professor, 1971
Phillips Academy (Andover), Headmaster and Instructor in History, 1972-81
A Study of High Schools, Chairman, 1981-84
Brown University: Education Department – Visiting Professor, Spring 1983;
  Professor of Education, 1984-1996
  Department Chairman, 1984-89
  Walter H. Annenberg Professor, 1993-94
Coalition of Essential Schools, Chairman Emeritus, 1984-
Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Director, 1994-1996
University Professor, 1994-1996
University Professor Emeritus, 1996-
Harvard University, Lecturer; Visiting Professor, 1997-98; 1999; 2000-
Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School: Trustee, 1995-
Acting co-Principal (with Nancy F. Sizer), 1998-99
Brandeis University; Visiting Professor, 2000-

PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS

Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century (Yale University Press, 1964)
(ed.) *The Age of the Academies* (Teachers College Press, 1964)
(ed.) *Religion and Public Education* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967)
(ed. with Nancy F. Sizer) *Moral Education: Five Lectures* (Harvard University Press, 1970)
Places for Learning, Places for Joy: Speculations on American School Reform (Harvard University Press, 1972)
Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, 1984; rev. ed., 1985; with new preface, 1992)
Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, 1992)
Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School (Houghton Mifflin, September, 1996
(with Nancy F. Sizer) *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (Beacon Press, 1999)

HONORS

Ped.D., Lawrence University, 1969
Guggenheim Fellow, 1971
Litt.D., Union College, 1972
Anthony Wayne Award, Wayne State University, 1981
L.L.D., Connecticut College, 1984

L.H.D., Williams College, 1984
L.H.D., University of Massachusetts/Lowell, 1985
L.H.D., Dartmouth College, 1985
L.H.D., Lafayette College, 1991
Teachers College Medal, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1991
L.H.D., Webster University, 1992
L.H.D., Indiana University, 1993
L.H.D., Mount Holyoke College, 1993
L.H.D., University of Maine, 1993
L.H.D., Iona College, 1995
L.H.D., Long Island University, 1996
L.H.D., Bridgewater State College, 1996
L.H.D., Wheaton College, 1997
Litt.D., State University of New York-Potsdam, 1997
L.H.D., Brown University, 1998
L.H.D., Marymount Manhattan College, 1999

Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995-
Fellow, American Philosophical Society, 1996-
Gold Medal for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, CASE, 1988
Member, National Academy of Education, 1988-
Harold W. McGraw Prize in Education, 1991
James Bryant Conant Award, Education Commission of the States, 1992
Distinguished Service Award, Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992
Distinguished Service Award, Council for American Private Education, 1993
National Award of Distinction, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1993
Alumni Award, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1994
Member, National Advisory Council, Scholastic Inc., 1996
President's Medal, Brown University, 1996
President's Medal, Fitchburg State College, 1998
Claude M. Fuess Award, Phillips Academy, 1999
President's Medal, George Washington University (with Nancy F. Sizer), 2000

Citations from:
- American Federation of Teachers
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Phillips Exeter Academy
- Chambers of Commerce in Boston and Andover
- Lehigh University Education Alumni (1991)
- National Association of College Admissions Counsellors (1991)
- United Nations of Greater Boston (1999)

Theodore R. Sizer

Theodore R. Sizer is the founder and chairman emeritus of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national network of schools and Centers engaged in restructuring and redesigning schools to promote better student learning and achievement. He is University Professor Emeritus at Brown University where he served as chair of the Education Department from 1984 to 1989. Before coming to Brown, Sizer was professor and dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (1964-72) and headmaster of Phillips (Andover) Academy (1972-81). Sizer earned a B.A. at Yale and a M.A.T. and Ph.D. in History at Harvard. Three of his books, *Horace's Compromise* (1985), *Horace's School* (1992) and *Horace's Hope* (1996), published by Houghton Mifflin, explore the motivation and the ideas of the Essential school reform effort. Sizer joined his wife, Nancy Faust Sizer, for the1998-99 school year as the acting co-principal of the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Devens, Massachusetts where he now serves as a trustee. He and his wife are co-authors of the recently published book, *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (Beacon Press). Currently, Dr. Sizer is teaching a course on education policy at Brandeis University as well as co-teaching a secondary school design course with Nancy Faust Sizer at Harvard University.