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What's Wrong with Reform

James H. Case

The conservative educational reform movement, which still, after more than a decade, is the dominant force in school reform, has had little success in improving schools because it is based on invalid and self-defeating theoretical assumptions. Taken together, these assumptions have the effect of substituting nostalgia — a longing for the schools the reformers themselves attended — for policy and for increasing standardization at the expense of individual growth and development. The reformers (Bloom, Hirsch, Ravitch, Finn, Bennett, et al.) have particular difficulty, given their assumptions, in dealing both with individual differences among students and with ethnic and racial differences among groups of students, and hence have little useful to say about the most serious problems in American education. Their assumption that American schools are worse than they used to be is based on impressions and anecdotes, not research. Finally, their belief in the importance of tradition prevents them from seeing major changes in demography, in technology, and in the state of knowledge, which are affecting schools.

What's wrong with the educational reform movement these days is not a lack of money or a lack of will, nor is it the lack of a coherent philosophy. For a movement that is more than a decade old, it has a surprising amount of energy. What's wrong is the philosophy itself: the leaders of the movement have made basic assumptions about schools and school improvement that are invalid and self-defeating. It is possible that they know this, for included in the group are some astute and knowledgeable critics of education like Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn. But it is also possible that they cannot afford to admit what they know, for their assumptions are part and parcel of a set of deep-seated beliefs about American society. To admit, for example, that teaching America's "cultural heritage" has little to do with the acquisition of values is to call into question, all in one blow, the importance of that heritage, the purpose of education, and the definition of "American values." So it is easier to maintain the original assumption, even at the risk of being ineffective: I think that were they to admit that the assumption was wrong, they would not be sure

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what they were fighting for. (It is possible, in fact, that a conservative political philosophy does not provide a basis for an effective approach to school reform.)

Those of us who oppose this reform movement should probably rejoice at its relative lack of success and not waste time gratuitously analyzing its weaknesses. We might do better to ignore the philosophical debate and devote our energies to the slow and undramatic process of improving schools from the ground up, as people like TheodoreSizer and John Goodlad are doing. But so many millions of Americans have adopted the reformers' assumptions (many, for example, are ready to blame the schools for the economy's problems) that some analysis of these assumptions, some labeling at least, might prove useful, even at this late date.

By "reform movement" I mean, of course, the movement that first gained general recognition with the publication in 1983 of the report of the Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*. Its leaders were and are the late Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*), E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*Cultural Literacy*), Chester Finn and Diane Ravitch (*What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*), William Bennett, and Lynne Cheney, all of whom are from the universities, though the last four have experience in government, and Finn and Ravitch have written extensively on elementary and secondary education. This group of academic critics has been supported or championed by business leaders like Dennis Kearns (*Winning the Brain Race*) and Ross Perot, and by governors like Lamar Alexander and Bill Clinton. And they have without question struck a responsive chord in the public at large, who are increasingly unhappy about schools.¹ Although the movement may have lost some of its momentum in the last couple of years, it is still the dominant force in American education. The planks in its platform are high standards, hard work, discipline, accountability, testing, the traditional curriculum, traditional values, and cost efficiency. It has succeeded so far in bringing about an unprecedented number of state school reform laws, but like most reform movements since World War II, it has failed to have any profound or apparently lasting effect on schools themselves.

One reason for the reformers' failure in this respect is, ironically, that actual schools, at least on the secondary level, are more similar to the schools they envisage than they realize. Despite some substantial changes since the late 1940s — a major decline in the school-leaving rate, for example, or the growth of special and bilingual education — schools have not really become so progressive or so permissive as the reformers think, and many of their basic characteristics have remained as they were: double-hung corridors, tracked classes, stand-up teaching, standardized testing, Carnegie units, the traditional college prep curriculum, the 8:00 to 3:00 school day broken into forty-five-minute periods, the 180-day school year, and finally, the authority relationships among and between students, teachers, and administrators. If the schools Hirsch and Bloom and Bennett want are the schools they attended, they don't have far to look.

But the other reason for their lack of success is, as I said at the start, that the assumptions they make about schools and school improvement lead them into untenable positions. My purpose here is to identify a number of these assumptions, then to indicate briefly why each is, in my opinion, invalid. Since not all of the critics I am dealing with agree on all points, some of my generalizations may be inexact. I have tried, however, to note major exceptions to the rule.

