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CHAPTER

For inspirational stories about people who have had a powerful impact on the lives of others, go to the Online Learning Center and read the "Class Acts."

Reforming America's Schools

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What are the goals of America's schools?
2. What school goals are important to you?
3. Why has school reform become a top national priority?
4. What new school options are replacing the traditional neighborhood public school?
5. What is the role of teachers and students in reforming our schools?
6. What are the characteristics of effective schools?



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WHAT DO YOU THINK? What do you think schools and students are like today? Check off what you think and see how others respond.

CHAPTER PREVIEW

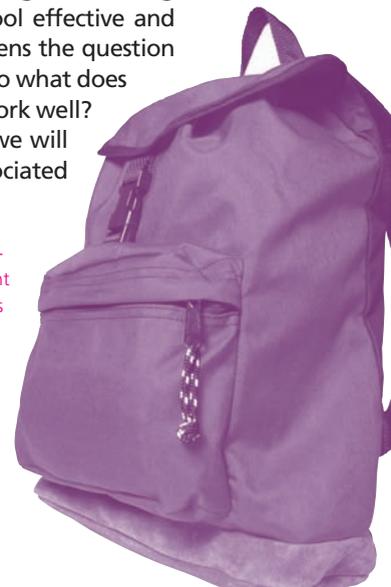
Although most of us take school for granted, the proper role of this institution continues to evoke heated debate. Are schools to prepare students for college, for a vocation, or to achieve high scores on standardized tests? Should schools help students develop good interpersonal relationships, patriotism, simply adjust to society or more ambitiously change and improve society?

In this chapter, you will have the opportunity to examine the major purposes assigned to schools and some of the major criticisms that have been leveled at them. The recent emphasis on standards and tests once again raises the crucial question: What's a school for? Some believe that poor test scores mean that America's schools are failing, and reform efforts have

led to the creation of new schools, quite different from the old neighborhood school that you may have attended. The creation of virtual schools that teach via the Internet has made even a physical school building unnecessary. Some concerned parents are giving up on schools entirely, choosing to educate their children at home. The call for educational reform is not new, but today it is a national issue. Defining the place and the purpose of schools has never been more challenging. And sorting out what makes one school effective and another ineffective broadens the question from what is a school for to what does it take to make a school work well?

As we close this chapter, we will look at the factors associated with effective schools.

CHAPTER FOCUS This chapter takes the reader to the two fundamental and contradictory purposes assigned to America's schools: to preserve and transform our society. The reform movement has helped to spawn charters and vouchers and homeschooling, to name but a few. Social forces have created a new emphasis on green schools. But the voices of teachers and students have been ignored in the school reform movement, and teachers have still not been won over to the effort. The chapter also provides a perspective on what research suggests is needed for an effective school.



What Is the Purpose of School?

Sounds like a complaint many of us have uttered after a bad day at school, but it is more than that: It is a deceptively complex question. Although we all agree that students go to school to learn things, we do not agree on just what those things are. Quite popular today is the idea that the nation's financial well-being depends on an educated workforce, one that can compete in the global economy. On a personal level, you have heard this purpose targeted to you: "If you want to get a good job, you better get a good education!" Politicians and businesspeople are on the same page but with even more focus: They want schools to emphasize science, math, and technology so we can compete with countries such as India and China. Some people believe the purpose of schools is to post high scores on international tests, expecting American students to rank number one (instead of lower down the list, where we actually score). But not everyone is interested in worldly competitions or the workforce. Traditionalists focus on the basics, the "three 'Rs': 'reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic (although spelling might be a good addition). Then there are those who say that given all the corruption in business, the improper conduct of politicians, the cheating in school, white-collar crime, and society's ethical dilemmas, perhaps schools should focus on making us all better people, more honest, kinder, and compassionate. Schools call this character development, and many Americans believe that is the most important goal any school can have. There is always a group, small but energized, that believes schools should promote creativity in the arts, developing the hidden skills and talents within each of us. New York City's High School of Performing Arts does just that, and became famous in the movie *Fame*. Who wouldn't want to go to a school like that? How about patriotism? Many believe that schools must focus on graduating loyal Americans. Others believe that patriotic Americans are those who question and even challenge their government. How would you define a good citizen? We will stop here, but you get the idea. This simple question is not so simple. Our views of what schools should be doing are diverse, sometimes superficial, and even contradictory. Let's spotlight what many see as the two fundamental, yet somewhat antithetical, purposes of all schools.

Purpose 1: To Transmit Society's Knowledge and Values (Passing the Cultural Baton)

Society has a vital interest in what schools do and how they do it. Schools reflect and promote society's values. There is a world of knowledge out there, more than any school can possibly hope to teach, so one of the first tasks confronting the school is to *select* what to teach. This selection creates a cultural message. Each country chooses the curriculum to match and advance its own view of history, its own values, its self-interests, and its own culture. In the United States, we learn about U.S. history, often in elementary, middle, and high school, but we learn little about the history, geography, and culture of other countries—or of America's own cultural diversity, for that matter. Even individual states and communities require schools to teach their own state or local history, to advance the dominant "culture" of Illinois or of New York City. By selecting what to teach—and what to omit—schools are making clear decisions as to what is valued, what is worth preserving and passing on.

Literature is a good example of this selection process. American children read works mainly by U.S. and British writers, and only occasionally works by Asian, Latin American, and African authors. This is not because literary genius is confined to the

GRABBER: BUMPER STICKERS
IM

FOCUS QUESTION 1
What are the goals of America's schools?

CLASS ACTIVITY:
School Goals/Community Meeting
IM, Activity 5.1

CLASS ACTIVITY:
Reel to Real: October Sky
IM, Activity 5.2

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

What *is* the purpose of a school? Would your response alter if you were addressing voters as an elected official, or if you were a guidance counselor trying to reach out to a potential dropout?

POWERPOINT 5.1
The Purpose of School

British and U.S. populations; it is because of a selection process, a decision by the keepers of the culture and creators of the curriculum that certain authors are to be taught, talked about, and emulated and others omitted. Similar decisions are made concerning which music should be played, which art viewed, which dances performed, and which historical figures and world events studied. As each nation makes these cultural value decisions, it is the role of the school to transmit these decisions to the next generation.

As society transmits its culture, it also transmits a view of the world. Being American means valuing certain things and judging countries and cultures from that set of values. Democratic countries that practice religious tolerance and respect individual rights are generally viewed more positively by Americans than are societies characterized by opposing norms, standards, and actions—that is, characteristics that do not fit our “American values.” That Afghani women were denied access to schools, hospitals, and jobs by the Taliban conflicted with our cultural and political standards and was repulsive to most Americans. Repression of religious, racial, and ethnic groups usually engenders similar negative feelings. By transmitting culture, schools breathe the breath of cultural eternity into a new generation and mold its view of the world.

But this process is limiting as well. In transmitting culture, schools are teaching students to view the world from the wrong end of a telescope, yielding a constricted view that does not allow much deviation or perspective. Cultural transmission may contribute to feelings of cultural superiority, a belief that “we are the best, number one!” Such nationalistic views may decrease tolerance and respect for other cultures and peoples.

Purpose 2: Reconstructing Society (Schools as Tools for Change)

If society were perfect, transmitting the culture from one generation to the next would be all that is required of schools. But our world, our nation, and our communities are far from ideal. Poverty, hunger, injustice, pollution, overpopulation, racism, sexism, and ethical challenges—and, of course, the dark clouds of terrorism, economic turmoil, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—are societal problems on a depressingly long list. To **reconstructionists**, society is broken, it needs to be fixed, and the school is a perfect tool for making the needed repairs. Reconstructionists see successful students as citizens ready to make change by transforming injustices.

To prepare students for such engagement, *social democratic reconstructionists* believe that civic learning—educating students for democracy—needs to be on par with other academic subjects. Yet knowing how to achieve this goal is not easy. Some believe that students should be made aware of the ills of society; study these critical, if controversial, areas; and equip themselves to confront these issues as they become adults.¹ Other reconstructionists are more action-oriented and believe that schools and students shouldn’t wait until students reach adulthood. They call for a *social action curriculum*, in which students actively involve themselves in eliminating social ills. For example, to gain public and government support for increased school construction and repairs, high school students in Baltimore, Maryland, organized a photo exhibit of their decaying school buildings. State legislators received a guided tour of the photos, which showed broken heaters, moldy walls, library shelves with no books, cockroaches, a stairwell filled with garbage, and broken windows.² As another example, students of all ages can learn about poverty and hunger in their communities and then organize a food drive or work in a soup kitchen.

GLOBAL VIEW

Is it really plausible that the purpose of U.S. schools has an impact on the world? How might the despair of repressed women mold our views? Are we merely a global economy when it comes to coffee beans or gasoline?

CLASS ACTIVITY:

Interviews
IM, Activity 5.3

TEACHING TIP

Invite students who completed a service credit for graduation to share their experiences. Consider making at least one class assignment that is similar to the service credit requirements in many secondary schools.

RAP 2.7

A Real Inservice Program

Frame of Reference

What's in a Name?

Ever wonder how schools get their names—and which names are the most popular? The National Education Resource Center researched the most popular proper names for U.S. high schools: Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy, Jefferson, Roosevelt (both Franklin and Teddy), and Wilson. (Presidents do well.) Lee, Edison, and Madison round out the top ten names. But proper names are not the most common high school names. Directions dominate: Northeastern, South, and Central High School are right up there. Creativity obviously is not a criterion, but politics is. Citizens fight over whether schools should be named after George Washington or Thomas Jefferson—who, after all, were slaveholders—and over why so few African Americans, Hispanics, and people of non-European ancestry are honored by having a school named after them. And, considering how many women are educators, it is amazing that so few schools are named to honor women—Eleanor

Roosevelt, Amelia Earhart, Christa McAuliffe, and Jacqueline Kennedy are exceptions. Some schools have honored writers (Bret Harte, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain) or reflect local leaders and culture. (In Las Vegas, you will find schools named Durango, Silverado, and Bonanza, which some complain sound more like casinos than western culture.)

REFLECTION: What choices do you think educators might make if they were responsible for school names? If students were in charge, would schools be named after sports figures or music and media stars? How do our school names reflect the power and culture in a society? What's in a name?

This idea of students contributing to society is not unique. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recommends that every student be required to earn a **service credit**, which might include volunteer work with the poor, the elderly, or the homeless. The idea behind a service credit is not only to reduce social ills but also to provide students with a connection to the larger community, to develop a sense of personal responsibility for improving the social condition.³ In 1992, Maryland became the first state requiring students to perform community service before they would be granted their high school diploma, and service learning became more popular nationwide throughout the 1990s.⁴ More than half of students in grades 6 through 12 participate in service learning, although who participates and what they do to gain service credits is somewhat erratic. Girls are more likely to participate than are boys, and whites outnumber students of color. Participation increases when schools take an active role in setting up the service opportunities and when they require it for graduation. And student participation increases with the educational level of their parents.⁵

Social democratic reconstructionists are reform-minded, but *economic reconstructionists* hold a darker view of society's ills and advocate more drastic, even revolutionary, action. They believe that schools generally teach the poorer classes to accept their lowly stations in life, to be subservient to authority, to unquestioningly follow rules while laboring for the economic benefit of the rich. To economic reconstructionists, schools are currently tools of oppression, not institutions of learning. They believe that students must be introduced to curricula that analyze and reform economic realities. For example, one such curriculum project targets a popular and highly visible athletic company, one that produces incredibly expensive sport shoes. This company manufactures its products in developing nations, maintaining horrid working conditions. Children in

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

The *Frame of Reference* discusses school names. How was your university named? Are there other school name stories that are worthy of conversation?

IMAGINE . . .

Japanese View of World War II

The Japanese are quite serious about transmitting a positive image of their culture and history, but World War II is a problem. However, it is not a problem for schoolchildren. The Hiroshima memorial explains that "the situation in Pearl Harbor hurtled Japan into the Pacific war." There is no mention of Japan's surprise attack, and no explanation of why Japan invaded China four years before Pearl Harbor. China and South Korea have objected to what Japan teaches the young, and have threatened trade sanctions if these inaccuracies are not corrected. They demand a meaningful account of Japan's invasion and occupation of their nations. Although many Japanese teachers support such revisions, Japan's Ministry of Education continually rejects any changes.

SOURCE: Jamie Miyazaki, "Textbook Row Stirs Japanese Concern," BBC online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, April 13, 2005.

Is the purpose of schools just academic learning, or might the goals include fostering an awareness of the benefits of community service, such as volunteering to tutor others?



these poor countries are sold into labor bondage by their impoverished families. As young as 6, they work twelve or more hours a day, enduring cruelty and even beatings as they earn only pennies an hour. Although the companies defend themselves by saying that they cannot change local conditions, economic reconstructionists believe that companies intentionally select locations because of their cheap labor costs. Economic reconstructionists point out that American children play with products made through the agonizing toil of other children. All the while, the companies profit. Educators who focus on economic reform have developed materials, Web sites, and social action projects that not only teach children about such exploitation but also provide them with strategies to pressure companies into creating more humane and equitable working conditions.⁶

Perhaps the most noted contemporary economic reconstructionist was **Paulo Freire**, author of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a book about his efforts to educate and liberate poor, illiterate peasants in Brazil.⁷ In his book, Freire describes how he taught these workers to read in order to identify problems that were keeping them poor and powerless. From this new awareness, they began to analyze their problems—such as how the lack of sanitation causes illness—and what they could do to solve specific problems and liberate themselves from their oppressive conditions. Freire highlighted the distinction between schools and education. Schools often miseducate and oppress. But true education liberates. Through education, the dispossessed learned to read, to act collectively, to improve their living conditions, and to reconstruct their lives. (See the education *Hall of Fame* in Chapter 7 for more about Freire.)

