

## The Little School That Could

By David W. Kirkpatrick



David Kirkpatrick

**O**NCE UPON A TIME there was a troubled K-6 inner-city school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Vaughn Elementary School. Nearly 95 percent of its 1,200 students were Hispanic, 80 percent were

Spanish-speaking English learners, 5 percent were African-American, a handful were Asian, and more than 97 percent were entitled to free or reduced lunches. The school operated on a multi-track year-round basis with only two-thirds of the students attending at any given time. The area was so poor that some parents and students were reported to live in backyard trailers or even garages. Few schools could match its serious problems or dismal results.

For forty years, since 1951, the school was listed as one of the worst in the district. Its test scores were in single digits, below the 10th percentile, the lowest in the district. Absenteeism was high, as many as 12 percent of the students were suspended, student fights were a daily occurrence, classrooms were regularly vandalized, and new computers were stolen before they could be unpacked. About a dozen of the school's thirty-nine teachers left every year, with the result that 70 percent of the teachers had less than three years' experience. A custodian was robbed and beaten at gun point, and one

morning there was a dead body on the sidewalk in front of the school. Relations within the school and with the community were so bad in 1990 that the principal left in March after receiving repeated death threats. His successor, Yvonne Chan, was appointed in May and was assigned three campus aides for security reasons.

For three years the struggle continued. Then, in the 1993-94 school year, a true transformation began. It began with the same building (symbolically renamed the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center with the slogan "The Little School That Could"), principal, staff, and student body that had been there the year before. (This suggests that public school problems are primarily systemic; to overcome them therefore requires changing the system.)

The security personnel were dismissed by Chan as she successfully sought to restore community relations. When the assistant principal and eight other personnel left, the remaining staff took on extra duties rather than replace them. Achievement and attendance rates began to rise. They also finished the school year with more than a \$1,000,000 surplus! This made it possible to buy two houses which adjoined school property, one a "crack" house. They were torn down and replaced by a fourteen-room learning center. The construction was completed within ten months, far less time than would have been possible at a typical district school. An insistence that workers from the community be employed on the project was but one of the initiatives to win support from the public as the school became a full-service community based school.

Just two years later, in 1995, Vaughn received a California Distinguished Schools Award. In 1996 it was selected for a National Blue Ribbon Schools Award. It is the only Los Angeles school to drop the multi-track schedule and have a

200-school-day year. Student attendance as of June 2003 was 97.73 percent and at times has exceeded 99 percent.

Among the changes are the following: 1993—adding twenty-two teaching stations; 1994—adding six portables and reducing class size to twenty-seven in all grades;

1995—building of fourteen new classrooms, eliminating the multi-track schedule, reducing class size to twenty in grades K-3, and extending the school year to 200 instruction days in grades 1-5; 1999—building a community library, clinic, museum, multi-media lab science center, professional development center, ten demonstration classrooms, and reducing class size to twenty in every grade; 2000—buying land for a 650-seat center for pre-K to first grade students and a separate campus for grades 6, 7 and 8.

It was decided to add grades 7 and 8 because too many of their students were running far ahead of the curve as they moved to higher grades in conventional schools within the district. In 2001 another site was purchased to build a 500-student high school academy, to open in July 2005. When that occurs, Vaughn will have 2,400 students on four 600-student campuses within a three-block radius.

Principal Chan has testified at hearings in more than thirty-two states, a Congressional hearing on school reform has been held at the school, and it has been noted in the national media. Despite this, its story remains one that more people, especially those in the public school "establishment," need to know.

This summary barely touches upon the changes in this school over the past decade, such as a performance pay plan and financial incentives for all staff. More can be found at its web-site: [www.vaughn.k12.ca.us](http://www.vaughn.k12.ca.us). The home page provides many links. For an overview see the "Introduction" and "Before and After."

*Continued on page 7,  
See "The Little School That Could"*

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# Charter Schools Scrutinized for Balancing Budgets!

By Lisa Snell



Lisa Snell

**A** recent *Boston Globe* feature explains why the Massachusetts State Auditor's office will audit forty-three "Commonwealth" charter schools for being fiscally responsible enough to have \$37 million in reserve funds while traditional public schools face budget deficits:

Officials in State Auditor A. Joseph DeNucci's office will examine the annual financial audits that all charter schools are required to file, said Glenn Briere, a spokesman for DeNucci. The Boston-based group Citizens for Public Schools, which has attacked charter school financing, requested the review after its own analysis found that charter schools have millions in unspent money, while the school systems they draw students from have lost money or laid off staff through budget cuts.