I

The reformers' first assumption is a procedural one: the people who know anything about schools firsthand — or anything about child development or about learning theory — are not to be listened to. They are, after all, the people who got us into this mess in the first place. So though it is acceptable for a businessman like Dennis Kearns, with no experience of schools and no knowledge of research on schools, to write about reforming American education, it would not be acceptable for me to write about reforming American business. More to the point, the various commissions responsible for the reports that followed *A Nation at Risk* included token teachers among their membership, but were dominated by representatives of business, higher education, and government. While Goodlad talks to teachers andSizer to students, the reformers talk to people like themselves, experts from business, the foundations, and the universities. There are virtually no references in the literature of reform to actual schools or actual classrooms.

Just as surprising, there are no references to Freud, except in Bloom, to Anna Freud, Sullivan, Erikson, Piaget, or to any research in the psychology of education, and except for Bloom's revival of Plato and Hirsch's passing references to Rousseau and Dewey, there are no references to any philosophers of education. In fact, insofar as the reformers have a philosophy of education — in contrast to a political philosophy — it appears to be based on tradition, or perhaps nostalgia; their psychology of education seems to come from John Locke by way of Ben Franklin. (They tend, for example, to think of children as storehouses for information.)

Partly for these reasons, it is difficult for the movement to gain the attention of the people who have prepared themselves to work in schools: to many practicing teachers and administrators, its proposals appear simply irrelevant. It is not only a movement of outsiders, but of outsiders who have no understanding of what it is like to be inside and make no attempt to communicate with the people on whom the success of reform depends.

II

The reformers' second assumption is that the primary purpose of education is to preserve, strengthen, and transmit America's cultural heritage. Hirsch talks about "our schools' responsibility to ensure our children's mastery of American literate culture." He goes on to say, "The acculturative responsibility of the schools is primary and fundamental. To teach the ways of one's own community has always been and still remains the essence of the education of our children, who neither enter a narrow tribal culture nor a transcendent world culture but a national literate culture."² Ravitch and Finn, writing about the traditional American curriculum, say, "Whatever its faults, at least the old tradition had a point of view about who we were as a people, what battles we had fought, what self-knowledge we had gained."³ Bloom agrees: "The delicate fabric of the civilization into which successive generations are woven has unraveled, and children are raised, not educated."⁴ And the writers of *A Nation at Risk* have the same concern (and the same metaphor): "Our concern also includes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society."⁵

There is a consensus among the reformers that the culture the schools are to pass on, the "old tradition," is known and already defined, that it should be taught to children at an early age, and that it should constitute the history and English curriculum. This culture consists largely of information — dates, names, places, battles, events; of documents; and of novels, plays, stories, and poems. The values important to the reformers are apparently embodied in this information and these artifacts, so the transmission of American culture to children is also in some unexplained way the transmission of American values. The reformers are clear, at any rate, that universal knowledge of this culture will create a strong sense of national identity and purpose and (therefore?) a more productive economy.

What concerns the reformers is that modern educators have allowed the curriculum to become "homogenized, diluted and diffused"⁶ or have substituted for the old curriculum "cafeteria style literature, including the written equivalent of junk food."⁷ In general they believe that popular culture, especially television and rock music, is not part of the national culture, but in opposition to it. As Bloom says of college students, "As long as they have the Walkman on, they cannot hear what the great tradition has to say. And, after its prolonged use, when they take it off, they find that they are deaf."⁸

Not far beneath this concern with culture is a strong strain of nationalism. Bloom is an exception: he is more concerned with culture's general role in checking the excesses of barbarianism and in keeping the "great questions" alive. But the writers of *A Nation at Risk* are frankly chauvinistic and believe that schools are the primary source of patriotic feeling. Hirsch, Finn, and Ravitch are in the Jeffersonian middle: the success of democracy depends not only on an informed citizenry, but on a citizenry that shares the same information and knowledge of the past, the same culture. And this culture is very certainly Anglo-American, including those aspects of Greek and Roman culture already embodied in the English tradition. "In the end," says Hirsch, we must be traditionalists about content," and this means the Anglo-American tradition because by historical accident we are an English-speaking people, most of whose customs and institutions have British roots.⁹

So much has been written about this assumption, about cultural pluralism and the definition of the canon, that it seems unnecessary to spell out its limitations. But it might be worth pointing out that Hirsch's specific version of this assumption, in his "anthropological" theory of education, that the acculturation of the young is the primary purpose of education, seems to stem from a fear of loss of tradition (if schools don't teach American culture, it will die) and from a related fear of exploration outside the traditional curriculum, a very Lockean fear of the dangers of leaving children to their own devices. When the responsibility for acculturation is assigned to a particular social institution, the chance that acculturation will become indoctrination is very real. I remember an elementary art teacher who told me that her curriculum was built around national holidays: all November, the children drew Pilgrims and Indians; in February, they drew presidents.