Public Demands for Schools

Preserving the status quo and promoting social change represent two fundamental directions available to schools, but they are not the only possible expectations. When you think about it, the public holds our schools to a bewildering assortment of tasks and expectations.

GLOBAL VIEW

Numerous press releases continue to report international cases of child labor law violations and the sexual abuse of girls and boys. How can teachers help children to understand other children's lives?

RAP 2.6

A Public Service Announcement: The Purpose of School

CLASS ACTIVITY:
Determining Schools' Goals
IM, Activity 5.4

John Goodlad, in his massive study *A Place Called School*, examined a wide range of documents that tried to define the purposes of schooling over three hundred years of history. He and his colleague found four broad goals:

1. *Academic*, including a broad array of knowledge and intellectual skills
2. *Vocational*, aimed at readiness for the world of work and economic responsibilities
3. *Social and civic*, including skills and behavior for participating in a complex democratic society
4. *Personal*, including the development of individual talent and self-expression⁸

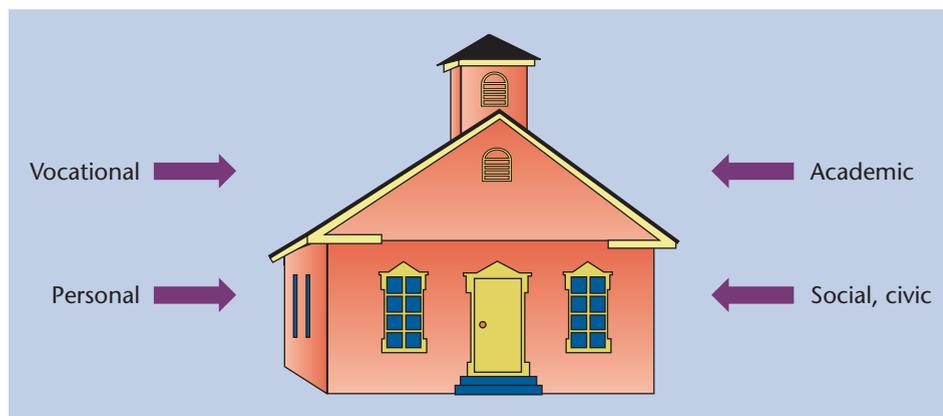
Goodlad included these four goal areas in questionnaires distributed to parents, and he asked them to rate their importance. (See Figure 5.1.) Parents gave “very important” ratings to all four. When Goodlad asked students and teachers to rate the four goal areas, they rated all of them as “very important.” When pushed to select one of these four as having top priority, approximately half the teachers and parents selected the intellectual area, while students spread their preferences fairly evenly among all four categories, with high school students giving a slight edge to vocational goals. When it comes to selecting the purpose of schools, both those who are their clients and those who provide their services resist interpreting the purpose of schools narrowly.

What do Americans want from their schools? Evidently, they want it all! As early as 1953, Arthur Bestor wrote, “The idea that the school must undertake to meet every need that some other agency is failing to meet, regardless of the suitability of the schoolroom to the task, is a preposterous delusion that in the end can wreck the educational system.”⁹

Then, in the 1980s, Ernest Boyer conducted a major study of secondary education and concluded,

Since the English classical school was founded over 150 years ago, high schools have accumulated purposes like barnacles on a weathered ship. As school population expanded from a tiny urban minority to almost all youth, a coherent purpose was hard to find. The nation piled social policy upon educational policy and all of them on top of the delusion that a single institution can do it all.¹⁰

Three decades later, the public continues to hold schools to a myriad of high expectations: More than two-thirds of Americans believe that schools are responsible for the academic as well as behavioral, social, and emotional needs of all students.¹¹



POWERPOINT 5.2

Goals of Schools

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE CONNECTION

Walk in the shoes (sandals, boots, or moccasins) of a naturalist and propose what a school's outside surroundings would look like to best represent educational goals.

CLASS ACTIVITY:

Creating Educational Dreams

IM, Activity 5.5

FIGURE 5.1

Goals of schools.

REFLECTION: Under each goal, list specific efforts a school could make to reach the goal. How would you prioritize these goals? Explain.

Where Do You Stand?

FOCUS QUESTION 2

What school goals are important to you?

CLASS ACTIVITY:

Where Do You Stand?
IM, Activity 5.6

Identifying school goals seems to be everyone’s business—parents, teachers, all levels of government, and various professional groups. Over the years, dozens of lists have been published in different reform reports, each enumerating goals for schools. The problem arises when schools cannot fulfill all these goals, either because there are too many goals or because the purposes actually conflict with one another. It is these smaller pieces that often dominate discussion. Should schools focus on preparing students for college? Should they try to inhibit drug use, or lessen the threat of AIDS? Perhaps schools ought to focus on the economy and train students to compete in the world marketplace.

Look at the following list of school goals. Drawn from a variety of sources, these goals have been advocated singly and in combination by different groups at different times and have been adopted by different schools. In each case, register your own judgment on the values and worth of each goal. When you have completed your responses, we shall discuss the significance of these goals, and you can see how your responses fit into the bigger picture.

Circle the number that best reflects how important you think each school goal is.

- 1 Very unimportant
- 2 Unimportant
- 3 Moderately important
- 4 Important
- 5 Very important



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

How Important Are These School Goals?

Do this exercise online. See how others responded to each statement.

	Very Unimportant					Very Important				
1. To transmit the nation’s cultural heritage, preserving past accomplishments and insights	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. To encourage students to question current practices and institutions; to promote social change	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. To prepare competent workers to compete successfully in a technological world economy	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. To develop healthy citizens aware of nutrition, exercise, and good health habits	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. To lead the world in creating a peaceful global society, stressing an understanding of other cultures and languages	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. To provide a challenging education for America’s brightest students	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. To develop strong self-concept and self-esteem in students	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. To nurture creative students in developing art, music, and writing	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. To prevent unwanted pregnancy, AIDS, drugs, addiction, alcoholism	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. To unite citizens from diverse backgrounds (national origin, race, ethnicity) as a single nation with a unified culture	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. To provide support to families through after-school child care, nutritional supplements, medical treatment, and so on	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

	Very Unimportant		Very Important		
12. To encourage loyal students committed to the United States; to instill patriotism	1	2	3	4	5
13. To teach students our nation's work ethic: punctuality, responsibility, cooperation, self-control, neatness, and so on	1	2	3	4	5
14. To demonstrate academic proficiency through high standardized test scores	1	2	3	4	5
15. To provide a dynamic vehicle for social and economic mobility, a way for the poor to reach their full potential	1	2	3	4	5
16. To prepare educated citizens who can undertake actions that spark change	1	2	3	4	5
17. To ensure the cultural richness and diversity of the United States	1	2	3	4	5
18. To eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and all forms of discrimination from society	1	2	3	4	5
19. To prepare as many students as possible for college and/or well-paid careers	1	2	3	4	5
20. To provide child care for the nation's children and to free parents to work and/or pursue their interests and activities	1	2	3	4	5

Now, think about your three most valued goals for school and write those goals below:

Three valued goals:

_____, _____, _____

Do your responses to these items and your three priority goal selections cast you as transmitter of culture or as change agent for restructuring society? To help you determine where your beliefs take you, record your scores on the following selected items:

Purpose of Schools	
Transmitting Culture	Reconstructing Society
<i>Focused Item</i>	<i>Focused Item</i>
1 _____	2 _____
3 _____	5 _____
10 _____	9 _____
12 _____	15 _____
13 _____	16 _____
19 _____	18 _____
<i>Total</i> _____	<i>Total</i> _____

REFLECTION: Do your responses reflect the school experiences you had, or the ones you had hoped for? Which camp are you in: transmitting culture or reconstructing society?

Let's investigate how your choices reflect your values. The current emphasis on standards, tests, and academic performance is reflected in items 1, 13, and especially 14. Are you in agreement with this contemporary educational priority? If you scored high on items 1 and 10, then you value the role schools serve in preparing Americans to adhere to a common set of principles and values. This has been a recurrent theme in schools as each new group of immigrants arrives. Some people called this the melting pot, more formally termed **acculturation**, or **Americanization** (replacing the old culture with the new American one). Others believe that it is a mistake to try to forge a singular definition of an American. Given our nation's diversity, they want schools to honor cultural pluralism, to learn and honor our different cultural and ethnic traditions, and to gain different insights on our world. Look at how you responded to item 17 to see the degree of your support for cultural pluralism. Item 17, along with items 2 and 18, also suggests a commitment to civil rights and student empowerment, hallmarks of the 1960s and 1970s, and since history often runs in cycles, perhaps those goals will resurface in the not-too-distant future. Do you like the Horatio Alger folklore: hard work and a little elbow grease, and the poor become wealthy? Agree with this folklore and you probably rated items 15 and 19 pretty high. Take a little time and see where you stand on the other items. And while you look them over, consider item 20, which may seem a bit odd. After all, few people see schools as babysitters, but without this "service," most parents would be overwhelmed. And consider the impact that millions of adolescents would have on the job market. Unemployment would skyrocket and wages would tumble. By minding the children, schools provide parents with time and keep our workforce down to a manageable size.

What did your ratings teach you about your values and your view of schools? Were your goals popular during particular periods of our past, or are you more future-oriented? You may want to compare your goals for education here with your philosophical preferences as identified in Chapter 8.

A History of Educational Reform

FOCUS QUESTION 3
Why has school reform become a national priority.

CLASS ACTIVITY:
School Reform
IM, Activity 5.7

RELATED READING
Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform by David Tyack and Larry Cuban 1995.

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged prominence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors through-out the world. . . . If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. . . . We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.¹²

So began the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, ***A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform***. The report cited declining test scores, the weak performance of U.S. students compared with students in other industrialized nations, the fear that the United States is losing ground economically to other countries, and the high number of functionally illiterate Americans. *A Nation at Risk* put school reform in the national spotlight.¹³ In response to the report, states increased the number of course requirements needed for graduation and required more testing of both students and teachers. Today, decades later, even more importance has been given to these tests. Although low international test scores and the new global economy fuel the demand for better schools, reforming schools actually began more than a century ago.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States was undergoing profound economic and social transformations. Vast new industries and giant corporations were being formed and factory labor was being exploited; massive numbers

of immigrants were arriving, the population was surging, and urban America was growing; traditional agrarian life was disappearing. How should schools respond? In 1892, the National Education Association (NEA) established the *Committee of Ten* to develop a national policy for high schools.¹⁴ The committee, composed for the most part of college presidents and professors, wanted consistency and order in the high school curriculum for an easier transition into college. The committee report required that high schools teach certain required courses four or five times a week for one year, and that student progress be measured by *Carnegie Units*. Now it became easier for colleges to decide which students were prepared to do college-level work.

The NEA repeated the process in 1918, but this time committee members included education professors, high school principals, the U.S. commissioner of education, and others focused not on transition to college but on preparing adults for their life roles. The truth is, very few Americans went on to college at that time; most went on to work and family. The committee wanted to know: What can high school do to improve the daily lives of citizens in an industrial democracy? This committee's report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, identified seven goals for high school: (1) health, (2) worthy home membership, (3) command of fundamental academic skills, (4) vocation, (5) citizenship, (6) worthy use of leisure time, and (7) ethical character. The high school was seen as a socializing agency, an opportunity to improve all aspects of a citizen's life. (Almost a century later, those 1918 goals still sound balanced and useful.) Nevertheless, today's reform movement echoes the narrower academic focus of the 1893 Committee of Ten.

In 1983, the *Nation at Risk* report called for a more demanding curriculum. Today, educational reform has taken on a life of its own. As the new millennium dawned, *No Child Left Behind*, with its huge testing culture, became law, and a school's success was measured by student test scores. (We will discuss this at greater length in Chapter 6, "Curriculum, Standards, and Testing.") If students scored well, the school was seen as successful. When students did poorly, the school was considered a failing school. But what could be done with a failing school?

School Choice

The idea to actually shut down a poor performing neighborhood school could be traced back to the 1950s and economist **Milton Friedman**, who believed that local public schools were often weak because they functioned as a monopoly. Neighborhood families were a "trapped" clientele, and so the local school had no incentive to improve. He believed that public schools would be more effective if they functioned in a free market, competing against one another so that the public would send their children to the better schools and the weak schools would lose their students and be forced to close. Friedman noted that not every family was trapped, because wealthy parents could bail out of a weak neighborhood school by moving to a different community or choosing a private school. His voucher plan, which we will discuss shortly, would give every family the same choice that the wealthy enjoyed. For Friedman, choice and competition were needed to improve schools.

In a 1981 study, **James Coleman** found that private schools were doing a better job of educating students than were the neighborhood public schools. Not only were the students attending independent, often religiously affiliated, private schools better behaved, but they also scored higher on tests. Coleman noted that the private schools enforced more rigorous academic standards and gave teachers and administrators more autonomy. In 1993, another study found that Catholic schools not only

POWERPOINT 5.3
History of Reform

RELATED READING
Waiting for a Miracle: Why Schools Can't Solve Our Problems—and How We Can by James P. Comer (1997).

were providing particularly effective education for inner-city students of color but also were providing this education at a lower per-student cost and in less segregated classrooms than were neighboring public schools.¹⁵ So now we had two arguments for giving parents a choice in school selection. One was Friedman's marketplace idea—competition creates better schools—and the other that private schools were doing better than public schools.

