

The Negative Influence of Education Schools on the K-12 Curriculum

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Introduction

Teacher educators as a group tend to discourage scientific research on the effectiveness and effects of the pedagogical theories and practices that they promote in coursework for aspiring or practicing teachers and administrators. The contrast in point of view between two articles in *Educational Researcher* in 1990, at the time of heightened debate on “whole language” versus phonics approaches to beginning reading instruction, illuminates their anti-scientific attitude toward empirical research. The three authors of the first article, “Whole Language: A Research Agenda for the Nineties,” make the reasonable suggestion that, to resolve the debate, researchers should design research comparing groups of students taught each way and find out which group does better. The author of the second article, “Whose Agenda Is This Anyway? A Response to McKenna, Robinson, and Miller,” accuses these three authors of “paradigm blindness” for proposing an empirical approach to resolve the debate.¹

Because they have been unwilling to evaluate empirically the effects of the theories and practices that they promote **before** dismissing disliked theories and practices that are supported by large bodies of empirical evidence, education schools have ended up mistraining several generations of educators in their preparation, master’s degree, and professional development programs. The greatest damage they have inflicted on public education, however, lies **not** in a mistrained corps of educators but in the effects of their virtually evidence-free theories and practices on the K-12 curriculum as conveyed by these educators and the textbooks used in K-12. Before providing evidence to support this charge, I describe the dominant pedagogical theory guiding most education schools and the training of this country’s teachers. Then, using excerpts from the pedagogical framework of a leading grade 11 American literature anthology authored by leading professors of English education in the country, I show how the application of this pedagogical theory to literary study leads to an intellectually, socially, and civically dysfunctional school curriculum.

General theories driving the pedagogy taught in education schools

Two major pedagogical theories on learning drive most of the pedagogy promoted in education schools today. Although both theories are concerned with motivation to learn, especially the motivation

of the lowest-achieving students in our public schools, they have affected the school curriculum in different ways.

One theory, often called constructivism, assumes that motivation to learn is enhanced by the opportunity to choose what to learn and how to learn it. This theory claims that what students learn must be self-constructed from their own initiatives and experiences. Meaningful learning is said to take place only when students can construct, with their peers, their own understanding of the world they live in, whether from personal experience or from the texts they choose to read. Reader Response theory is a version of this pedagogical theory for literary study—how to teach students to read a literary text. In its radical form, the pedagogical strategies that are related to this theory encourage students to interpret what they read through the lens of personal experience, regardless of what the author actually wrote.² Any interpretation of a text can be considered valid. The influence of reader response pedagogy on the students of several generations of elementary and secondary English teachers has been enormous.³ The long-term influence of this pedagogy shows itself in, as one example, the perceived inability of college freshmen to “argue” about what is in a text in their English literature courses.⁴

The other theory, a “social justice” approach to teaching and learning, assumes that motivation to learn is enhanced by developing students’ awareness of the historical and current grievances that social groups considered “oppressed” should hold against those who are to be perceived as their “oppressors.” According to this theory, teachers should discredit traditional curricula and choose alternative curricula. This theory is associated with a school of thought called “critical pedagogy.” Its basic concepts were popularized by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy for the Oppressed*, first published in 1970. A Brazilian educator, a Marxist, and judged one of the most influential educators of the 20th century, Freire denigrated traditional curriculum content as oppressive and the pedagogy that he associated with it as a “banking concept of education” in which teachers “deposit” this oppressive knowledge into the minds of passive students. Although designed for illiterate farmers and fishermen, his ideas spread throughout the educational world like wildfire, even though independent evaluations of his work in Brazil or elsewhere attesting to the efficacy of his ideas at any educational level and for any group of students have yet to be

located.⁵ To implement his ideas, teachers seek to develop their students' political understandings and attitudes—hostility or resentment in students belonging to social groups to be considered “non-dominant,” and guilt in students who are to be perceived as members of the “dominant” groups.⁶

Motivating this theory in part is the idea that the relatively lower academic achievement and social status of these non-dominant groups may be traced to a lack of motivation for, or resistance to, the cultural content and pedagogy of a curriculum that was not originally designed for them—thereby an alien and oppressive curriculum.