III

The third assumption, somewhat at variance with the second, is that education is essentially vocational, at least in the broad sense of the word: schools are to mold

children into productive workers. *A Nation at Risk* is the reform text most clearly based on this assumption. Although it pays lip service to the growth and development of individual students, the weight of its rhetoric falls on productivity: "If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system."¹⁰

Dennis Kearns pays more than lip service to individual development, but his principal goal is a skilled workforce. As Robert Hawkins writes in his preface to Kearns's *Winning the Brain Race*, "A strong society and a healthy U.S. economy depend on the ability of American enterprises to compete successfully with foreign companies. Such ability relies primarily on the skills of an educated workforce."¹¹

Most of the business people, state legislators, and state governors involved in the reform movement echo this theme. My direct experience with educational reform legislation in Massachusetts in the early 1980s, however, led me to believe that most business leaders were less interested in real workforce development than they were in basic education and basic socialization. They wanted workers who could read and write, follow directions, and get to work on time, workers who would not rock the boat and who, once trained (and they were perfectly willing to do the training), would stay in Massachusetts for twenty-five years. If my impression is correct, the reformers who share this assumption about the relationship of education to productivity may have two different models of education in mind.

But this assumption, for whatever reason it is held, is powerful and pervasive and reinforced by a great deal of real-life experience. Education equals jobs (the more education, the better job), and jobs equal a healthy economy. Lending still more strength to the assumption these days is the fear of America's "losing the brain race," but the assumption predates the fear. It is part of both the history and mythology of America: Harvard was founded to train ministers, Lincoln became a lawyer because he studied by firelight, schools gave immigrants their chance to get the jobs that enabled them to participate in the American dream. If schools do not serve to perpetuate the country's economic system, then what do they do?

What they do, of course, and have done, is foster individual growth and development, encourage creativity and exploration, and provide an environment for the free expression of ideas. They can do this and prepare students for jobs: the two functions are not mutually exclusive. But this traditional rationale for a liberal education, also part of American history and mythology, is not among the traditions the reform movement apparently wants to maintain. The only strong statement in favor of individualism in education in the texts we have been considering comes not from the academic critics whose background (and employment) is in liberal education, but from Dennis Kearns, the former chairman of Xerox.

IV

The fourth assumption is newer, and may be as much of a rationalization as an assumption. It is that schools promote racial and ethnic equality by providing all students with the same information and skills, the same starting point. "Cultural literacy," Hirsch writes, "constitutes the only sure avenue of opportunity for disadvantaged children, the only reliable way of combating the social determinism that now condemns them to remain in the same social and educational condition as their

parents.”¹² Lawrence Cremin documents the degree to which this assumption became a credo for some groups of nineteenth-century immigrants and their teachers,¹³ and it is, in fact, a modern version of the melting pot approach. In *Hunger for Memory*, Richard Rodriguez describes how he adopted this assumption in the primary grades of a California parochial school. Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey made the assumption national policy in their Great Society programs: schools were to be the great equalizers, the common entrance to the mainstream.

Since then, however, as we all know, the picture has become more confused, thanks in part to James Coleman’s studies and reports, to Christopher Jencks’s elaboration of some of the implications of Coleman’s major report, to various rebuttals and criticisms of both Coleman and Jencks, and particularly to the accumulated experience of teachers in desegregated (or desegregating) schools and school systems. One of the best accounts of the effects of such change is Shirley Brice Heath’s *Ways with Words*, an ethnographic study of white and black children in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas.¹⁴

To anyone who has read these studies (or any of the recent research in this area), Hirsch’s statement appears so naive that it is hard to imagine he is not rationalizing his way out of the most difficult problem in American education. Is it possible that Hirsch and the reformers who agree with him do not understand that the educational issues which stem from racial and ethnic differences do not lend themselves to purely cognitive solutions? That the information which constitutes “cultural literacy” cannot bridge the deep social, attitudinal, and emotional differences that separate one group of students from another? Perhaps so: certainly he and most of the other reformers offer no other solutions, and no analysis of the problem at all.