By the late 1980s, a third, even more persuasive argument emerged: Many public schools, especially inner-city schools, were disasters. In these under-resourced schools, teacher turnover was high, the buildings were in disrepair (and often rodent-infested), test scores were abysmal, and dropout rates high. Rather than finding open doors to promising futures, students in these schools did not even make it to graduation. To require parents, typically poor parents, to send their children to such troubled neighborhood public schools seemed both cruel and unfair. The neighborhood public school, once sacrosanct, was now vulnerable; school choice was gathering steam.

RELATED READING

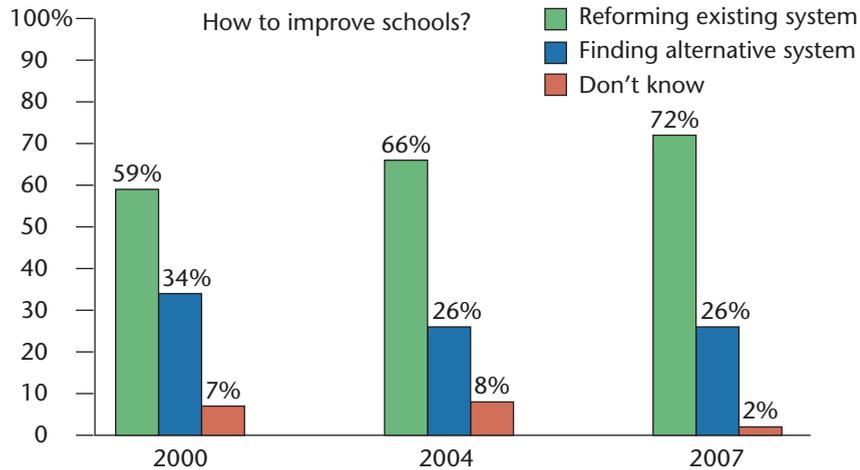
School Choice Policies and Outcomes: Empirical and Philosophical Perspectives, edited by Walter Feinberg and Christopher Lubienski (2008).

By the early 2000s, national figures such as Bill Gates were telling the nation that if we were to compete on the world stage, more than the neighborhood elementary schools needed to be fixed; high schools were also failing. Gates argued that our high schools were “obsolete,” designed to prepare students for a world that has not existed for decades. “Only one-third of our students graduate from high school ready for college, work and citizenship . . . In 2001, India graduated almost a million more students from college than did the United States; China graduates twice as many students with bachelor's degrees as the United States, and they have six times as many graduates majoring in engineering.”¹⁶ The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation followed those words with action, committing several billion dollars to strengthening America's high schools. For high school, Gates emphasizes a different set of “3 Rs”: rigor (a stronger curriculum), relevance (better preparation for work and college), and relationships (a school structure in which students have more support from teachers and counselors).

The prestigious consulting firm McKinsey & Company voiced a similar concern in a 2009 report titled *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools*. This report examined the dimensions of four distinct achievement gaps in education: (1) between the United States and other nations, (2) between black and Latino students and white students, (3) between students of different income levels, and (4) between similar students schooled in different systems or regions. The report actually put a monetary cost on these gaps. It concluded that the nation's Gross Domestic Product, or GDP (that is, the total value of all goods and services produced each year), would be \$1.3–2.3 trillion higher if these achievement gaps did not exist. If educational reform had been successful back in 1998, fifteen years after *A Nation at Risk* was initially published, our nation's economy today would be far stronger. The slow pace of educational reform has led to the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession, with lower earnings, poor health, and higher rates of incarceration. One author of the report put it this way: “We waste 3 to 5 billion dollars a day by not closing these achievement gaps. This is not simply an issue about poor kids in poor schools; it's about most kids in most schools.” To underscore our international performance gap, 15-year-old American students ranked 25th out of 30 industrialized nations in math problem-solving skills, and 24th out of 30 in science problem-solving skills. U.S. students scored on a par with Portugal and the Slovak Republic, but well behind our economic competitors, such as Canada, Korea, and Australia. Our lagging education system is costing us all.¹⁷ (See Figure 5.2.)

POWERPOINT 5.4

Public Attitudes: Reforming or Replacing Public Schools

**FIGURE 5.2**

**Public attitudes:
Reforming or replac-
ing public schools.**

SOURCE: The 2007 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools.

REFLECTION: Why do you believe that most people prefer to reform the current system rather than find an alternative?

By the time President Obama took office in 2009, reforming schools was a top national priority. Offering parents a choice of schools was one way to improve educational quality. As a result, today's schools are undergoing significant changes, and students and parents (and often teachers) can choose from a variety of schooling options. As we describe each of these options, consider which sound attractive to you, perhaps places where you would like to teach.

Charter Schools

In the early 1990s, Minnesota created the first charter school, launching an idea that has mushroomed into almost five thousand charter schools operating in forty states and the District of Columbia. Arizona, California, Texas, and Florida have created the most charter schools, but other states have been more cautious. (To check on the charter schools in your state, visit www.charterschool.com).

What are these charter schools? The concept is simple. A **charter school** has legal permission (called a charter or a contract) from a local or state school board to operate a school, usually for a fixed period of time with the right to renew the charter if the school is successful. So if you and a group of your friends wanted to create a school, you would apply for a charter. If the school board accepted your plan, you could begin your school. You would look for a building to rent, or perhaps discover an unused school building, or if you were really stuck, find a benefactor to help finance your school. You would create your budget, develop your curriculum, hire your teachers and staff, and recruit students. For each student who enrolled in the school, you would receive a certain amount of money from the state. Enroll enough students, and you have your funds to pay your teachers. For the extra niceties/necessities of a school—special materials, audiovisual equipment, computers, library books, and the like—you would have to find additional resources. Your charter school curriculum could be as creative or as traditional as you liked because it would be your school. You would be exempt from most state and local regulations, although you

FOCUS QUESTION 4

What new school options are replacing the traditional neighborhood public school?

RELATED READING

Inside Charter Schools: The Paradox of Radical Decentralization by Bruce Fuller (2000).

would have to follow health, safety, and civil rights rules. In effect, charter schools “swap” regulations for greater freedom and the promise that they will be effective and their students will do well. After a certain period of time, perhaps five years, your school would be evaluated to make certain that students were performing well.

A charter school typically

POWERPOINT 5.5
Charter Schools

- Allows for the creation of a new or the conversion of an existing public school
- Prohibits admission tests
- Is nonsectarian
- Requires a demonstrable improvement in performance
- Can be closed if it does not meet expectations
- Does not need to conform to most state rules and regulations
- Receives funding based on the number of students enrolled

Okay, since you are taking what might be your first education class, perhaps it is a bit premature for you to open a charter school, but you might be wondering who would take on such a task. Tom Watkins, director of the Detroit Center for Charter Schools, describes three types of charter advocates: reformers, zealots, and entrepreneurs. *Reformers* are those who want to expand public school options, create a positive option for parents and children, and perhaps promote a specific approach, such as a more student-centered institution. Reformers engender positive reports in the press. Watkins also describes *zealots*, who want to promote more conservative schools and who typically do not like teacher unions. Often, these charters model private schools and emphasize traditional curricular ideas and teacher-centered classrooms. The final group consists of *entrepreneurs*, businesspeople who believe that efficiency can convert schools into untapped profit centers. This last group believes that you can have effective charter schools that teach students well and make a profit for investors. We will take a closer look at these educational entrepreneurs a bit later.¹⁸

VIDEO SEGMENT 10
Tour of a Boston Charter
School

How effective are charters? Preliminary studies suggest that student achievement varies little between charter and traditional public schools, although there is some evidence that students in charters may show improved attendance and behavior, and may be more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college.¹⁹ But it is wise to remember that there are enormous differences in charters. Some are strong, offering smaller classes and ample resources. Others struggle to find an appropriate building, qualified teachers, and funds needed for computers or library books.²⁰ Some charter schools can offer you, as a new teacher, more freedom than the traditional neighborhood school, allowing you to create your own standards and curriculum, establish rules for discipline, and even make budget decisions. That is what Casey Mason, a social studies teacher at the Amy Biehl High School (ABHS) in New Mexico likes about her charter school experience. Casey had taught in a regular middle school but far prefers the ABHS charter school. She likes planning the curriculum with other teachers and working in a close relationship with her colleagues. “At traditional public schools I would teach 150 students per day, with up to 35 students in a class. At ABHS I have no more than 20 students in a class.” Casey believes her students do well because there is “no place to hide.”²¹

RELATED READING
*Powerful Reforms with
Shallow Roots* by Larry
Cuban and Michael Usdan
(2003).

But as we said, there is a great variety of charter schools. While many charter schools are like ABHS, one-of-a-kind schools, others have gone national. There are almost seventy KIPP middle schools, usually grades 5–8, in major cities across the nation. KIPP stands for Knowledge Is Power Program and was begun by two graduates of Teach for America who had some very firm ideas about what it takes to make

inner-city schools work. Unlike Casey's experience at Amy Biehl High School, KIPP teachers follow specific rules and lessons and are far more strictly controlled than most public school teachers. KIPP charter schools follow five principles:

1. *More time.* KIPP schools have longer school days and a longer school year. For example, school days may run 7:30–5:00 Mondays through Fridays, and 9:30–1:30 several Saturdays a month. School also continues for several weeks in the summer. Teachers earn a higher salary (typically 15–20 percent more than a typical teacher's salary) to compensate for this additional time.
2. *High expectations.* Students, parents, teachers, and staff work to create a culture of achievement and support. Parents sign contracts guaranteeing their involvement in monitoring their children's work and participating in school activities.
3. *Choice and commitment.* Everyone in a KIPP school chooses to be there, and to put in the time and the effort required to succeed.
4. *Power to lead.* The principals of KIPP schools have control over their school budget and personnel and are held accountable for learning. There is no central bureaucracy. Principals are expected to achieve results, or the KIPP organization replaces them.
5. *Focus on results.* What are those results? Certainly, high student scores on standardized tests are a KIPP priority. Students are expected to achieve a level of academic performance that will enable them to graduate and go on to the nation's best high schools and colleges.

KIPP has a lot of fans, and evaluations of KIPP charter schools have been generally positive. In 2007, nearly 95 percent of KIPP graduates went on to college-preparatory high schools. But there is a catch: KIPP, like so many inner-city schools, loses many students before they graduate. The urban environment has many distractions, and when a KIPP student cannot keep up with the academics, he leaves the school. So although KIPP graduates do well, the challenge is keeping students in school long enough to graduate.²²

So if you are getting the idea that charter schools are strikingly diverse, you are correct. About half of all charters have a special academic focus, such as the performing arts, bilingual education, or technology. Some charter schools are associated with national programs, such as the International Baccalaureate Degree, and others are independent, meeting local needs. In St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, the City Academy is a year-round charter school serving forty at-risk students. Metro Deaf serves deaf students. The Teamsters Union and the Minnesota Business Partnership sponsor a vocational and technical school, called Skills for Tomorrow, that uses internship placements to educate students interested in becoming skilled workers. The City on a Hill charter in Boston was created by two veteran teachers committed to providing a more effective education for poor inner-city children. Nataki Talibah Schoolhouse of Detroit is a K–8 school that uses a social studies immersion program to integrate civics, economics, geography, history, and world culture into the core curriculum. The student body is 100 percent African American, and the curriculum allows students to learn about African-American

POWERPOINT 5.6

KIPP Schools

RELATED READING

Work Hard, Be Nice: How Two Inspired Teachers Created the Most Promising Schools in America by Jay Mathews (2009).



TEACHING TIP

Survey the class to see what experiences they have had with state charter schools. Are there any charter school graduates or parents? community advocates or critics? future faculty, administrators, or developers?

VIDEO SEGMENT 11

Alternate Visions
Second-Chance Schools
Educational Remedies

history and culture. In the District of Columbia, two Ivy League graduates gave up their high-paying positions to start the SEED School, a rare college-preparatory public boarding school for poor, inner-city youth. Students do not go home after school. They live in dorms and receive twenty-four-hour supervision, tutoring, and life-skills training along with a rigorous academic program.²³ And it is interesting to note that when Hurricane Katrina destroyed thousands of homes and ruined countless communities in New Orleans, the city viewed the disaster as an opportunity to restructure its troubled public school system. The public schools were converted into charters, making New Orleans a leading laboratory for charter school experiments.²⁴

Vouchers

Although charter schools have taken off under the school choice idea, there is irony in this story. Charter schools were not at all what Milton Friedman had in mind when he promoted school choice over half a century ago. Friedman was promoting competition through vouchers, not charters. You might think of an educational **voucher** as an admission ticket to any school in the country, public or private. The government would give parents an educational voucher for each child attending school, and then the family would go “shopping” for the best school. Once a school was chosen, the parent would give the voucher to the school administrator, the school would turn it over to the local or state government, and the government would pay the school a fixed sum for each voucher. In Friedman’s mind, good schools would collect many vouchers, convert them into cash, and thrive, perhaps even expand, while poor schools would find it difficult to attract “customers” and would go out of business. Competition would do the work of reforming schools by simply eliminating weak schools and expanding the good ones.