Critical pedagogy has strongly influenced the teaching of history in the schools, accelerating its absorption into the social studies with a stress on the academic trinity of race, ethnicity, and gender. In essays published in 1994, 1995, and 2000, I showed how the secondary literature curriculum was also being transformed by a social justice theory.⁷ Little else has been written about its broader reach in the curriculum, even though it has had a more powerful effect than reader response on literary study in the secondary grades, incorporating other current academic theories on how to study a literary text (such as the new historicism) and altering what students understand as American literature, as well as how they are to view the people and culture of the country they live in. Like the constructivists, the advocates of critical pedagogy are uninterested in the teaching of reading skills or literary appreciation. Unlike the constructivists, they want teachers to guide classroom “dialogue” and reading materials with a heavy hand.⁸ How strong an influence does critical pedagogy have in our education schools? Although few teacher educators describe themselves as critical pedagogues (as suggested by the relatively small number of contributors to *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, a recent collection of essays),⁹ David Labaree stresses that “education schools are solidly in the progressive camp ideologically,” encouraging educators, among other things, to promote “values of community, cooperation, tolerance, justice, and democratic equality” and to engage students in projects that “integrate the disciplines around socially relevant themes” (pp.90-91).¹⁰

How a Social Justice Theory Influences Literary Study and the School's Civic Mission

A pedagogical theory oriented to social justice began to influence the construction of secondary literature curriculum in the 1980s. The social and political criteria it justified not only helped to determine the literary works read in the English class **and** the thematic connections that students were encouraged to see among these works, they motivated the use of other kinds of material as well—videos, diaries, letters, and a variety of other primary documents. As I show in an essay published in 2006, by intention, not default, the English class has more and more been turned into an ersatz social studies class, with debased or biased content taught by a moralizing pedagogue untrained in history or any social science.¹¹

To show concretely how a social justice theory of pedagogy affects what students read in the secondary English class and how teachers may approach its goals, I offer examples from the 2000 edition of McDougal Littell's grade 11 anthology on American literature, a volume in one of the three leading anthology series for grades 7 to 12 in the country and approved for adoption in textbook adoption states.¹² On what basis might the pedagogy presented in this anthology be perceived as authoritative in the field and as reflecting what is promoted in English education coursework? To begin with, most of its eight authors are nationally known education professors in English education. Two authors have co-directed the federally funded National Research Center for Literature Teaching and Learning at the University of Albany—SUNY since 1987, and for many years they co-edited the major research journal sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English.¹³ In addition, the introduction clearly indicates that these eight professors played a major role in the development of the 2000 edition. They guided its “conceptual development,” “participated actively in shaping prototype materials for major components,” and “reviewed completed prototypes and/or completed units to ensure consistency with current research and the philosophy of the series”(p. iii).

A back-breaking 1400 pages long, with over 160 excerpts and complete selections from a variety of genres, the organization of the anthology reflects a social studies approach. That is, current social and political issues are used to organize historical content in each of the anthology's seven units. The result is

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that contemporary selections addressing the constructs of race, ethnicity, and gender cast a heavy presentistic shadow on the older selections with which they are thematically grouped. Not only have many readings chosen for their thematic relevance been lifted out of their historical context (e.g., Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* is offered in the (early) unit on the Puritans), many literary offerings also have been chosen for the political uses that could be made of them (e.g., Dwight Okita's poem on the Japanese-American internment or Denise Levertov's poem on a demonstration against the Vietnam War).

The goals of critical pedagogy are reflected in the pedagogical structure for individual selections in the student text (ST) and in the material in the teachers' edition (TE). In the ST, this structure typically consists of background information for the selection, a suggested focus for reading it, post-selection questions to stimulate connections to their lives and to "check comprehension," questions to prompt students to "think critically" about the selection, questions to help students "extend" their interpretation of the selection by making further connections to their lives and comparisons with other selections, and biographical material on the author. The questions asking students to make links to their lives reflect constructivist pedagogical theory. They are invariably superseded by questions to "think critically." If teachers faithfully draw on the pedagogical material provided in the student text and teacher edition, students are likely to have formed negative judgments about (1) the worth of this country's existence as a nation, (2) the extent of its internal cohesion historically and today, (3) the character of the men who articulated our founding political principles, (4) the validity of the popular images and metaphors used to describe our cultural traits, and (5) the character of those inhabitants who express its dominant cultural values.