I think there are two reasons for this oversight. First, the reformers tend to think of education in the Lockean sense, not the Deweyan: education is the transmission of information from the teacher to the passive learner, not the engagement of the learner with world-to-be-learned. In Locke’s model, there are no differences in learners — once they have become learners — except differences in raw ability: the differences are in the curriculum with which they are presented. The educator’s most important task, therefore, is to choose the right curriculum. If that choice is made wisely, the result will be, to varying degrees depending on ability, the right product. Not only racial and ethnic differences, but individual differences — again, other than raw ability — can thus be ignored, or thought of only as static interrupting the transmission. (With this mind-set, it is not surprising that all the reformers are opposed to bilingual education and to any other program that encourages differences.)

A possible second reason for this oversight is fear of the social, political, and economic consequences of encouraging difference. Unassimilated groups and individuals are a threat to the social order and inhibit the smooth functioning of a highly standardized economy: schools can remove this threat by socializing all children into one culture. In practice this means that if all children learn their multiplication tables in the same way, all read Hawthorne and Frost, all remember the Alamo and the *Maine*, and so on, all will work cooperatively together to maintain a civilized and productive national society. The model not very far back in the minds of many of the reformers is Japan; the conviction is what motivated the Napoleonic reform of the schools in France. The dominant theme of the reform movement is standardization.

V

The fifth assumption is that schools are primarily educational institutions, “educational” here meaning formal instruction in academic subjects. A corollary to this assumption is that most education occurs in schools. This assumption is not in conflict with the first assumption — that the schools’ primary function is to acculturate the young — because acculturation occurs *through* formal academic instruction. So Hirsch can say that “the traditional materials of national culture can be learned by all citizens only if the materials are taught in the nation’s schools,” and intend such a statement as a curricular mandate.¹⁵

What he and the other reformers ignore or mention only to criticize are the other functions of schools in society: providing counseling, mental health services, and medical services; providing “personal use” and “family life” courses, drug and sex education; providing athletic and artistic training and performances for students and the community; providing a safe environment for children while adults work; keeping adolescents off the full-time labor market. They also ignore what John Goodlad calls “the implicit curriculum”: what schools often inadvertently teach, for example, about citizenship or about competition, by being the kind of institutions they are.¹⁶

And finally they ignore the multitude of educational institutions and forces outside the school: family, church, work, the media, libraries, peer culture, clubs and organizations, “the street.”¹⁷ As a result of this narrowing of focus, education that occurs outside school does not enter the debate, nor does any aspect of schooling except formal academic instruction.

Instead there is a focus on the achievement of students, on their cognitive attainments, on “what our 17-year-olds know” about literature, history, mathematics, and science, on what can be measured by standardized tests. The exclusivity of this focus gives an air of unreality to the reformers’ arguments and prevents them from seeing the interconnectedness of the social, emotional, and intellectual development of children. It is not the assumption that schools are primarily educational institutions that is so wrong: that is at least an arguable position. It is the definition of education that is wrong. The reformers take a significant part of education as the whole, just as they see the whole child only as a student.

VI

And it follows that the sixth assumption the reformers make is that children are more important for what they will become than for what they are, that school is not living, but preparation for living. All of them except Bloom might deny that they make this assumption, but the weight of their own words is against them, and their omissions are even more significant. They do not write about children; they do not really write about schools, or about the experience of learning. They write instead about input (the curriculum) and output (the product). And this leads them, especially the businessmen and the legislators, to an oversimplified utilitarianism: the best schools are those which produce the highest scoring students at the lowest cost. (The U.S. Department of Education’s annual “wall chart” reinforces this conviction by comparing states on the basis of the relationship between test scores and cost per pupil.) The

experiences of children in school, the lives of children in school, are important only as they affect this performance/cost equation.

At the end of *A Nation at Risk*, there is a "Word to Students," which epitomizes this attitude. The National Commission for Excellence in Education says to American students:

When you work to your full capacity you can hope to attain the knowledge and skills that will enable you to create your future and control your destiny. If you do not, you will have your future thrust upon you by others. Take hold of your life, apply your gifts and talents, work with dedication and self-discipline. Have high expectations for yourself and convert every challenge into an opportunity.¹⁸

Work, control, application, dedication, self-discipline: here we are close to the real values embodied in the American heritage. Education is serious business; childhood is not a time for excitement or exploration, still less for enjoyment. If you want to amount to anything when you grow up, you must give yourself over to hard work now.