Paul Dunphy, a policy analyst with Citizens for Public Schools, said the discovery should prompt changes in how charter schools are financed so that money left over during the year is returned to communities that send students. "They should be treated as public schools rather than private entities that are exempt from the fiscal regulations that apply to public schools, which cannot carry over massive reserve accounts," Dunphy said.

However, charter-school backers pointed out that much of the money in their reserve accounts is privately raised. Community Day Charter School in Lawrence, for example, has about \$1.3 million in reserves, most of it generated through a fund-raising campaign and earmarked for capital renovations. That's because, under state law, charter schools have to pay for facilities and construction themselves, unlike traditional public schools, which get state assistance.

In other words, schools that balance their budgets and have reserves should be scrutinized by the state, while schools that have budget shortfalls should get more money from the state but no scrutiny. Go figure. In typical form, charter school critics would rather punish the prudent charter school operators by demanding a share of their "profits" rather than finding the root cause of school district budget shortfalls. School districts suffer from a school budgeting process that encourages districts to spend their entire funding allocation. This problem is especially acute in California where school districts are faced with a second year of severe budget shortfalls. In a Winter 2003 *Education Next* article, Jon Fullerton describes the situation in California and the underlying reasons why school districts suffer from "Fiscal Indiscipline."

He explains that:

*School districts also face strong incentives to spend their entire funding allocation in any given year. In the private sector, profits are good. They can be used to grow the business, to provide a cushion during downturns, or to reward investors. School districts, however, are reluctant to generate surpluses (the public sector's analogue for profits). Like most government agencies, school districts operate under conditions of "use it or lose it." The assumption is that if they don't spend the money, they didn't need it. Even if a school district were to control its costs enough to generate a significant surplus, the extra funds would immediately become a target for outside interests. Large surpluses suggest to politicians that too much money is being put into the schools and to unions that too little is being paid to teachers.*

For instance, in 2002, after a spring of difficult cost-cutting, administrators in Los Angeles discovered that the school district had a substantially larger ending balance than projected. The union saw this as proof that the district could afford raises for teachers and that some unpopular budget cuts, such as increases in class size, were unnecessary. In spring 2003, union-backed candidates

ousting two incumbent school board members. This was the result of several factors, but the previous year's budget cuts and unexpectedly large ending balance played a significant role in mobilizing the union. It is thus little wonder that districts attempt to "kiss" a zero or a statutorily established minimum balance every year.

One of Fullerton's solutions is to use the charter schools model...to make each school responsible for its own budget. He writes, "choice-based reforms such as charter schools, if thoroughly implemented (and combined with more rational state funding), could eliminate a significant amount of the complexity associated with district finances. Each school would need to balance only its own budget."

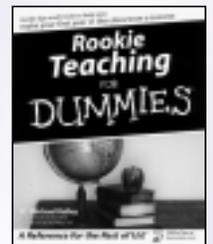
UCLA's William Ouchi's new book, *Making Schools Work*, offers a compelling model for how districts can get from their current budgeting process to a true school-based budgeting model. **EM**

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## New Resources— Rookie Teaching for Dummies

**R**ookie Teaching for Dummies is a practical blend of theory and application tips that can be utilized by new and experienced teachers



interested in surviving the classroom with their sense of humor in tact. *Rookie Teaching* provides teachers with sound advice and information ranging from classroom management, instructional delivery, relationships with school administrators and parents, additional teacher duties, and health and safety.

Written by American Board Coordinator of Preparation W. Michael Kelley, *Rookie Teaching for Dummies* also includes a chapter on integrating technology into the classroom. *Rookie Teaching for Dummies* can be ordered through Barnes & Noble Bookstores.

To read reviews on *Rookie Teaching*, go to: <http://www.calculus-help.com/the-books/dummybook.html>.

# Reading Comprehension— Constructing vs. Extracting Meaning

By Dolores Hiskes



Dolores Hiskes

In her recent article “Making Matters Worse,” Lynne Cheney pointed out that much of education today is student-directed, allowing students to create their own meaning from what they are trying to learn.