In the TE, the editors provide teachers with very specific "possible responses" to the discussion questions in the ST, additional questions for class discussion, and different kinds of literary and historical information to use. Many English teachers do not have the historical knowledge or political sophistication to know how to use the selections or questions in the ST to implement a social justice approach to the fullest extent possible. Thus, the TE plays a major role in furthering the anthology's approach, given that student understanding of many current social and political issues is likely to be at

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best only semi-formed. Through the “possible responses” and other material in the TE, teachers learn explicitly how to guide students to think “critically” or “extend” their interpretations so that both teachers and students arrive at the right critical thoughts and interpretations. The questions in the ST *often* give students a choice of alternatives to think about, thus appearing genuinely open-ended, but the phrasing of the alternatives, the material in the “possible responses,” and contextual information supplied in the ST or TE serve as very strong guides to a desired response. The pedagogical structure conveys or cultivates the anthology’s viewpoints in a variety of ways.

An Anti-Civic and Anti-Christian Viewpoint

1. *The titles of the anthology’s major units are used to convey an anti-civic viewpoint.* Selections are grouped in seven units, ranging from pre-1620 “Origins and Encounters,” with two parts titled “In Harmony with Nature” and “Exploration and Exploitation,” to post-1940 “War Abroad and Conflict at Home,” the second part of which is titled “Integration and Disintegration.” The latter title takes us to the present.

2. *Questions in the ST or TE frequently invite invidious comparisons across groups or time to reinforce understanding that this country was illegitimately conceived.* E.g., selections in the first unit highlight European exploitation or brutality in the New World in the context of selections about the cultural traditions of several Indian tribes, their hospitality to the first Europeans they encountered, and the slave trade. After students have read selections about a Spanish conquistador’s adventures in the New World, the Pilgrims, and the Middle Passage, they are asked to compare the “experiences of captured Africans brought to North America on slave ships with the experiences of the Pilgrims or Cabeza de Vaca’s men” (p. 98). The TE notes that “students should understand that the major difference between the experiences of African slaves and those of Pilgrims is that the Pilgrims chose to make their journey” (p. 98).

E.g., after an excerpt from a travelogue by William Least Heat-Moon, students are asked to compare the “experiences and attitudes of William Least Heat-Moon, William Bradford, and Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca as they explored America.” The TE suggests: “William Least Heat-Moon has a greater

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respect for and interest in Native American culture. Bradford and de Vaca are wary of Native Americans, regarding them as barbarians whose way of life is inferior to Western European culture” (p. 107).

3. *White Americans tend to be portrayed as ugly racists in both fiction and nonfiction.* E.g., after a selection by William Least Heat-Moon, students are asked “What do you think makes it difficult to be a Hopi?” and are given the following points to address: “how most whites view Native Americans, how some Native Americans view others for ‘acting like Anglos,’ and how the Hopi and other Native Americans have historically been treated” (p. 107). The TE suggests that “it is difficult to be a Hopi because many whites are prejudiced against Native Americans; others tend to idealize them, denying their humanity. Some Native Americans disparage others for adopting Anglo ways. Furthermore, the Hopi and other Native Americans have long been treated as foreigners, not citizens” (p. 107).

E.g., the TE itself describes a long selection titled “The Legend of Gregorio Cortez” by Americo Paredes in the unit on the settlement of the west as follows: “The narration reveals deep conflicts between the two cultures—Anglo and Mexican. The sheriffs and rangers are portrayed as bullying racists so inept that hundreds of them cannot capture one man. The American horse trader spews demeaning stereotypes. Cortez is harassed and receives no justice in the U.S. courts” (p. 718).

E.g., the last unit in the anthology, covering from 1940 to the present, offers a story, “Armistice,” by Bernard Malamud. The story takes place in 1940 in Brooklyn in the context of the imminent surrender of the French to the Nazis in Europe and focuses on the interactions between a Jewish immigrant grocer and one of his suppliers, who is portrayed as sympathetic to the Nazis and an anti-Semite. The supplier describes himself as a “hundred percent American” (p.1081). One wonders if this self-description was the reason that the story was selected for the anthology.