VII

The final and most pervasive assumption is that American schools are in terrible shape by any measure, in much worse shape than they used to be, and in much worse shape than the schools of any other industrialized nation. "Public education in this country is in crisis," says Kearns.¹⁹ Hirsch regularly refers to "the failure of our schools to create a literate society" and to "the decline of American literacy."²⁰ Ravitch and Finn, though careful to say they cannot document an actual decline in American students' knowledge of history and literature, lacking comparative test data, nonetheless can say that "our society is breeding a new strain of cultural barbarian" and decry the loss of "the old tradition" in curriculum.²¹ So of course does Bloom, and Part 1 of *The Closing of the American Mind* is a catalogue of educational and cultural decline. And this assumption pervades *A Nation at Risk*.

It appears to be part of a broader pessimism. Teenagers today are mindless, irresponsible, and hedonistic; the crime rate is increasing and the courts are ineffective; the old-fashioned American family is breaking up, many children live in single-parent homes, and teenage pregnancies are increasing; drugs are everywhere; the economy is in disrepair, and the Japanese are beating us at our own game. America is past its prime and is engulfed in "a rising tide of mediocrity."²² In schools and colleges this decline is reflected in lower test scores, watered-down standards and curricula, less hard work, inflated grades, and the coddling of students, especially minority students.

But the decline is poorly documented. Documentation of decline over time is hard to come by (there is no way to prove, for example, that American students read less well than they did fifty years ago) and the data used to compare American students with students in other countries is questionable in terms of the methodology of assessment, particularly in terms of the sequence of studies. (It would be interesting and more to the point to do a comparative assessment of the knowledge of a cross section of adults in various countries.)

The reformers are able to turn this assumption into an assertion, however, because it is so readily accepted that it is never seriously challenged: it is even believed by many educators who are no part of the movement and oppose its proposed reforms. In the absence of good data, it is hard to know whether American schools (and American society) are deteriorating, or whether this assumption simply represents a change in social attitudes from, say, the early 1960s, a general fear of change or sense of loss that happens to focus on the schools, or whether it is simply another instance of one generation criticizing another ("Now, when I was in school . . ."), or some of all of the above. The assumption of decline is a bit like low consumer confidence, an artifact that has some connection with present reality and some effect on future developments but which is affected by many intangible factors outside the economic (educational) system.

VIII

I don't want to argue that these seven assumptions are all wrong, or wrong in all instances. Schools do acculturate, they do prepare students for work, and they are, obviously, educational institutions. Teachers do not necessarily know best how schools should be improved, and American schools, especially urban American schools, are faced with a host of problems, many of which appear to be becoming more serious. And certainly in any large system, some degree of standardization is necessary.

I do not, however, subscribe to the myth of general decline. The schools I know firsthand, schools I have worked in (or with) in Massachusetts and New York, many of them city schools, are better in many ways than they were a generation ago, better in many ways than the schools I attended. (And I am using here the standard of measurement the reformers use: the schools they attended.)

The teachers, especially but not only the elementary teachers, are better educated, not only in the arts and sciences but in child development and pedagogy.²³ The curriculum, though still governed by tradition, though still tied to an idea of a college curriculum that is no longer valid (colleges having changed in this respect so much more rapidly than schools), is more imaginative and more responsive to the needs of children and adolescents. Despite still being authoritarian, modern schools have come to realize that institutional behavior and relationships may have more effect on students' actions and values than what they learn in the classroom. But perhaps most important is the schools' increased concern with individual differences, individual learning styles, individual histories. Very few teachers today would argue that simply presenting all students with the same information will provide them with the same "starting point," and very few would argue for still more standardization of curriculum and testing. We have learned a great deal from the theory behind the individual educational plans used by special educators and from the studies of language acquisition that provide bilingual education with its theoretical base. We have learned from our own failures with students whose backgrounds are different from ours.

I cannot document these statements any more than the reformers can document theirs except by appealing, as many of them cannot, to a number of years of experience relevant to the subject at hand and to a familiarity with the relevant research. But the point is not whether I might be right or not: it is whether they might be wrong. For the reformers (like many of the legislators who follow their lead) have

been asking us to enact major changes on the basis of almost no data, very little analysis, and, with the exception of Finn and Ravitch), virtually no knowledge of educational philosophy and psychology. I doubt that reforms with so little backing would be taken seriously in any other sector of modern society.