In 1990, Milwaukee became the site of the first publicly financed voucher program. Wisconsin lawmakers approved a plan for Milwaukee students to receive about \$3,000 each to attend nonsectarian private schools and then, in 1995, amended the law to allow students to attend religious schools as well. And it is the inclusion of religious schools, first in the Milwaukee voucher plan, then in a similar plan in Cleveland, that sparked a heated controversy and a round of lawsuits. The reason that religious schools are so closely involved in the voucher dispute is that they are the prime beneficiaries, receiving upward of 90 percent of the students using such vouchers. Why is this? Two reasons: First, most private schools are religious schools, and second, most religious schools have low tuition rates. Most voucher plans offer modest financial support, too little for elite private schools but enough to cover the cost of many parochial schools.

St. Agatha–St. Aloysius, a parochial school housed in a crumbling brick hulk of a building on Cleveland’s East Side, is the kind of school that attracted many parents with vouchers. The neighborhood has changed much over the past decades, from mostly Irish American to mostly black, but the school has not. Boys wear white shirts and ties, shelves in the basement library are stocked with trophies won by teams a half-century ago, discipline is strict, and daily homework is a given.²⁵ But here’s a problem you might be thinking about: How can vouchers—public taxpayer money—be used to send children for religious instruction? Doesn’t the First Amendment of the Constitution ensure the separation of church and state—or has all that changed?

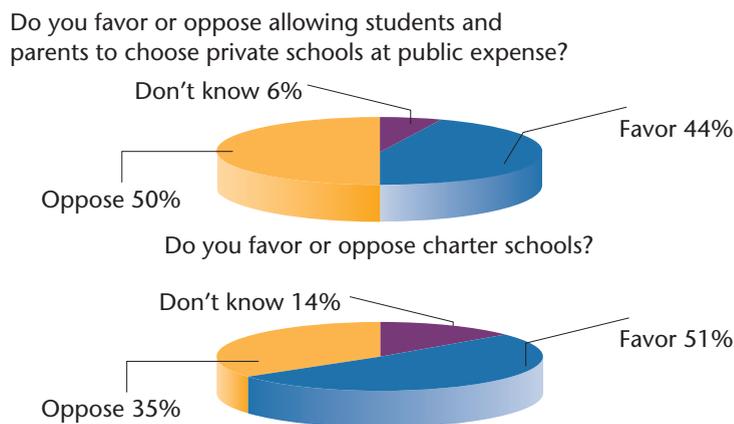
In fact, the legal picture is in flux. Vouchers were always slow to catch on in part because of this religious issue. Back in 1971 in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* and in 1973 in the *Nyquist* case, the Supreme Court constructed clear walls limiting the use of

TEACHING TIP

Reproduce on the board or a handout the quotes of Justices Rehnquist and Stevens. Ask students to react to these differing views—and to voice their own.

public funds to support religious education. What became known as the *Lemon* test provided three criteria to determine the legality of government funds used in religious schools. According to *Lemon*, the funds (1) must have a secular purpose, (2) must not primarily advance or prohibit religion, and (3) must not result in excessive government entanglement with religion. So the wall separating church and state seemed pretty high, until 2002, when a more conservative court revisited the issue. In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002), a narrow 5–4 Supreme Court majority ruled that publicly funded vouchers could be used to send children to Cleveland's private religious schools. Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that such vouchers permit a "genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious." Justice John Paul Stevens dissented, writing, "Whenever we remove a brick from the wall that was designed to separate religion and government, we increase the risk of religious strife and weaken the foundation of our democracy."²⁶ Even though these legal decisions made vouchers more possible, by 2009 tuition vouchers were used in just six states and the District of Columbia. Moreover, evaluations of the few voucher programs do not show that they were performing very well.²⁷ Although Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court have given their approval to tuition vouchers, many state courts and state lawmakers remain wary. Most state constitutions have so-called Blaine Amendments—named for a late-nineteenth-century legislator from Maine—that restrict public aid to private and religious institutions.²⁸ So although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled vouchers constitutional, many state courts have ruled the opposite. The result is that few school districts use a voucher program.

Vouchers have also become politicized, with many Republicans supporting them and many Democrats opposed. (Charter schools, on the other hand, have bipartisan support.) The public is also divided. Supporters believe that vouchers expand educational choice, but most Americans oppose public funds going to private schools, and perhaps even spreading religious doctrine. Both sides of the argument may be correct.²⁹ (See Figure 5.3.)

**POWERPOINT 5.7**

Public Funds, Private Schools, and Vouchers

POWERPOINT 5.8

Private Schools at Public Expense

FIGURE 5.3

Americans view vouchers and charter schools.

SOURCE: *The 2008 Phi Delta KappalGallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools.*

We have set this "KappalGallup" as per figure 5.2 sourcenote. Please confirm if this is fine.

REFLECTION: Why do you think more Americans support charter schools than vouchers? Try your own skill at polling, and ask friends and family their responses to these questions. How do their responses compare with national trends? How might you explain these similarities or differences?

Magnet Schools

Although few people thought of it as a “choice” option over seventy years ago, for talented students, magnet schools were just that. You may have heard of magnet schools, or perhaps you even attended one. A **magnet school** offers one or more special programs, perhaps in math or science or the arts, programs so highly regarded that, like a magnet, they draw students from near and far. In large school districts such as New York City, some very fine magnet schools have been serving students for a very long time. In 1936, New York City Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia founded the High School of Music & Art for students gifted in the arts. Today, it is the LaGuardia School of Arts, a public magnet school open to students who pass a rigorous audition. Among its hundreds of well-known graduates are Jennifer Aniston, Ellen Barkin, Al Pacino, and Wesley Snipes. Stuyvesant High School, also in New York, is a magnet school for mathematics, science, and technology. As many as 20,000 students each year are tested for admission to Stuyvesant, but only 800 or so are accepted. Stuyvesant proudly announces on its Web site that four of its graduates went on to become Nobel Laureates.

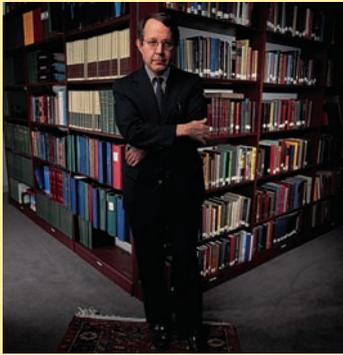
Although magnets like these were created to offer high-quality programs for talented students in metropolitan areas, the magnet idea gained additional momentum in the 1960s and 1970s as a method to voluntarily racially desegregate schools. A magnet school with a strong specialized program would be established in a school in a predominantly African American community. White students would voluntarily travel to attend these special programs, and the result would be an integrated school. But it is important to remember that though the school was integrated, many of the classrooms were not. Most of the African American students in the school attended the regular high school classes, whereas most of the white students attended the special magnet classes. About half of today’s magnet schools have helped racial desegregation, but as today’s cities and communities become ever more racially segregated, the ability of magnet schools to desegregate communities is diminished.

More than 2 million students attend magnet schools today. Unlike charter schools, magnet schools are not in the spotlight and many suffer from underfunding, especially when it comes to paying for transportation costs, but that is not to say they are not doing an effective job. Often, magnet schools are effective and more racially integrated than other public schools, including charters. Are they effective? Some studies suggest that students in magnet schools outperform students in other public schools and in Catholic schools. Research also indicates that those attending career magnet schools that prepare students for the world of work are less likely to be involved in fighting and drinking, and they earn more college credits and demonstrate greater involvement in social justice issues than their contemporaries in public schools. Although magnet schools cost more than neighborhood public schools, these studies suggest that they may also be more effective.³⁰

Open Enrollment

In 1988, Minnesota instituted **open enrollment**, which eliminated the requirement that students must attend the closest public school. Like the magnet schools, open enrollment encouraged parents to choose a school, but it greatly increased the number of schools to choose from. Any public school with available space became eligible. Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, and other states soon followed Minnesota’s lead and introduced open enrollment legislation. Today, more than forty states allow open enrollment within school districts. However, even more radical proposals are available that may redefine, if not eliminate, the neighborhood school.³¹

Profile in Education Jonathan Kozol



A Harvard graduate and Rhodes scholar, **Jonathan Kozol** had no idea “what it was like to be a poor kid in America.” He quickly learned. In 1964, the Klu Klux Klan in Mississippi murdered three young civil rights workers. The injustice ignited a need to act.

I’d never been involved with racial issues. I was not particularly political. In fact, I wasn’t political at all. But this event had an extraordinary effect. I volunteered to spend the summer teaching at a black church which had set up a freedom school. When September came, I walked into the Boston school department and said, “I’m going to be a teacher.”¹

He was assigned to the fourth grade of an urban school in Boston, a school so impoverished he didn’t have a classroom. Kozol and his disenfranchised students camped out in an auditorium. In an effort to resuscitate their interest in learning, he shared his favorite poetry. Students recited lines, asked questions, even cried as they identified with the words of Langston Hughes. Although the words of the black poet may have inspired students, the author was not on the school’s approved reading list. Kozol was fired. He chronicled his first year teaching in *Death at an Early Age* (1967), which alerted the nation to the wrenching injustices found in impoverished schools and the resiliency of their students.

For almost four decades, Kozol’s compassionate spirit has given voice to the poor. In his best-selling

book, *Savage Inequalities* (1991), he describes life in destitute schools from East St. Louis to the Bronx. Kozol writes of schools so overcrowded that students get desks only when other students are absent. Of students who go for part, most, or all of the year without textbooks. While decrying this tragedy, Kozol does not find an answer in voucher programs.

[T]he idea behind choice (within the district), basically, is that if you let people choose, everybody will get the school they want. [But] people very seldom have equal choices, and even when they theoretically have equal choices, they rarely have equal access.

People can’t choose things they’ve never heard of, for example. And lots of the poorest folks in our inner cities are functionally illiterate. In many of our inner cities, as many as 30 percent of our adults cannot read well enough to understand the booklets put out by school systems delineating their choices.

Even if they can understand and even if the school system is sophisticated enough to print these things in five different languages for all the different ethnic groups in cities like New York or Chicago, there’s a larger point that those who hear about new schools, good schools, first are almost always the well connected.

And so, what often happens is that while everybody theoretically has the right to choose any school, the affluent, the savvy, the children of the academics, the children of the lawyers, the children of the doctors, the children of the school superintendent tend to end up in the same three little boutique elementary schools. And I call them boutique schools because they’re always charming, and the press loves them, and they always have enough racial integration so it looks okay for the newspaper or the TV camera. But, in fact, they are separated by both race and class, and more and more by class.

What happens is that the poorest of the poor often do not get into these schools or very small numbers get in. Large numbers of the

kids who nobody wants end up concentrated in the schools that no one chooses except by default . . .

Now the dark, terrifying prospect of vouchers or a choice agenda, of a so-called market basis for our public schools, is that rather than encourage a sense of common loyalties among people, choice will particularize loyalties. It will fragmentize ambition, so that the individual parent will be forced to claw and scramble for the good of her kid and her kid only, at whatever cost to everybody else. There’s a wonderful quote from John Dewey. He said “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely. Acted upon, it destroys our democracy.”

. . . The best known voucher advocate, John Chubb, of the Brookings Institute, in Washington, says something—I’m paraphrasing him—like this: “Democratic governance of schools is what’s wrong with schools. We need a voucher plan in order to break the bonds of democratic education, because it hasn’t worked.” That’s what he says.

When I hear that, I think to myself, “Wait a minute. We’ve never tried democratic education.” We haven’t yet given equal, wonderful, innovative, humane schools—at the level of our finest schools—to all our children. . . . I think we should try it first, see how it might work.”²

¹Mardell Raney. Interview with Jonathan Kozol. *Technos* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 4–10.

²Reprinted with permission of *Educational Leadership* 50, no. 3 (November 1992), pp. 90–92.

REFLECTION: In your opinion, what American values are reflected—or undermined—in school choice?

www.mhhe.com/sadker9e

To learn more about Jonathan Kozol, click on *Profiles in Education*.

Schools.com

One of the most unusual schools we shall look at (well, perhaps not exactly “look at” because you cannot really see it) is a school that has no building and no parking lot, and no one actually goes there. (Some might call it a “dream school.”) But before you get carried away, **virtual schools** provide a wealth of learning, usually through technology. Actually, a virtual school is a form of **distance learning**, or learning provided over long distances by means of television, the Internet, and other technologies. The first virtual high schools (VHS) began in Utah, Florida, and Massachusetts in the 1990s. Today, K–12 online learning programs exist in about half of the states, with more than 700,000 students enrolled in over 1 million courses. Recognizing the importance of online literacy, in 2006 Michigan became the first state to require high school students to complete one online course to graduate.³²



How would you feel about teaching in a virtual school? What are the advantages, and the disadvantages?

As with other schools, most virtual schools still have a central office, administrators, teachers, professional development, curriculum, daily attendance,

grades, report cards, parent conferences, special-education and health services, field trips, rules, discipline infractions, state reporting, school board meetings, and even disgruntled parents. But they no longer have to be housed in big brick-and-mortar buildings. Rather than taking cars and buses to school, teachers and students ride the Internet.