4. *Many selections facilitate a stereotype of Christians in particular as hypocrites or bigots.* E.g., after a selection by Olaudah Equiano on the Middle Passage, students are asked: “Who do you think are the ‘nominal Christians’ that Equiano refers to in the last paragraph? Do you agree with his epithet? Support your answer with evidence from the selection” (p. 98). The TE suggests: “Equiano is talking about

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people who practice slavery yet claim to be guided by Christian values—Christians in name only. Most students will agree that holding human beings as slaves is not morally acceptable behavior” (p. 98).

E.g., after Arthur Miller’s play “The Crucible,” the TE suggests staging a Mock Trial in which students might try “Reverend Parris for his involvement in the conviction of innocent people...” (p. 235). Explaining “irony” as a literary technique, the TE suggests asking students “what is ironic about the entire premise of the witch trials.” “Possible Response: All the accusers called themselves Puritans, and yet they lied and gave false testimonies—sins in the Bible. The people who were wrongly accused were also Puritans, and they tried to tell the truth—something required by the Bible—and they were hanged for it. Finally, the authorities, who were supposed to follow the Bible and rational principles of justice, did the exact opposite and condoned the killing of innocent people. The Salem witch trials occurred in the name of Christianity, and yet these trials embodied the very sins that Christianity condemns” (p. 242).

5. The TE tends to provide damning facts or anecdotes that portray white Americans as greed-driven bigots or hypocrites while ignoring or qualifying well-known positive facts. E.g., in the historical background to the Civil War, the TE offers as statistics: “Historians estimate that 10 to 20 million slaves were transported to the Americas. Of these, nearly half died of disease, brutality, or execution. The importation of slaves to the United States was outlawed in 1808, but black-market sales continued. Some entrepreneurs specialized in breeding slaves with certified qualities, listed like the pedigrees of racehorses” (p. 559). The TE does not clarify that only 6% of the slaves taken to the Americas went to North America or present information on the abolition of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade by the British. Nor is the major role of other white abolitionists apparent in the unit on the Civil War, which offers only one selection by a white abolitionist—a poem by James Russell Lowell.

6. The ST suggests that no one should want to assimilate to this country’s values. E.g., in its introduction to Walt Whitman’s poems, the ST indicates: “Most of his poems are marked by optimism, vitality, and a love of nature, free expression, and democracy—values often associated with the America of his day” (p. 396). The inference to be drawn is that these values cannot be associated with America today, and, indeed, students are asked later to address this question.

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E.g., after selections that debunk the American dream and portray America as little more than a nation of greedy bigots, the TE suggests that students prepare an argument about assimilation. “Outline an argument for or against assimilation—the process of adapting one’s values and expectations in order to fit into the prevailing society. Keep in mind issues such as cultural identity, personal integrity, and economic necessity...” (p. 893).

An Anti-Marriage, Anti-Family Feminist Viewpoint

The anthology wants teachers and students to understand that American women have been oppressed by their husbands and society at large throughout their country’s history, that marriage is an oppressive institution that has caused women much suffering, that middle-class American family life leaves much to be desired, and that women have achieved a great deal despite marital, social, and political oppression.

The anthology also tries to show that they are, in fact, superior to men in some ways.

E.g., “Students are asked: “What influences from the Declaration of Independence do you see on Olympe de Gouges’ Declaration of the Rights of Women? How do the two documents differ?” (p. 279).

The TE suggests: “One difference is that Jefferson cites specific grievances against George III to justify the decisive step taken by the colonists. Olympe de Gouges, on the other hand, reasons from general principles—for instance, that people subject to the law must also be allowed to express their views freely.” Using a relatively unknown selection, the TE wants teachers to comment on a woman thinking at a higher level than Jefferson did in composing the Declaration of Independence, and to imply that women are superior to men.

E.g., before students read Charlotte Gilman Perkins’ “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the TE indicates that the story is “an example of the new literature that began to emerge in the late 1880s, in which long-repressed women’s voices began to be heard. Women’s lives were ruled by their husbands and by their perceived place in society” (p. 765). The TE does not explain why there are so many exceptions to this generalization, such as Abigail Adams, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, and Susan B. Anthony.