One last word: many of the problems schools are now facing are new problems, with few precedents in the history of education. Despite recent short-term increases in drop-out rates, more Americans are spending more time in school than ever before. On the secondary level, this development has had a dramatic effect: high schools which as recently as the 1950s were educating only those adolescents who were going on to college or were in specific vocational programs — substantially less than a majority of the age group — are now educating — as best they can — over 80 percent of the school-age population. And the adolescents who make up the difference, who never would have completed high school a generation ago, who would not have been Hirsch's or Bennett's classmates, or mine, are a very diverse group of students by any measure. For many of them, the traditional college preparatory curriculum is so inappropriate as to be counterproductive: it turns them away from education. (I am not arguing here for increased tracking but for comprehensive curriculum reform. I am not sure that the traditional curriculum, at least as the reformers envisage it — Bennett's "national curriculum," for example — is appropriate for any students.)

New problems are created not only by these demographic changes, but by changes in the state of knowledge and in technology. The incredibly rapid and accelerating expansion of knowledge in the last century has transformed most of the academic disciplines in ways schools are just beginning to realize. Nor, as we often suppose, has this expansion been confined to the sciences: it has occurred in history, anthropology, geography, language study, psychology, and most of the social sciences. Somewhat ironically, the reformers are advocating the traditional curriculum at a time when scholars within the traditional disciplines are unsure of the definition of their own fields.

At the same time, changes in technology, particularly in information technology, changes that have contributed to this expansion of knowledge, have created new modes of communication and learning which challenge traditional modes of teaching and the traditional organization of schools. The technology exists to individualize education completely, or to allow eighth-graders to access data banks in India, or to allow a scholar in San Francisco to conduct a seminar in Austin, or to carry out mathematical calculations that were impossible until now, or to correlate historical data on a scale never before attempted. We may or may not want to take advantage of these various possibilities at the elementary and secondary level, but we certainly do not want to ignore them.

Or do we? The critics of education I have been talking about don't pay much attention to these changes. Instead, they talk about restoring the practices and standards of the past. At their worst, they are simply self-justifying. Allan Bloom's experience as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago becomes the model for collegiate education; the curriculum William Bennett studied, very slightly updated, becomes the national standard; David Kearns's transformation of Xerox is the way to transform the schools; and what E. D. Hirsch and his friends know becomes "Cultural Literacy." Nostalgia becomes policy. It is a little like deciding to reform the postal service by restoring it to cabinet rank, eliminating zip codes and computerized sorting, repainting the boxes green, and bringing back the three-cent stamp. ♣

Notes

1. The Annual Gallup Poll of Education regularly reports that respondents give American schools low grades, and that this tendency has increased in recent years. (Ironically, an almost equal percentage continue to give their own children's schools quite high grades.)
2. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 18.
3. Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn, *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 11.
4. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 57.
5. National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 7.
6. Ibid., 18.
7. Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*, 11.
8. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 81.
9. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, 126.
10. National Commission on Excellence, *A Nation at Risk*, 7.
11. David Kearns and Dennis Doyle, *Winning the Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Our Schools Competitive* (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1988), 8.
12. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, xiii.
13. Lawrence Cremin, *American Education, Vol. 3: The Metropolitan Experience* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), Chapter 3.
14. James S. Coleman et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Salem, N.H.: Ayer Publishing, 1966), Christopher Jencks, et al., *Inequality* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), and Shirley Brice Heath, *Ways with Words: Language Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
15. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, 91.
16. John Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), 197.
17. Cremin, *The Metropolitan Experience*, throughout. Cremin describes the combination of educative agencies as "configurations" and argues that it is difficult to talk about the effect of schools without taking these configurations into account.
18. National Commission on Excellence, *A Nation at Risk*, 35–36.
19. Kearns and Doyle, *Winning the Brain Race*, 1.
20. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, 25.
21. Ravitch and Finn, *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*, 13.
22. National Commission on Excellence, *A Nation at Risk*, 5.
23. The reformers think differently about this generation of teachers: "The old teachers who loved Shakespeare or Austen or Donne, and whose only reward for teaching was the perpetuation of their taste, have all but disappeared." (Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 65.) The statement is a good example of how the reformers' nostalgia and sentimentality substitute for observation and research. Even a cursory reading of *The English Journal* or *College English* would show how completely Bloom is mistaken.

“There is a revolution happening — a technology revolution. Putting these instruments of change — electronic learning instruments — in the hands of teachers and students will change the nature of public education, breaking down the two covers of a book, the four walls of the classroom, and the six periods of the day in ways we can’t even imagine now.”

— Nick Paleologos