The Internet extends the school day as long as a student wants to learn and offers courses unavailable in most high schools, including Bioethics Symposium, Earth 2525, A Model United Nations Simulation, and Folklore and Literature of Myth, Magic, and Ritual. Virtual classes are asynchronous (that is, people can join classroom activities at any time of the day or night), so students from around the nation or around the world can take the same course at a time that works for them. Students in a small town in Colorado can enroll online in an advanced anthropology course with classmates from New York, Los Angeles, and even Amman, Jordan. (For more information, visit “Welcome to the Virtual High School” at www.govhs.org.)

Although many virtual high schools were formed to augment high school programs, some have been organized as full-time charter high schools, offering an entire high school curriculum online. Whether students attend full- or part-time, virtual high schools provide expanded opportunities, especially to students in under-resourced rural or urban schools. Homebound children with special needs; students who prefer to learn online; or students whose creativity, talent, and curiosity exceed the resources of their local school all benefit from online learning.

Critics of virtual schools argue that they isolate students and deprive them of important social interactions (one reason why there are so few virtual schools at the elementary level). But students learning online report that they find virtual courses more personal, interactive, and individualized than typical high school classes. Other supporters point out that virtual schools may hold the answer to a growing teacher shortage.³³ Clearly, virtual schools have become part of our educational landscape.



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Virtual High School
Click on the Virtual High School Web site to observe an online classroom.

Schools for Profit

Wall Street calls them EMOs, Educational Maintenance Organizations (paralleling the HMOs in the health field), companies that run schools to yield a profit to their stockholders. HMOs are big business, and many on Wall Street are predicting that EMOs will be, too. During the past few years, for-profit businesses have contracted with local school districts to provide a wide range of services in an attempt to win a segment of the lucrative education market, a market that exceeds \$300 billion a year. Not that the entrance of private companies onto the public educational scene is completely new. For years, school districts have contracted with private businesses to provide school lunches and bus transportation. But, to manage education itself, to be responsible for academic performance, *is* new.

The largest for-profit venture in public schools, the **Edison Schools**, took off after a chance encounter. In 1990, Benno Schmidt, the president of Yale University, was attending a party in the Hamptons, a posh section of Long Island. At that party, Schmidt met Chris Whittle, an entrepreneur who was involved with various education-related projects. Apparently, they hit it off. Whittle offered Schmidt a high salary, reported to be about \$1 million a year, to leave Yale and assume leadership of the Edison Schools. Chris Whittle's vision called for creating a model school, one based on proven educational programs, and then franchising the model nationally.

Edison Schools lengthen the school day by one or two hours, while increasing the school year from 180 days to 210 days. In effect, these changes add about two more years of study before graduation. Curricular changes include devoting more school time to math and science, foreign language instruction starting from the early grades, and using proven programs, such as the University of Chicago's "Everyday Mathematics" approach to math and "Success for All," a reading program developed at Johns Hopkins University. Learning contracts are used to increase student accountability. Edison's plan calls for linking each student to the school by a company-provided home computer. The computer offers students a virtual library and gives both parents and students a dedicated communication link to teachers.

The project's start-up costs were enormous, and the franchise idea was not easy to implement. Whittle saw that opening charter schools would be an easier way to disseminate his plan.³⁴ The charter school movement was a wonderful opportunity for education companies like Edison. The company could work with an entire school district or deal directly with parents and neighborhood groups, selling its Edison concept as a charter school. Today, Edison manages about one hundred public schools throughout the country. Yet a critical question remains unanswered: Are these schools effective? A Columbia University study of Edison found that there was high teacher morale, enthusiasm for the curriculum, and satisfied parents. However, some Edison employees reported that the company was hiding its problems from the public and that the needs of special education students, among others, were not being met. Studies by the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, and RAND Corporation found Edison students doing no better than regular public school students, and sometimes worse.³⁵ Dogged by financial troubles and persistent questions, Chris Whittle turned his public venture into a private company. The future of Edison Schools remains rocky.

Yet private-sector education companies are undaunted. A number of charter schools are managed by for-profit companies. Advantage Schools, a Boston-based company, focuses on urban school districts, hires nonunion teachers, and promotes direct instruction, a program that relies on intense and frequent teacher-student interactions, and like other private companies, does not have a stellar record with

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

The performance of EMOs is often debated from the point of view of a special-interest group. Assist students to analyze studies by first asking, "What's in it for the research team?"



FOR-PROFIT SCHOOLS

Are a Good Idea Because . . .

COMPETITION LEADS TO BETTER SCHOOLS

For-profit schools will break down the public school monopoly by creating competition and choice. As schools compete, parents (particularly poor parents) will finally have a choice, and not be forced to place their children in the neighborhood school. Just as in business, the weak schools will lose students and declare “bankruptcy.” The stronger schools will survive and prosper.

SCHOOLS WILL BE ABLE TO REWARD GOOD TEACHERS, AND REMOVE WEAK ONES

The current public school bureaucracy protects too many incompetent teachers through the tenure system, and does not recognize teaching excellence. Using sound business practices, for-profit schools will reward superior teachers through profit-sharing incentives, retain competent teachers, and terminate ineffective teachers.

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY WILL IMPROVE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Education needs the skills and know-how of the business community. For-profit schools will implement the most effective educational strategies in a business culture. The top-heavy management of today’s schools will be replaced by only a handful of administrators, and teachers will be driven to greater productivity through the profit incentives.

FOCUSED PROGRAMS AND INVESTOR OVERSIGHT LEAD TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

For-profit schools will do a better educational job because they provide a focused and proven instructional plan. These schools avoid the public school pitfall of trying to offer “something-for-everyone.” And if they falter and profits disappear, investor pressure will put them back on track.

Are a Bad Idea Because . . .

COMPETITION LEADS TO WEAKER SCHOOLS

Transplanting businesslike competition into the education arena would be a disaster. Competition is not all that business brings: false advertising, “special” promotions, a “feel-good” education—all the hucksterism of the marketplace to mislead students and their parents. Worse yet, the local public school, which holds a community together, will be lost.

TEACHERS WILL LOSE THEIR INFLUENCE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Teachers who speak out against the company, or teach a controversial or politically sensitive topic, will have a brief career. The business community is quite vocal about teachers sharing in the profits but strangely silent about what will happen during economic hard times.

PROFITS AND EDUCATION DO NOT MIX

For-profit schools are exactly that, “for profit,” and when the interests of children and investors clash, investor interests will prevail. If investors demand better returns, if the stock market drops, if the economy enters hard times, the corporate executives will sacrifice educational resources. After all, while students enjoy little leverage, stockholders can fire business executives.

FOCUSED PROGRAMS MEANS KEEPING SOME STUDENTS OUT

Their one-size-fits-all approach practiced by these schools might be good for efficiency, but it is bad for students. The more challenging students, those with special needs, nonnative speakers of English, or those who need special counseling, will be left to the underfunded public schools to educate.

www.mhhe.com/sadker9e



YOU DECIDE . . .

Do you believe that business and schools are a good or a bad match? Explain. Do you believe that profits can be made in schooling the nation’s children? As a teacher, would

you want to work for a for-profit school? Now here is your chance to be the author! What additional advantages and disadvantages of for-profit schools can you add to the above lists?

special education students. Sylvan Learning Systems provides after-school instruction for students who are performing below expectations. In fact, Sylvan is piloting their centers at Wal-Mart, so students can be tutored while parents cruise the aisles. Advocates of the private management of schools, called **privatization**, argue that corporations can more effectively and less expensively provide specific services for and even run innovative schools, especially those serving underperforming children. Critics worry that schools fueled by a profit motive will shortchange students' academic and social needs in order to make money.³⁶ The business community is certainly not timid about investing in public education.

Home Schools

Homeschooling is also a choice, a decision not to send a child to the neighborhood school, or any school, but to educate a child at home. Only a few decades ago, a mere 12,500 students were homeschooled; today between 1 and 2 million children are taught at home.³⁶ (See Figure 5.4.) Why the huge increase?

Although concerns about the school environment, such as safety, drugs and peer pressure, are the primary motivations for homeschooling, they are not the only reasons. Many parents opt for homeschooling to ensure specific religious and moral instruction. Other parents, disenchanted with school bureaucracies, choose to create homeschools that nurture their children and individualize learning. But not all homeschools are launched with such noble motivations. Sometimes racism, anti-Semitism, or another hateful reason can inspire a parent to homeschool. Researcher Van Galen describes parents who homeschool as either ideologues or pedagogues. *Ideologues* focus on imparting certain values. They create a homeschool where they choose the curriculum, create the rules, enforce a schedule, and promote their beliefs. *Pedagogues* are motivated by educational goals; they are interested in the process of learning, intrinsic motivation, and experiential activities.³⁸ Below is a description of a homeschool in action, probably the homeschool of a pedagogue:

Thirteen-year-old Taylor is working at the kitchen table, sorting out mathematical exponents. At 10, Travis is absorbed in *The Story of Jackie Robinson*, while his brother Henry is practicing Beethoven's Minuet in G on his acoustic guitar. The week before, the brothers had attended a local performance of a musical comedy, attended a seminar on marine life, and participated in a lively debate about news reports concerning corporal punishment in Singapore. These boys are part of a growing number of students being educated at home. What makes their story somewhat unusual is that their father is unable to participate in their education as much as he might like, because he must spend time at his own work: teaching English at a local public high school.³⁹

Scenes like this are even more common today thanks to technology. Now parents have available homeschooling sites that provide lesson plans, tutoring, legislative updates, and networking. Homeschools can now be connected to one another.⁴⁰

Does homeschooling work? The evidence is promising. Homeschooled children outperform conventionally schooled students not only on standardized tests but also on tests of social skills. Their high performance often continues in college, where they earn higher GPAs and are described by professors as more self-directed and willing to take risks than the traditional student.⁴¹

But homeschooling has its critics as well. Do children educated in isolation from their peers suffer any negative consequences? What is lost by not working and learning with other children of diverse beliefs and backgrounds? Since Americans were originally motivated to build schools to promote Americanization, to meld a single

CLASS ACTIVITY:
Home Schooling Investigation
IM, Activity 5.8

RELATED READING
The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School & Get a Real Life & Education by Grace Llewellyn (1997).

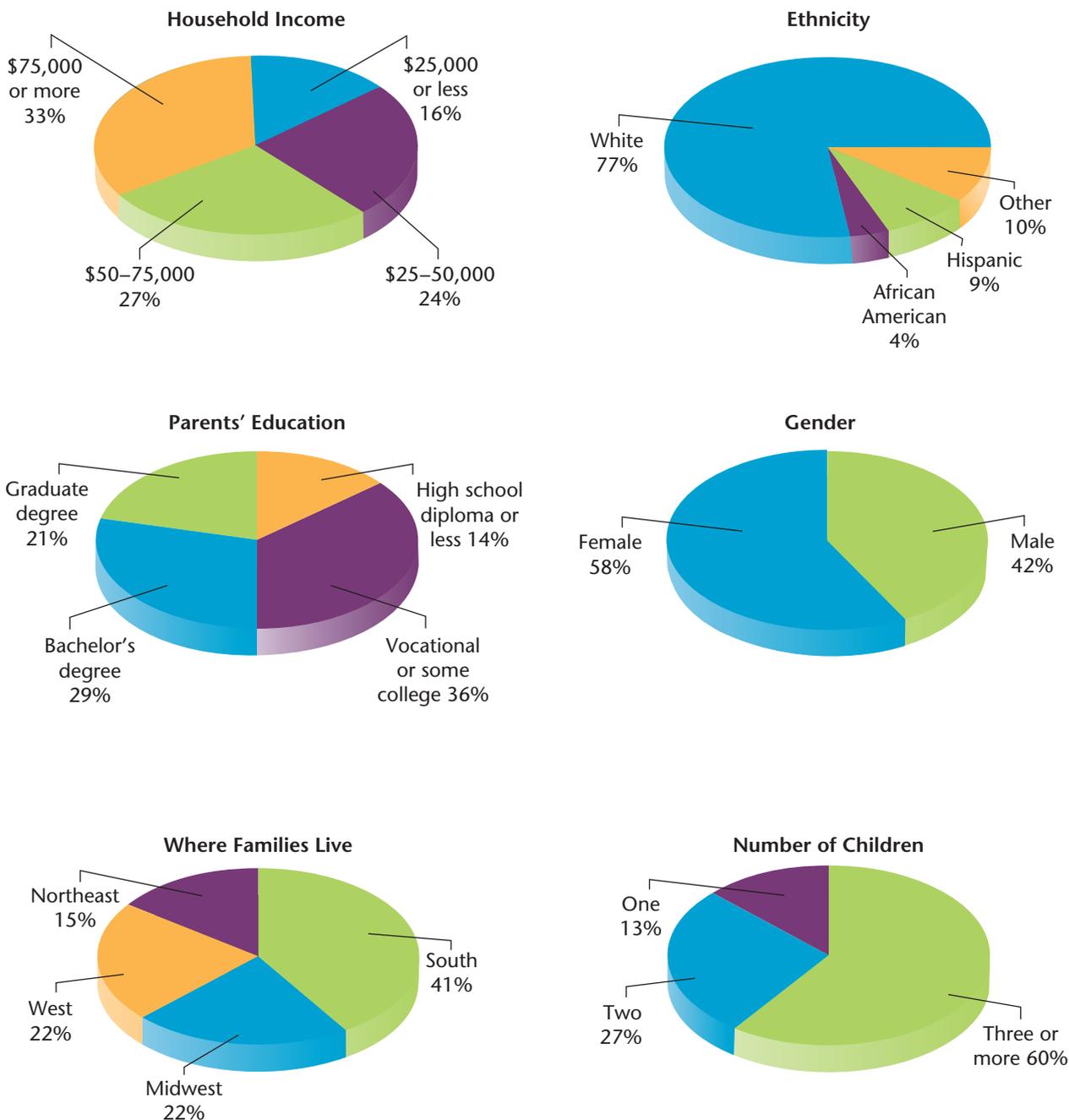
POWERPOINT 5.9
Who Are Homeschoolers?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION
What's a school for? How will students *now* synthesize an answer?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION
Can students envision a school that works? Reflective thinkers suggest that if we cannot create a clear image, we will not be able to realize the recommendations.