E.g., “The Yellow Wallpaper” is followed by Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” which is described in the TE as follows: “[It] reveals the innermost thoughts of a woman who is told that her husband has suddenly been killed. Her thoughts and feelings about her new-found freedom give insights about women’s lives at the end of the nineteenth century.” [At the end of the story, she drops dead of a heart attack when she discovers her husband had not been killed, after all.] After students read Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” students are asked: “How would you compare the themes of the two stories? Which story do you prefer, and why?” Possible responses in the TE: “Chopin’s story is shorter than Gilman’s, but its sentences tend to be longer. Its narrator is objective and uses the third-person point of view, as opposed to the highly subjective first-person point of view in “The Yellow Wallpaper. Both stories show upper-middle class married women of the 1890s trapped in confining roles and escaping through tragedy—death in one case, insanity in the other. Have students explain their preferences.” (p. 786)

E.g., to make sure teachers and students have absorbed the right understandings from these stories, students are asked in a unit wrap-up: “What do you feel you’ve learned about the social position of American women in the past? What new thoughts do you have about the American dream?” The ST goes on to say: “Many of the selections in the first part of the unit show American women’s struggles with social constraints, stereotypes, and inequalities. Review the ways in which the female characters in these selections respond to oppression or limitation. Which character did you find it easiest to identify with? Which character did you find it most difficult to identify with?” The ST also says: “Think about the American dream in relation to the selections in the second part of this unit. Which characters would classify the American dream as an illusion? Which would view it as a reality?” (p. 910). Given the selections offered, I would judge that very few would view it as a reality.

E.g., in a unit titled “Alienation of the Individual,” after a poem by Anne Sexton that follows one by Sylvia Plath, students are asked: “Based on the details you recorded (in your notebook), expand the title {“Self in 1958”} into a general statement that explains the theme, or main idea, of the poem.” The

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TE suggests: “the idealized role of the 1950s homemaker left many feeling alienated and not real” (p. 1061). Their biographies inform students that both women committed suicide at relatively young ages.

E.g., the TE suggests that teachers ask students to respond to a quotation on “America’s middle class” in the ST from *The Organization Man* by William A. Whyte, Jr. that appears in the historical background for Unit Seven, Integration and Disintegration in Postwar Society. Possible response: “He implies that those Americans, usually men, who strive for the American dream by working for big business become totally removed from their families” (p. 1133).

E.g., Anne Tyler is described as someone who looks at “the loneliness and isolation of middle class family life” today, and her story “Teenage Wasteland” is about a boy who finally runs away from home and never returns to his “controlling and accusatory” parents (p. 1168). Tyler’s story is followed by “Separating,” a short story by John Updike about an upper-middle class couple with four children who have decided to separate. The ST asks students to think of “some reasons that married couples separate? How do you think a wife and a husband feel once they have decided to separate? If they have children, how do you think the children feel?” (p. 1181).

A Viewpoint Debunking Positive Views of American Cultural Values or Traits

E.g., Unit Three, on 19th century American literature, is titled The Spirit of Individualism. The first section of the unit, titled Celebration of Self, presents the Transcendental optimists Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. The second section presents Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville (writers who are usually characterized as anti-Transcendental pessimists) in a section titled “The Dark Side of Individualism.” This misleading title not only leaves students without a clear grasp of the real dark side of celebrating the self—the preoccupations of obsessed or tormented individuals as portrayed by the anti-Transcendental pessimists—but also serves to negativize the concept of individualism itself, a political and cultural philosophy positively associated with this country.

E.g., after Edward Arlington Robinson’s poems “Miniver Cheevy” and “Richard Cory,” students are asked: “How would you relate “Miniver Cheevy” and “Richard Cory” to the American dream?

Possible response in the TE: “Both poems illustrate the failure of the “American dream”: Richard Cory

seems to be the embodiment of that dream, yet he chooses to kill himself; Miniver Cheevy rejects the idea of an American dream, focusing instead on an idealized past to justify his own failures” (p. 832).

E.g., the TE explains that two poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar “both demonstrate that the American dream is not a reality for all Americans. People who can achieve the dream may have the illusion that it is open to everyone, but those whose dreams are caged like a bird have a different perspective” (p. 834).