This article will discuss the fallout and results of this educational philosophy as it applies to reading comprehension.

Most schools today claim to teach phonics, and initial results seem to indicate that they are doing an admirable job. When schools use phonics programs such as Open Court, for example, first and second grade reading scores soar.

However, subsequent comprehension issues are rampant, and by fourth grade, students begin getting D’s in reading comprehension. The recent National Assessment of Educational Progress test (conducted every four years by the Department of Education) revealed that California’s fourth and eighth graders have reading skills that are now eighth from the very bottom. Why such dismal results when phonics is taught?

Taking a closer look, we find that the beginning readers in most phonics reading programs are approximately 50 percent decodable at best, thus setting in motion an unfortunate chain reaction.

In first and second grades, the stories are simple, with pictures on every page offering clues to meaning. Students are frequently given beginning and ending letters of a word, which helps them be even better guessers. They are also encouraged to use sentence context clues to find a word that seems to have the meaning needed. It’s ok to choose another word that seems to fit, such as “house” for “home,” or “horse” for “pony.” Students are trained to guess, and construct their own meaning from what they are reading.

However, by third or fourth grade, the stories are more complex, and there are no more picture clues. And the more complex the reading, the more frequent and wild the guessing! To illustrate, try reading this phrase that’s only 50 percent decodable: chocolate %\*#@?#

Clearly, it would be impossible to read this without guessing. Try reading it again, after knowing the beginning and

ending letter sounds: chocolate b%\*#@?# Could it be “best”? Or perhaps “beast”?

Knowing beginning and ending letters will help you become a better guesser. And if there were picture clues you’d make an even better guess. But you would not now—or ever—be able to accurately read this phrase without knowing all of the letter sounds.

When students are trained to guess and substitute words, they are putting meaning into, rather than extracting meaning from, the story. They are confined within the boundaries of their current vocabularies and thoughts, interpreting things only from within their own shallow perspectives.

When we are trained to guess, we cannot even think clearly and logically. Human attention is limited: it cannot focus on the meaning of something at the same time we’re trying to determine what that something says.

Even misreading only one or two words on a page can change the entire meaning of the story. *The New York Times* had an article on June 3, 1999, about how epidemic numbers of pharmacists are misreading prescriptions, frequently confusing such words as chlorpromazine (an antipsychotic) with chlorpromamine (lowers blood sugar), with sometimes disastrous results.

Clearly, a myriad of different problems can arise, resulting from a misunderstanding or misapplication of what “phonics” really is.

In fact, most of today’s phonics reading programs are a form of implicit phonics. Implicit phonics is a combination of phonics and whole language, whereby words are first learned as a whole, and then broken down. For example, colors are usually the first things taught. Letter sounds may be taught simultaneously. Implicit phonics moves from the whole to the smallest parts.

These programs have appealing descriptions such as “Balanced Reading Program,” “Embedded Phonics,” or “Integrated Language Arts,” but the content belies the titles. Like Cinderella’s sisters trying on the glass

slipper, the shoe simply will not fit! They are not explicit phonics, which is the only truly effective phonics method of teaching reading that consistently results in success for everyone.

What then is explicit phonics? With explicit phonics, letter sounds are learned first, and then gradually blended and built into words. Explicit phonics moves from the smallest parts to the whole.

Decodable reading practice, which I define as only based on skills learned so far and not including previously taught sight words, is an integral part of this process. Just because a child knows the phonetic code does not mean he is ready to read complex and subtle literature, any more than a beginning piano student is ready to play a lovely sonata just because she knows the notes!

Now try reading the phrase once more, this time with 100 percent decodable text: chocolate buffet.

Explicit phonics is the indispensable key to fluent and accurate reading with excellent comprehension, and is the single most important feature missing from many reading programs today.

Learning how to read logically with a sequential, progressive method also develops clear and precise thinking skills that spill over into other disciplines.

Math frequently improves without tutoring, and critical thinking, in general, sharpens.

If explicit phonics is so good, why isn’t it included in reading curricula today? Explicit phonics with decodable reading practice for the most part has not been taught correctly in graduate teaching curricula for over fifty years. Teachers cannot teach what they may not know, any more than students can know what they have never been taught.