FIGURE 5.4

Who are homeschoolers?



SOURCE: "Home Schooling in the United States: 2003," issued February 2006, National Center for Education Statistics.

REFLECTION: These percentages are based on a million homeschoolers. Some believe that the true number may be at least twice that. Why do you believe so many homeschoolers are not counted? How might these statistics change if those left out were included?

nation, to learn how to live and work together, it is logical to wonder if homeschooling will adversely affect our national cohesion.⁴²

Green Schools

Today, homeschools, charter schools, magnet schools—in fact, all kinds of schools—are being affected by a reform movement initiated by nature: climatic changes. The modern green movement can be traced back to September 1969, when Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, worried about the impact of population growth on the earth, announced that there would be a nationwide grassroots environment demonstration. That demonstration, the first Earth Day, was held on April 22, 1970, and marked the beginning of the modern environmental movement. Coast-to-coast rallies protested oil spills, raw sewage, polluting factories and power plants, pesticides, freeways, toxic dumps, the loss of wilderness, and the extinction of wildlife. Earth Day is now a worldwide movement, one that has reached the schoolhouse door.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nearly 60 million people—students, teachers, administrators, and staff—spend their days in school buildings. What kinds of buildings are they? Half of all schools have unsatisfactory indoor environmental conditions, one in five schools has unhealthy air quality, and about a third of all school buildings are in need of extensive repair. So it is not surprising that when schools clean up their environment and become green, incidences of illness and teacher and student sick days decrease.

Green schools promote clean air and water quality, healthy and natural foods, recycling, nontoxic cleaners, alternative means of transportation, expanded recreational choices, and opportunities for all students, and teach children how to promote energy conservation and sustainability. Teacher retention is higher in a green school, students enjoy going to school more, and learning improves. Schools with natural daylight actually post higher test scores. The Earth Day Network, the organization created to honor and continue Earth Day, has the goal of greening all America's schools within a generation. (For more information, visit <http://www.earthday.net/>.)⁴³

Schools all across America are going green, sometimes with small steps, and other times with major building and curricular changes. Most schools can begin the process even on a limited budget by exchanging incandescent bulbs for more energy-efficient ones, organizing recycling drives, beginning a school garden, or using energy-efficient power strips to plug in computers. When budgets and commitments are bigger, the creation of a green school is even more dramatic. The new Sidwell Friends Middle School in Washington, DC, is living up to its Quaker value of environmental stewardship in a big way. The school itself was built with recycled materials, including reclaimed cedar wine casks, and every part of the building was constructed with an eye toward sustainability. Photovoltaic roof panels provide energy to the computer lab, and another part of the roof is home to a garden growing herbs and vegetables for school lunches. Sloping grasslands in front of the building set the urban school in a picturesque natural setting, but there is more at work than appearances. The school's wastewater actually flows beneath the grasses and plants, where it is filtered and recycled into the school's toilets. Skylights and windows directing natural light mean that Sidwell can light its classrooms at a small fraction of the cost of a nongreen school. Windows with light-filtering shades also save on heating costs in the winter, and air-conditioning costs in the summer. In a typical school, utility costs (fuel, water, wastewater, and trash disposal) average \$140 per student per year.

TEACHING TIP

Ask the students for their experiences with green schools. How green is your college campus?

Photo-Synthesis

Sidwell Friends Middle School in Washington, DC, has made a serious commitment to going green. Although not all schools may be able to undertake such major renovations, schools and teachers can make a big difference in caring for the earth. Can you identify at least six ways you can help your school and students respect the planet and its resources?



93% less of the District's water supply is used by treating sewage on site in a constructed wetland and reusing the water.



78% of building materials were manufactured regionally to minimize energy needed to transport them to the site.



5% of the school's electricity is generated by the sun and harvested by the photovoltaic array on our rooftop.



60% less energy is used through energy efficiency and passive solar design.

Source: http://www.sidwell.edu/about_sfs/greenbuilding_ms.asp

A green school such as Sidwell can save many of these utility costs and redirect those funds to teaching and learning activities.

Energy-efficient school building and grounds are important aspects of the green movement, but so are healthy food choices, improving science-based environmental education, promoting alternative means of transportation, and improving recreational opportunities. A green school does well when it uses its “green-ness” to provide relevant learning opportunities. Here are a few examples:⁴⁴

- At Robins Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, students have designed and built a desert habitat. Selecting and caring for plants while providing desert animals with shelter, food, and water resources have earned the school a National Wildlife certification. The gardens also provide science lessons in identifying native plants and monitoring rainfall, as well as natural subjects for drawings and journaling.
- At Whitmore Lake High School in Michigan, students design shoebox-size cars that work on solar power, and investigate wind power as part of their “Green Tech” program.
- The Chesapeake Bay Foundation feared the unintended consequences of *No Child Left Behind*, a testing culture that kept students inside buildings and alien from nature. So they created their own program, called *No Child Left Inside*, to help children be more active in the outdoors and overcome “nature deficit disorder.” They sponsor canoeing trips on the Chesapeake Bay, Rhode Island camps for endangered butterflies, and a Texas nature center to show kids live bison. No Child Left Inside works with schools to develop a green curriculum and to promote environmental education and more active learning.

Most students (and teachers) embrace the green movement, and it is likely that the school you teach in will have some level of climate consciousness, some commitment to greening the planet.

Full Service Schools

Full service schools may be the most ambitious (and costly) school choice available, which explains in part why there are so few of them. Though rare, they teach us the importance of looking beyond the traditional role of the school. A **full service school** provides far more than education, offering a network of social services, including nutrition, health care, transportation, counseling, and parent education. The idea behind such a school is simple: Learning cannot occur if the basic needs of children and their families are not met. Children do not learn when they come to school tired, hungry, or abused, or if their families are in distress.

Full service schools are not really new. They can be traced to the immigration movement in the early 1900s when schools began expanding their child welfare activities. Today, a full service school provides hot meals, medical and dental care, and mental health, alcohol, and drug counseling, as well as conflict resolution training. School boards are replaced by children’s boards, made up of professionals and community members who work on the comprehensive needs of children. Some educators and parents believe that these schools offer the best hope for poor and immigrant students, and that there should be more of them. Here is a glimpse into one such school:

At Intermediate School 218, in the Washington Heights section of New York City, school is open by 7 a.m. for breakfast, sports activities, and dance or Latin band practice, all before school “officially” opens. At the school’s Family Resource Center, parents receive social services, including immigration, housing, and employment consultations. Social

RAP 2.4

Visit a “Choice” School

workers, mental health counselors, and a health and dental clinic are all on site. After classes end, the building remains open until 10 p.m. for sports, computer lab, music, art, mentoring, English classes, parenting skills, and cultural classes. Intermediate School 218 is a full service school.⁴⁵

CLASS ACTIVITY:
Organizer for the Choice
Concept
 IM, Activity 5.9

A full service school can be thought of as a community of support services moved into a school building. In a sense, it is the reverse of a homeschool, which abandons the school institution entirely, and perhaps brings us full circle. Looking back over this section, it is clear that the United States has no shortage of school choices, perhaps a hopeful sign that educational reform movement is moving forward. But then again, the modern reform movement started in 1983, and we have made precious little progress. Why is it taking so long to improve our schools?

Teachers, Students, and Reform

FOCUS QUESTION 5
 What is the role of teachers and students in reforming our schools?

In the mid- and late 1980s, leading educators such as Theodore Sizer, John Goodlad, and Ernest Boyer called for teachers to assume a greater role in educational reform. Alarmed at the loss of teacher autonomy in what too often felt like oppressive school climates, they believed that teachers should be given more responsibility to reshape their schools, a process called **empowering teachers**. These educators believed that schools managed by teachers would reduce bureaucracy, create a better-trained and better-paid teacher faculty, practice local decision making, and be able to study subjects in greater depth. They saw teachers as the focal point of reforming America's schools. Today, many in the public and on the media view teachers as more interested in job security than in school reform. What role do teachers play in the reform movement?

The nonprofit Education Sector surveyed over a thousand teachers on how they view the reform movement.⁴⁶ The survey found that most teachers want change and are interested in reform but are skeptical about what really will happen. Many teachers do not trust administrators or politicians and find trading away their job protections frightening. Let's take tenure as an example, a job protection you may already know a bit about. If you teach well for your first three years or so, you will earn **tenure**, an expectancy of continued employment. Tenure protects teachers from arbitrary dismissal because they are teaching an inconvenient fact or an unpopular idea, a job protection we call academic freedom. But tenure also has been used to protect teachers who are incompetent. (Perhaps you have had such a teacher, not a pleasant experience.) So although many teachers report that they know at least one colleague who should be fired, they fear that firing an incompetent teacher might put all teachers at risk. Such job protections are roadblocks to change.

Teachers in the survey reported that they do not feel comfortable in a system that rewards longevity rather than competence, and this is especially true for younger teachers. Today, it is not how well you teach that determines your salary; it is how long you have been teaching and what education you have received. If you have only a bachelor's degree and no teaching experience, even if you are a gifted teacher, you are placed on step 1, the lowest salary level. Each year, you receive a standard raise, and the longer you teach, the more you earn. You could also increase your salary by attending graduate school; the more course credits you earn, the higher your pay. The problem here is obvious: Older teachers or teachers with more college credits are not necessarily the most skilled teachers. This system lacks accountability.

To bring accountability to teaching, many advocate **merit pay**, a system that bases a teacher's pay on how well he or she teaches. Government leaders (including President Obama), principal and superintendent organizations, and many citizens

support a pay-for-performance plan that bases teacher salaries on how well their students do on tests. Teachers are not so sanguine. Merit pay certainly sounds fairer than the current system, but basing it on student test scores does not sit well with many teachers. And if test scores are not used, how do we determine which teachers deserve merit pay?⁴⁷ Let's listen in on a hypothetical (but incredibly realistic) faculty meeting to get a sense of teachers' concerns:

PRINCIPAL MOORE: "As you may have heard, our school board is now promoting a merit plan for our district. I have outlined four different approaches to merit pay, and I'd like to hear your reactions to them."⁴⁸ Dr. Moore turns to her PowerPoint presentation:

- *"Teacher performance.* This plan sends observers into your classroom to measure your teaching effectiveness, and merit is determined by these observations.
- *"Individualized productivity.* Do you remember the professional goals each of you wrote for this school year? This plan would ask you to write more detailed goals for what you would like to accomplish this year, including new skills you will be working on and any additional assignments you agree to take on. You would receive financial bonuses based on how much of your plan school administrators believe you have accomplished.
- *"Teaching assignment.* With this plan, compensation is related to market demands. Our math, science, and special education teachers would probably receive the greatest bonuses if we were to adopt this plan.
- *"Student performance.* This plan is the one supported by President Obama, and if made into law, it will be the one we need to follow. Teacher salary raises will be tied to student gains on standardized tests. As you know, test scores are very important to the school board and to our parents. So if your students score well, you will get merit pay. If they do not, you will not."

As the PowerPoint shuts down, the teachers jump in:

"This sounds great! I can finally get that bonus I deserve for all my extra hours."

"Does only the teacher with all the smart kids get merit when they do well on tests?"

"I don't think I'd feel comfortable if other people found out that I was getting extra money. Teaching is supposed to mean working as a team, not competing for bonuses."

"Dr Moore, you try to be fair, but not everyone does. What about supervisors who give merit pay to their friends?"

"What if I teach well and the students bomb the test?"

"I teach special ed kids how to take a bus, dress for work, and hold a job. I think that is incredibly valuable, but my kids don't test well at all. What happens to me?"

"Why can't we all get merit pay? We all do a tough job."

"I don't think we all deserve merit pay. I think some of us are stronger teachers than others, and it is well past time that we recognize that."

As you can hear from these comments, merit pay can strain relationships among teachers, raise serious questions about measuring classroom success, fan the fear of "playing politics," and create a sense of being manipulated by outside forces. But many teachers, particularly young ones, are excited about the possibility of a higher

salary and feel that too many weak teachers are paid the same as stronger ones. The Education Sector survey reported that almost 80 percent of teachers express a desire for a stronger teacher evaluation system, as well as financial incentives for superior teachers, but they want one that is fair. Influential teacher organizations are also supportive, but cautious, and more likely to support a merit plan if it is not based solely on test scores, if local teachers are involved in planning, and if the plan does not penalize teachers who work in under-resourced schools.⁴⁹

CLASS ACTIVITY:
Merit and Tenure
IM, Activity 5.10

History suggests that teachers may be right, and that linking teacher pay to student performance may not be a successful long-term strategy. When merit pay was first tried, back in 1710 in England, teacher salaries were tied to student test scores. You can probably predict the results: Schools became all about test preparation.⁵⁰ Historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban write: “The history of merit performance-based salary plans has been a merry-go-round” as districts initially embrace such plans, only to drop them after a brief trial. But in spite of these failures, school officials keep “proposing merit pay again and again.”⁵¹ Will merit pay work this time? Will tenure become a thing of the past? Will skeptical teachers join the reform movement? It may all depend on something too few talk about: trust.