E.g., the TE explains that in a short story “In the American Society” by Chinese American writer Gish Jen on how “one immigrant family aspires to their version of the American Dream,” their “illusions that material success will guarantee social privilege are dashed by a suburban society whose reality is inherently racist” (p. 877). Later the TE suggests that teachers “tell students that this story takes place in the 1960s, when racism was a serious issue that the nation was just beginning to address. Many private country clubs denied admission to Jews or to anyone who wasn’t white and preferably an Anglo-Saxon Protestant as well” (p. 882).

Summary

In McDougal Littell’s grade 11 anthology of American literature, students are helped to see that Original Sin lies not in man but in the nation’s founding and in its cultural values. The teacher’s task is to help students understand who the victims of social injustice have been, why they cannot be held responsible for their behavior, and what social, political, economic, and religious forces have oppressed them. It clearly does not give American Protestantism the serious attention it warrants in a literature course, leaving American students unable to understand why the Framers were skeptics, not utopians, and the profound difference that made to our history.

Howard Mumford Jones, for many years an English professor at Harvard University, articulated concerns in *Jeffersonianism and the American Novel* about whether the civic character needed for representative self-government had been undermined by this country’s major writers.¹⁴ In our political culture, he observed, the adult American is understood to be “a being capable of both rational and moral choice.” Upon this assumption, he wrote, “the republic rests.” Yet, as he pointed out in his survey of

American novels of the 20th century, they have seriously weakened, if not obliterated, a view of the individual as someone free to make choices and responsible for them. Jones could not have anticipated that teaching strategies derived from a pedagogical theory of social justice would supply the coup de grace in secondary English classes.

Indices of Damage to K-12

Student scores on the main or long-term trend high school reading tests given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests may well reflect more than the effects of these two pedagogical theories on the secondary English curriculum and on approaches and textbooks used by secondary English teachers. But it is reasonable to assume that the scores must reflect to some extent the effects of these theories on their teachers' training, given that their training programs are evaluated for re-accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for ensuring that prospective English teachers can "engage students in discovering their personal responses to texts and ways to connect such responses to other larger meanings and critical stances," among other NCATE program standards.¹⁵

What do NAEP reading tests show? From 1990, when the main tests began, up to 2005, they show no significant differences in the average gap between black/Hispanic students and white/Asian students at all grade levels assessed (4, 8, and 12). The demographic gaps are as great now as they were in 1990. Worse yet, the grade 12 reading test in 2005 shows an average decrease for all students. Moreover, while both male and female students' scores were lower in 2005 in comparison to 1992, the decline in reading skills is far more a young male than a young female phenomenon, with female students outscoring male students by 13 points, amounting to over one grade level difference between girls and boys. (NAEP's long-term trend tests in reading show a 14-point differential among 17-year olds.) The decline and growing gender gap may be accounted for in part by the pedagogical theories that education school faculty have drawn on to shape the English curriculum, classroom instruction, and student learning.

In many ways, the national decline in reading skills is not surprising, given that the pedagogical theories now influencing teacher education and the K-12 curriculum are indifferent if not opposed to the teaching of skills. Conveniently, less class time on skills-teaching means that teachers have more class time for eliciting students' personal experiences or promoting a political agenda. The classroom application of either pedagogical theory also deals a lethal blow to pedagogy seeking to cultivate the pleasures and uses of the imagination. Together, they effectively bury it.

Concluding Remarks

We may best interpret the recent mushrooming of both privately and publicly financed tutorial programs (especially in mathematics), the phenomenal growth of home-schooling in the past two decades, and the ever-increasing number of public and private charter schools as forms of parental reaction to the bloated, distorted, or non-existent textbooks that their children now learn from in a haphazard, watered-down, and distorted curriculum. Labaree tries to make the case that education schools have “no ability to promote progressive practices in the schools” or to control public education. My analysis of a leading grade 11 American literature anthology suggests how insidious their control of public education is. Indeed, education school faculty shape every subject taught in the schools at every grade level through their near monopolistic control, direct or indirect, of the content and pedagogy in the textbooks that teachers and administrators use in our public schools, whether or not they train them.