Fortunately this situation can be easily and inexpensively remedied without changing current classroom reading programs or investing a great deal of time and money into learning a whole new program. With minimum adjustments, any reading program can be enhanced to produce truly gratifying results.

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## How to Identify Good Teachers

In January, the Ohio education establishment announced a five-year \$10 million project to identify what makes a good teacher. They can save a few bucks simply by reading two recent newspaper columns: one by *Washington Post* columnist Jay Mathews, and the other by *San Jose Mercury News* reporter (and former teacher) Larry Slonaker.

In his January 6 article entitled “Better Late than Never Admits Two Classroom Stars,” Mathews reviewed books written by award-winning teachers Rafe Esquith and Ron Clark. He found many similarities between the two men. “Both are classroom clowns,” Mathews wrote, “VERY strict disciplinarians, demons on homework, and prone to take students on long field trips where they do some of their best teaching in non-classroom subjects like manners, music appreciation, and travel safety. There were many other similarities as they plowed through the inertial molasses of modern school administration that defeated many other teachers with ideas as good as theirs.”

Mathews also noted Esquith’s belief that children have been “wrongly taught that learning should always be fun by teachers who think hard lessons are bad for kids from low-income homes.”

Slonaker’s January 11 article entitled “Why burnout?” contrasts two veteran teachers at the same California public school, one beloved and motivated, the other “fleeing” to private school in Ukraine after ten years at the school and eighteen in the profession. In the classroom for thirty-five years, Lin Moore teaches 7<sup>th</sup>-grade at Campbell Middle School. “He doesn’t have a bunch of rules,” said Principal Jerry Davis. “But from Day One, he sets the tone for the classroom, which is a quiet calm. And the kids follow that.” But Davis admitted that Moore’s classroom management style “is not typical of what you would see in our school.”

Davis told Slonaker that “most classes are more interactive. The students talk to each other. There’s more movement.” Moore said

that when he tries that in his classroom, he sees “more socializing than learning.”

Teacher Bob DeNike didn’t have Moore’s golden touch. His students were constantly “off task” and they routinely verbally abused their teacher. Slonaker asked a student who had both teachers what made them different. “Mr. Moore sets down the rules very clear, Mr. DeNike was way more laid-back,” the student said, adding that this sometimes encouraged students to “take advantage of him.”

It shouldn’t take five years and \$10 million to learn that what makes a good teacher:

Number 1—The ability to create an environment where learning is *possible*

Number 2—The subject knowledge to make the achievement of Number 1 *worthwhile*.

Anything after that is up to the students. **EM**

*Source—Communiqué, a publication from EIA, that conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. [www.eiaonline.com](http://www.eiaonline.com).*

## Teacher Evaluation— Can Portfolios Withstand Legal Challenges?

States and districts considering the use of teacher portfolios as the means for evaluating the quality of teachers may want to take a look at a study in Education Policy Analysis Archives. Authors Judy Wilkerson and Steven Lang exposed the essentially insurmountable legal obstacles that make portfolios not just an impractical but an irresponsible choice for “high-stakes” purposes—such as whether a teacher should be certified or get a raise. They don’t tiptoe around their conclusions, declaring that portfolios are invalid and unreliable unless districts insist on standardizing the contents of the portfolio as well as the evaluation process. Because the popularity of portfolios represents an insurgence of sorts against the use of standardized measures of evaluation, this advice may not be welcomed.

In what may be the most interesting part of the paper, Wilkerson and Lang delve into the legal implications of a negative evaluation that is based on a scientifically invalid measure such as a portfolio. Wilkerson and Lang convincingly show how portfolios undercut standards of research methodology and make licensure laws unclear—which can only lead to a proliferation of lawsuits. **EM**

For more information see “Portfolios, the Pied Piper of Teacher Certification Assessments” Judy Wilkerson and William Lang, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 11, No. 45, <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n45/>.