The Importance of Trust

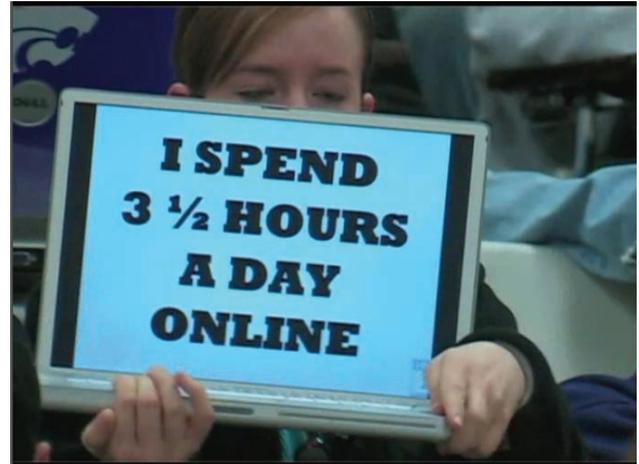
After almost a decade of research, interviews, and observations in the Chicago public schools, researchers came to a conclusion that was both startling and obvious: Meaningful school improvement and reform depend on trust.⁵² Teachers in schools without trust naturally cling to tenure for protection and are unlikely to feel comfortable trying new strategies. If teachers are expected to reform their schools, they need to feel safe and to be part of the process. A school built on trust, one that involves teachers in the decision-making process and reduces teacher vulnerability, is what teachers need to be willing to try new approaches. Teachers in trusting schools thrive, and so do their students. The researchers uncovered that when trust is present in a school, student academic performance improves.

What does a trusting school look like? You probably intuitively know the answer. People respect one another, even when they disagree, and rude behavior is not tolerated. Teachers and parents listen carefully to each other, and they keep their word. Tenure is not used to protect weak teachers, and competent teachers are recognized for their talents. Educators are willing to reach out to students, parents, and one another, and nothing is more important than the welfare and education of the students. We hear a great deal about school reform but too little about creating trust in schools. Clearly, if reform is going to work, teachers need to be a central part of the effort, trusted partners. To date, their voices are not heard.

Students and School Reform

If teachers feel left out of decision making in school reform, just imagine how students feel. Their opinions are rarely sought; their voices rarely heard. Elementary students, asked to draw pictures of typical learning situations, sketch teachers and chalkboards and books in their drawings, but not themselves. Their drawings show how disengaged elementary students feel from traditional classroom instruction. But when asked to draw learning activities they like, they draw themselves as central in those activities.⁵³ When they enjoy learning, they are not drawing teachers and classrooms.

Nor do things improve at the high school level, where one in four students frequently arrives at school without paper, pencil, or homework.⁵⁴ Some call this “pretend attend,” a situation where student bodies are in school but their minds and their interests are elsewhere. Many college students also are disengaged. A YouTube video titled “A Vision of Students Today” is based on a survey of two hundred college students. The video depicts the survey results by showing students sitting in a large lecture hall taking turns holding up signs: “My average class size is 115.” “18% of my teachers know my name.” “My neighbor paid for this class, but never comes.” “I spend two hours a day on my cell phone.” “I spend 3½ hours a day online.” “I Facebook through most of my classes.”



“I do 49 percent of the reading assigned.” And then a close-up of a question written on the back of a chair: “If students learn what they do, what are they learning sitting here?” The video, made by students and their professor in an anthropology class at Kansas State University, is a stunning example of college student alienation. (Ironically, the students who made the tape were probably very engaged in their activity.)

While many talk about reform in terms of improving student test scores, too few discuss it in terms of engaging students in their own learning and in preparing for their own futures. Statistics suggest that students drop out of school more from boredom than from academic failure.⁵⁵ If teachers need a basis of trust to become part of the reform movement, then students need to feel ownership of their own learning.

If students had a voice in educational reform, what changes would they envision? Middle and high school students throughout the United States and Canada were asked that question, and here are some of their suggestions:⁵⁶

- Take me seriously.
- Challenge me to think.
- Nurture my self-respect.
- Show me I can make a difference.
- Let me do it my way.
- Point me toward my goal.
- Make me feel important.
- Build on my interests.
- Tap my creativity.
- Bring out my best self.

Teachers and students agree that school should be more than test scores, and students clearly desire more relevance and meaning in their education. Some schools do listen to students.⁵⁷ In these schools, students participate in textbook selection, in writing school behavior policies, and even in designing new school buildings. In Washington State, many high school students are encouraged to research their dream careers along with the state’s graduation requirements and, on the basis of that research, plan their coursework. In other high schools, students participate in hiring the principal, teaching others how to use technology, and organizing school forums. Unfortunately, these schools are far too few.

Although most reform reports focus on academics, a few recognize that students’ *affective needs*, their social, emotional, and psychological development, are also important. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, looks beyond test scores and warns that

Many college students feel disengaged from classroom instruction. Visit “A Vision of Students Today” on YouTube to get a sense of their alienation.

Source: <http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?p=188>

one in four adolescents does not have caring relationships with adults, guidance in facing sometimes overwhelming biological and psychological changes, the security of belonging to constructive peer groups, and the perception of future opportunity. Students report that when they are feeling sad or depressed, overwhelmingly they turn for help to friends (77 percent) or family (63 percent); far less frequently do they seek out educators (33 percent).⁵⁸ Educational researcher Sara Lawrence Lightfoot describes the following incident, which took place in an elite school in a wealthy suburb in the Midwest:

A student with a history of depression . . . had been seeing a local psychiatrist for several years. For the last few months, however, she had discontinued her psychotherapy and seemed to be showing steady improvement. Since September, her life had been invigorated by her work on *Godspell*—a student production that consumed her energies and provided her with an instant group of friends.

After *Godspell*, her spirits and enthusiasm declined noticeably. After a visit to her psychiatrist, she killed herself.

The day after, the school buzzed with rumors as students passed on the gruesome news—their faces showing fear and intrigue. . . . But I heard only one teacher speak of it openly and explicitly in class—the drama teacher who had produced *Godspell*. Her words brought tears and looks of terror in the eyes of her students. “We’ve lost a student today who was with us yesterday. We’ve got to decide where our priorities are. How important are your gold chains, your pretty clothes, your cars? . . . Where were we when she needed us? Foolish old woman that I am, I ask you this because I respect you. . . . While you still feel, damn it, feel . . . reach out to each other.”⁵⁹

The nation listens to the speeches of politicians and educational administrators about educational reform, but perhaps the unheard voices of teachers and students would be more useful.

This chapter has explored a deceptively simple question: What’s a school for? The many approaches to schooling offer us a variety of insights into the purposes of schools, but there is one critical question that we have left unasked (until now): What makes a school effective? So let’s close this chapter with a look at what we know (and don’t know) about effective schools.

What Makes a School Effective?

Consider the following situation: Two schools are located in the same neighborhood and are considered “sister schools.” They are approximately the same size and serve the same community, and the student populations are identical. However, in one school, state test scores are low and half the students drop out. In the other school, student test scores exceed the state average and almost all students graduate. Why the difference?

Puzzled by such situations, researchers attempted to determine what factors create successful schools. Several studies have revealed a common set of characteristics, a **five-factor theory of effective schools**.⁶⁰ Researchers say that effective schools are able, through these five factors, to promote student achievement. Let’s take a look at these classic five factors, and then move on to some more-recent studies.

Factor 1: Strong Leadership

In her book *The Good High School*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot drew portraits of six effective schools.⁶¹ Two, George Washington Carver High School in Atlanta and

TEACHING TIP

Ask your students to discuss their views on the nonacademic role of the teacher. How will they handle students’ personal challenges?

CLASS ACTIVITY:

Teachers, Students, and Trust: Poetry IM, Activity 5.11

FOCUS QUESTION 6

What are the characteristics of effective schools?



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

What Makes Schools Effective?

Rate what you think makes schools effective. Compare your responses with those of your colleagues.

POWERPOINT 5.10

Factors Supporting Effective Schools

John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx, were inner-city schools. Highland Park High School near Chicago and Brookline High School in Brookline, Massachusetts, were upper-middle-class and suburban. St. Paul's High School in Concord, New Hampshire, and Milton Academy near Boston were elite preparatory schools. Despite the tremendous difference in the styles and textures of these six schools, ranging from the pastoral setting of St. Paul's to inner-city Atlanta, they all were characterized by strong, inspired leaders, such as Robert Mastruzzi, principal of John F. Kennedy High School.

When Robert Mastruzzi started working at Kennedy, the building was not yet completed. Walls were being built around him as he sat in his unfinished office and contemplated the challenge of not only his first principalship but also the opening of a new school. During his years as principal of John F. Kennedy, his leadership style has been collaborative, actively seeking faculty participation. Not only does he want his staff to participate in decision making, but he also gives them the opportunity to try new things—and even the right to fail. For example, one teacher made an error about the precautions necessary for holding a rock concert (eight hundred adolescents had shown up, many high or inebriated). Mastruzzi realized that the teacher had learned a great deal from the experience, and he let her try again. The second concert was a great success. “He sees failure as an opportunity for change,” the teacher said. Still other teachers describe him with superlatives, such as “he is the lifeblood of this organism” and “the greatest human being I have ever known.”⁶²

Mastruzzi seems to embody the characteristics of effective leaders in good schools. Researchers say that students make significant achievement gains in schools in which principals

- Articulate a clear school mission
- Are a visible presence in classrooms and hallways
- Hold high expectations for teachers and students
- Spend a major portion of the day working with teachers to improve instruction
- Are actively involved in diagnosing instructional problems
- Create a positive school climate⁶³

Factor 2: A Clear School Mission

A day in the life of a principal can be spent trying to keep small incidents from becoming major crises. But the research is clear: In effective schools, good principals somehow find time to develop a vision of what that school should be and to share that vision with all members of the educational community. Successful principals can articulate a specific school mission, and they stress innovation and improvement. In contrast, less effective principals are vague about their goals and focus on maintaining the status quo. They make such comments as, “We have a good school and a good faculty, and I want to keep it that way.”⁶⁴

It is essential that the principal share his or her vision so that teachers understand the school's goals and all work together for achievement. Unfortunately, when

TEACHING TIP

The need for new school site administrators is increasing. Do any of your students intend to become principals? What factors encourage and discourage them?

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE CONNECTION

Focusing on the characteristics of strong leadership, have students develop a classified ad for a new school principal.



A positive, energizing school atmosphere characterized by accepting relationships between students and faculty often begins and ends with the principal.

POWERPOINTS 5.11–5.12
 School-Related Violence
 Factors Responsible for
 School Safety

GLOBAL VIEW
 Compared with children in 25 other industrialized countries combined, U.S. children under age 15 are: 12 times more likely to die from gunfire; 16 times more likely to be murdered by a gun; 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun; 9 times more likely to die in a firearm accident. [Children's Defense Fund (2001) www.childrensdefense.org/facts-figures_america.htm].

teachers are polled, more than 75 percent say that they have either no contact or infrequent contact with one another during the school day. In less effective schools, teachers lack a common understanding of the school's mission, and they function as individuals charting their own separate courses.

The need for the principal to share his or her vision extends not only to teachers but to parents as well. When teachers work cooperatively and parents are connected with the school's mission, the children are more likely to achieve academic success.

Factor 3: A Safe and Orderly Climate

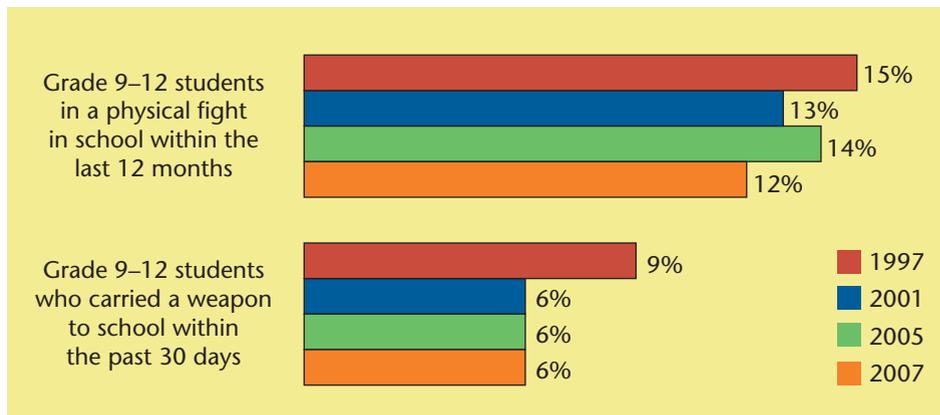
Certainly, before students can learn or teachers can teach, schools must be safe. An unsafe school is, by definition, ineffective. Despite those horrific headlines reporting student shootings, today's schools in fact are safer than they have been in years.⁶⁵ (See Figure 5.5.) The vast majority of teachers (96 percent) and students (93 percent) report feeling safe in school (thank goodness).⁶⁶ LGBT students represent an exception to this general rule; they are three times more likely to feel unsafe in school than their peers.⁶⁷

The vast majority of schools provide safe learning environments. This is accomplished by more than metal detectors and school guards. Safe schools focus on academic achievement, the school mission, involving families and communities in school activities, and creating an environment where teachers, students, and staff are treated with respect. Student problems are identified early, before they deteriorate into violence. School psychologists, special education programs, family social workers, and schoolwide programs increase communication and reduce school tension.