To salvage a failing public school system, we need to remove de facto control of the content of the K-12 curriculum from education schools as soon as possible. We can remove their control over teacher training by transferring control of teacher preparation in core subjects and the content of these subjects to discipline-based experts at non-profit independent centers or institutes with principled intellectual and civic goals. We can also require educational textbook publishers to use these academic experts as senior authors or consultants for all school textbooks. Voices are beginning to call for the dissolution of our public school system—a logical result of the increasingly negative influence of education schools on the quality of the curriculum and instruction in it. That influence will continue until

their direct control of educator preparation and indirect control of the content and pedagogy in school textbooks is removed.

¹ Michael C. McKenna, John W. Miller, and Richard D. Robinson, "Whole Language: A Research Agenda for the Nineties," *Educational Researcher*, 19 (8): 3-6, and Carole Edelsky, "Whose Agenda Is This Anyway? A Response to McKenna, Robinson, and Miller," *Educational Researcher*, 19 (8): 7-11.

² See, for example, the examples offered in Thomas Carnicelli, "The English Language Arts in American Schools: Problems and Proposals," pp. 211-236, in S. Stotsky (Ed.), *What's at Stake in the K-12 Standards Wars: A Primer for Educational Policy Makers*. NY: Peter Lang, 2000.

³ See, for example, the essay by Irma DeFord, now a retired junior high school English teacher, on the effects on students of a reader response approach: "Why Students Resist Reading," *American School Board Journal*, 191, December 2004, 18-19.

⁴ See, for example my review of Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind* in *American Journal of Education*, November 2005, 112 (1), pp.149-152, Graff's comment on my review, pp.152-156, and my response to Graff, pp.157-161.

⁵ For a critical evaluation of Freire-inspired programs in the United States and Puerto Rico, see <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/Facundo/Facundo.html>

⁶ According to Wikipedia, critical pedagogy is a teaching approach that attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate. It is a theory and practice of helping students achieve "critical consciousness"—a state of understanding about the world that helps to liberate them from oppression.

⁷ S. Stotsky, "The changing literature curriculum in K-12." *Academic Questions*, 1993-94, 7 (1), 53-62; S. Stotsky, "The transformation of secondary school literature programs: Good news and bad." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 1995, April 76 (8), 605-612; S. Stotsky. "The state of literary study in national and state English language arts standards: Why it matters and what can be done about it." In S. Stotsky (Ed.), *What's at stake in the K-12 standards wars: A primer for educational policy makers* (pp. 237-258). NY: Peter Lang, 2000.

⁸ For example, in my review of *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* by P. Freire & D. Macedo in "On literacy anthologies and adult education: A critical perspective," *College English*, December 1990, 52 (8), 916-923, I note that Freire and Macedo offer no examples of true "dialogue" and instructional material seems to consist of revolutionary slogans and Marxist propaganda.

⁹ Antonia Darder, Marta Baltodano, and Rodolfo Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003.

¹⁰ David Labaree, "The Ed Schools' Romance with Progressivism," in D. Ravitch (Ed.), *Brookings Papers on Education Policy 2004*, pp. 89-112, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004.

¹¹ S. Stotsky, "Anti-civic uses of literary discourse." In Manuel Casado Velarde, Ramón González Ruiz, y Victoria Romero Gualda (eds.), *Análisis del discurso: lengua, cultura, valores. Actas del I Congreso Internacional* (Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona), Madrid, Arco/Libros, 2006, vol. I, pp. 65-89. (ISBN de toda la obra: 84-7635-632-3)

¹² According to Carol Jago, the editor of the *California English Journal*, the 2000 edition of the grade 11 anthology is one of the most frequently used anthologies in California's public schools. In addition, it is the anthology that the University of California chose to feature in its online pilot course for a grade 11 course in American literature in 2004. Personal communication, March 2007.

¹³ Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer have co-directed the federally-funded National Research Center for Literature Teaching and Learning at the University of Albany – SUNY since 1987.

¹⁴ Teachers College Press, 1966.

¹⁵ This is the Target rating for Standard 4.8 under English Language Arts Candidate Pedagogy, a section indicating those program standards showing that candidates have "acquired and demonstrated the dispositions and skills needed to integrate knowledge of English Language Arts, students, and teaching." These program standards were

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prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English for the initial preparation of secondary English language arts teachers, grades 7-12 and were approved by NCATE in October 2003.