In some of America's most distressed neighborhoods, safe schools provide a much needed neighborhood refuge. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot tells of the long distances that urban students travel to reach John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx. One girl, who did not have money to buy a winter coat or glasses to see the chalkboard, rode the subway 1 hour and 40 minutes each way to get to school. She never missed a day, because for her school was a refuge—a place of hope where she could learn in safety.⁶⁸

FIGURE 5.5
 School-related violence: On the decrease

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2007 (issued April 21, 2009).



REFLECTION: How do you explain the popular perception of a more violent society contrasted with these statistics reflecting a decrease in school violence?

Factor 4: Monitoring Student Progress

As the researcher walked through the halls of a school we will call Clearview Elementary School, she noted attractive displays of student work mounted on bulletin boards and walls. Also posted were profiles clearly documenting class and school progress toward meeting academic goals. Students had a clear sense of how they were doing in their studies; they kept progress charts in their notebooks. During teacher interviews, the faculty talked about the individual strengths and weaknesses of their students. Teachers referred to student folders that contained thorough records of student scores on standardized tests, as well as samples of classwork, homework, and performance on weekly tests.

A visit to Foggy Bottom Elementary, another fictitious school with a revealing name, disclosed striking differences. Bulletin boards and walls were attractive, but few student papers were posted, and there was no charting of progress toward academic goals. Interviews with students showed that they had only a vague idea of how they were doing and of ways to improve their academic performance. Teachers also seemed unclear about individual student progress. When pressed for more information, one teacher sent the researcher to the guidance office, saying, "I think they keep some records like the California Achievement Tests. Maybe they can give you what you're looking for."

Following the visit, the researcher wrote her report: "A very likely reason that Clearview students achieve more than Foggy Bottom students is that one school carefully monitors student progress and communicates this information to students and parents. The other school does not."

Effective schools carefully monitor and assess student progress in a variety of ways:

- **Norm-referenced tests** compare individual students with others in a nationwide norm group (e.g., the Stanford9, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or the SAT).
- **Objective-referenced tests** measure whether a student has mastered a designated body of knowledge (e.g., state assessment tests used to determine who has "mastered" the material).

Other measures may be less formal. Teacher-made tests are an important (and often overlooked) measure of student progress. Some teachers ask students to track their own progress in reaching course objectives as a way of helping them assume more responsibility for their own learning.⁶⁹ Homework is another strategy to monitor students. Researcher Herbert Walberg and colleagues found that homework increases student achievement scores from the 50th to the 60th percentile. When homework is graded and commented on, achievement is increased from the 50th to nearly the 80th percentile. Although these findings suggest that graded homework is an important ingredient in student achievement,⁷⁰ how much homework to assign and what kinds of homework tasks are most effective continue to be points of contention.

Factor 5: High Expectations

The teachers were excited. A group of their students had received extraordinary scores on a test that predicted intellectual achievement during the coming year. Just as the teachers had expected, these children attained outstanding academic gains that year.

Now for the rest of the story: The teachers had been duped. The students identified as gifted had been selected at random. However, eight months later, these randomly selected children did show significantly greater gains in total IQ than did another group of children, the control group.

In their highly influential 1969 publication, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, researchers Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson discussed this experiment and the power of teacher expectations in shaping student achievement. They popularized the term *self-fulfilling prophecy* and revealed that students may learn as much—or as little—as teachers expect.⁷¹ Although methodological criticisms of the original Rosenthal and Jacobson study abound, those who report on effective schools say that there is now extensive evidence showing that high teacher expectations do, in fact, produce high student achievement, and low expectations produce low achievement.⁷²

Too often, teacher expectations have a negative impact. An inaccurate judgment about a student can be made because of error, unconscious prejudice, or stereotype. For example, good-looking, well-dressed students are frequently thought to be smarter than their less attractive peers. Often, male students are thought to be brighter in math, science, and technology, and girls are given the edge in language skills. Students of color are sometimes perceived as less capable or intelligent. A poor performance on a single standardized test (perhaps due to illness or an “off” day) can cause teachers to hold an inaccurate assessment of a student’s ability for months and even years. Even a casual comment in the teachers’ lounge can shape the expectations of other teachers.

When teachers hold low expectations for certain students, their treatment of these students often differs in unconscious and subtle ways. Typically, they offer such students

- Fewer opportunities to respond
- Less praise
- Less challenging work
- Fewer nonverbal signs (eye contact, smiles, positive regard)

In effective schools, teachers hold high expectations that students can learn, and they translate those expectations into teaching behaviors. They set objectives, work toward mastery of those objectives, spend more time on instruction, and actively monitor student progress. They are convinced that students can succeed.

Do high expectations work if students do not believe they exist? Probably not, and that is too often the case. Whereas a majority of secondary school principals believe that their schools hold such expectations for their students, only 39 percent of teachers believe this to be true, and, even more discouraging, only one in four students believes their school holds high expectations for them.⁷³ We need to do a better job of communicating these expectations to students, and making certain that these expectations truly challenge students.

And it is not only students who benefit from high expectations. In *The Good High School*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot reported that when teachers hold high expectations for their own performance, the entire school benefits. At Brookline High School, “star” teachers were viewed as models to be emulated. Always striving for excellence, these teachers felt that no matter how well a class was taught, next time it could be taught better.

POWERPOINT 5.13

Student Observations of
Effective School Practices

RAP 2.5

Effective Schools

CLASS ACTIVITIES:

Field Observation: Effective
Schools
IM, Activity 5.12

A Note of Caution on Effective Schools Research

Although the research on what makes schools effective has had a direct impact on national reform movements, it has limitations.⁷⁴ First, there is disagreement over the definition of an effective school. Researchers use varying descriptions, ranging from “schools with high academic achievement” to schools that foster “personal growth, creativity, and positive self-concept.” Although the five factors we have described are helpful, they do not really provide a prescription for developing successful schools.

Another problem is that much of the research has been conducted in elementary schools. Although some researchers suggest applicability to secondary and even higher education, caution must be used in carrying the effective-schools findings to higher levels of education. The generalizability of the research is also limited, since several of the studies were conducted in inner-city schools and tied closely to the achievement of lower-order skills in math and science. If one wanted to develop a school that nurtures creativity rather than basic skills, another set of characteristics might be more appropriate.

Beyond the Five Factors

New effective-schools findings offer us insights beyond these original five factors of effective schooling:

- *Early start.* The concept that there is a particular age for children to begin school needs to be rethought. The earlier schools start working with children, the better children do. High-quality programs during the first three years of life include parent training, special screening services, and appropriate learning opportunities for children. Such programs are rare, but those that are in operation have significantly raised IQ points and have enhanced language skills. It is estimated that \$1 spent in an early intervention program saves school districts \$7 in special programs and services later in life.
- *Focus on reading and math.* Children not reading at grade level by the end of the first grade face a one-in-eight chance of ever catching up. In math, students who do not master basic concepts find themselves playing catch-up throughout their school years. Effective schools identify and correct such deficiencies early, before student performance deteriorates.
- *Smaller schools.* Students in small schools learn more, are more likely to pass their courses, are less prone to resort to violence, and are more likely to attend college than those attending large schools. Disadvantaged students in small schools outperform their peers in larger schools, since achievement differences for the rich and the poor are less extreme. Many large schools have responded to these findings by reorganizing themselves into smaller units, into schools within schools. Research suggests that small schools are more effective at every educational level, but they may be most important for older students.
- *Smaller classes.* Although the research on class size is less powerful than the research on school size, studies indicate that smaller classes are associated with increased student learning, especially in the earlier grades. Children in classes of fifteen outperform students in classes of twenty-five, even when the larger classes have a teacher's aide present.

POWERPOINT 5.14
Beyond the Five Factors

Frame of Reference

A World without Schools

In *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich compared schools to a medieval church, performing more a political than an educational role. The diplomas and degrees issued by schools provide society's "stamp of approval," announcing who shall succeed, who shall be awarded status, and who shall remain in poverty. By compelling students to attend, by judging and labeling them, by confining them, and by discriminating among them, Illich believed that schools harm children. He would replace schools with learning "networks," lifelong and compulsory. To Illich, the notion of waking up to a world without schools would be a dream fulfilled.

Education reformer John Holt agreed, and coined the term "un-schooling" to describe an education where kids, not parents or teachers, decide what they will learn. Holt believed that children do not need to be coerced into learning; they will do so naturally if given the freedom

to follow their own interests and a rich assortment of resources. For unschooled kids, there are no mandatory books, no curriculum, no tests, and no grades. Children are given complete freedom to learn and explore whatever they choose—from Chinese to aesthetic mathematics to tuba lessons to the Burmese struggle for civil rights.

SOURCE: Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); John Holt, *Instead of Education* (New York: Dutton, 1976).

REFLECTION: How are schools more a political than an educational institution? What would your community be like if it were de-schooled?

- *Increased learning time.* Though not an amazing insight, research tells us what we already suspect: More study results in more learning. Longer school days, longer school years, more efficient use of school time, and more graded homework are all proven methods of enhancing academic learning time and student performance.
- *Teacher training.* Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond reports that the best way to improve school effectiveness is by investing in teacher training. Stronger teacher skills and qualifications lead to greater student learning. Conversely, students pay an academic price when they are taught by unqualified and uncertified teachers.
- *Trust.* Trusting relationships among parents, students, principals, and teachers are a necessary ingredient to govern, improve, and reform schools. As trust levels increase, so does academic performance.
- *Parental involvement.* Learning is a cooperative venture, and a strong school-home partnership creates a more positive attitude toward learning, and improves academic achievement and social well-being. Not surprisingly, teachers' expectations for student success also rise as parents become more engaged in school life.⁷⁵

Research and experience will continue to offer answers to that pressing question, "What makes a school effective?" Are there factors that you believe might some-day be added to this list? Perhaps we could expand the notion of "effective school" to venture beyond academics. Some schools are already doing this, adopting a broader view of an educated American. Such schools create a climate of kindness, teaching students to serve their community and to treat the earth and all its inhabitants with compassion. Perhaps one day more schools will be able to broaden their definition of "effective."

THE TEACHERS, SCHOOLS, AND SOCIETY READER WITH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION VIDEO CLIPS



Go to your *Teachers, Schools, and Society* Reader CD-ROM to:

READ CURRENT AND HISTORICAL ARTICLES

17. **Questionable Assumptions about Schooling**, Elliot Eisner, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 2003.
18. **Teaching against Idiocy**, Walter Parker, *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 2005.
19. **Charting a New Course for Schools**, Marc Tucker, *Educational Leadership*, April 2007.
20. **International Education: What's in a Name?** Walter Parker, *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 2008.

ANALYZE CASE STUDIES

9. **Amy Rothman**: A high school resource room teacher is confronted by a parent during a staffing meeting about a gifted, autistic student in her resource room for whom the parent wants a service not provided by the school district.
10. **Chris Kettering**: A teacher finds to his dismay that his white, middle-class students are not interested in social activism and that he is unable to promote awareness and openmindedness in them.

OBSERVE TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND CLASSROOMS IN ACTION



9. Classroom Observation: Tour of a Boston Charter School

You may one day want to explore teaching in a charter school. In this observation, you will observe the faculty and administrators of the Match charter school, who provide insights into daily life and teaching in a charter school. A number of comparisons with typical public schools are made.



10. Classroom Observation: Family-to-School Connection

Positive relationships between families and teachers help build connections that enrich students' performance and create a home and school bond. In this video, an elementary school principal, a middle school principal, and a middle school guidance counselor discuss various successful strategies they have used to involve parents in their children's education.

KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

www.mhhe.com/sadker9e

CHAPTER REVIEW

Go to the Online Learning Center to take a chapter self-quiz, practice with key terms, and review concepts from the chapter.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

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WEB-TIVITIES

Go to the Online Learning Center to do the following activities:

1. The Purposes of Schools
 2. Paulo Freire and Reconstructionism
 3. Educational Vouchers and School Choice
 4. Educational Maintenance Organizations (EMOs)
 5. Home Schools, Home Teachers
 6. Preventing School Violence
 7. Monitoring Student Progress
 8. The Virtual High School
1. Discuss your list of school goals that you recorded with your classmates. Which goals seem to be most important to your peers? to your instructor? Which do you consider most important? Give reasons for your priorities.
 2. Congratulations! You have been put in charge of designing the next charter school in your district. Describe the charter school that you would design. Be sure to include the research on effective schools in your description. Going beyond the current research, what unique factor(s) would you make part of your school because you believe they would contribute to an effective school?
 3. Reform movements are not new, but the current one has been under way for a quarter of a century, and still has a great deal of momentum. How would you describe the strengths and the weaknesses of this movement? Explain whether you believe it will succeed and strengthen America's schools—or come up short.
 4. What do you think of private businesses contracting to run schools? What factors would cause you to seek or avoid teaching for a corporation? Would you feel secure in your job, even without tenure?
 5. Does your local public school district have an official (or unofficial) policy concerning homeschooling? Do homeschooled students participate in any school activities or receive any school resources? How do you feel about these (un)official policies?