## Incentive Pay— Cash on the Line for AP Tests

Since 1995, the Dallas school district has taken a mercenary approach to get more teachers to teach and more students to pass the difficult Advanced Placement (AP) exam. It looks like cold hard cash is a great motivator. For participating high schools, the program—which was started by a Dallas philanthropist—offers a \$100 cash incentive to students who pass and a \$150 bonus to teachers for every student that passes. The program has been wildly successful at raising both participation and pass rates for the test. During its first five years, the number of students taking AP exams quintupled, while minority students are passing the exam at ten times the national average. One high school experienced a 300 percent increase in the number of tests taken in the past three years and a 190 percent increase in the number of exams passed. The success of the program is clear in that it’s spreading like wildfire: forty-six high schools in fifteen Texas districts, including twenty-eight Dallas public high schools. The program has been so successful that Texas Instruments has committed \$2.1 million over five years for incentives, while the Dallas school district chipped in \$6.1 million to pay for teacher training, tutoring, and subsidizing the exam. **EM**

*Source—Teacher Quality Bulletin, a weekly publication of the National Council on Teacher Quality. For more information, visit [www.nctq.org](http://www.nctq.org).*

## Universities Advance the Union Agenda

Many universities have deviated far from their educational mission, and another manifestation of that is the spread of “labor studies” programs. Such programs are intended to help advance union ideology and activism, and the courses are sometimes based on materials supplied by the AFL-CIO, not exactly disinterested scholarship.

An excellent article by Steve Malanga of the Manhattan Institute, “Union U,” in the summer 2003 issue of *City Journal* ([www.manhattan-institute.org/cfm/printable.cfm?id+1113](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/cfm/printable.cfm?id+1113)), discusses these programs that have taken hold at many of America’s largest universities, including the University of Massachusetts, Harvard, UCLA, Michigan State, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Illinois, Rutgers, Penn State, and Missouri. Malanga observes that “nearly all of these programs, especially the most militant and ideological, operate from publicly funded universities.”

Students not only learn union mantras about the alleged unfairness of free enter-

prise but also sometimes wind up doing political work on behalf of labor union causes. In one case, Malanga writes about the owner of a deli in Santa Monica, California, who was opposing a campaign to pass a “living wage” ordinance that would have increased his cost of doing business. He was most annoyed to find out that some of those promoting the law on the streets were college students fulfilling requirements for their “labor studies” course. “As a taxpayer, I’m funding the University of California system,” the man said. “This isn’t the kind of activity I want to fund.”

Maybe taxpayers should go on strike! **EM**

Source—*Inside Academe*, Fall 2003, Vol IX, No. 1, a quarterly publication of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Washington, D.C., [www.goacta.org](http://www.goacta.org).

## Polls, Politics, and Potential Fixes of NCLB

Much ado about No Child Left Behind this month. The National Education Association (NEA) unveiled a slick multi-million dollar public relations campaign, complete with radio and TV spots and backed by an NEA-commissioned poll that “reveals that the more voters learn about the real world impact of the two-year-old federal education law, the so-called ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act, the more they believe changes must be made.”

Unfortunately for the NEA, that assertion is undercut by reporting in *USA Today*, which actually read the polling data closely and concluded precisely the opposite: that, as voters hear more about NCLB, the more they like it. As an internal NEA memo obtained by *USA Today* notes, “Once our opponents have an opportunity to provide voters with their descriptions of the content of the law, swaying them becomes increasingly difficult.” Meanwhile, Democratic presidential candidates continue to trumpet their opposition to NCLB on the campaign trail. Into all this *sturm und drang* wades Education Secretary Rod Paige, who last month leveled a potentially explosive charge—that districts are not accurately and honestly reporting whether students are making adequate yearly progress—and announced that no wholesale legislative fixes to NCLB are envisioned (though “regulatory” tweaks may be in order). **EM**

Source—The Education Gadfly, news and analysis from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. Web-site: [www.edexcellence.net/gadfly](http://www.edexcellence.net/gadfly).

## A New Resource— We the People A New Guide to Promoting Historical Literacy for Teachers

**D**espite growing public alarm about historical illiteracy and a Congressional Resolution calling for action, not a single one of America’s top fifty colleges and universities now requires the study of American history of its graduates. And only 10 percent of these same colleges require any study of history at all.



A Roper survey conducted in 2000 for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni revealed that seniors from our elite colleges could not identify Valley Forge, words from the Gettysburg Address, or even the basic principles of the U.S. Constitution. Given high-school level questions, 81 percent of the seniors would have received a D or an F.

Disturbed by these results, the U.S. Congress unanimously adopted a bipartisan concurrent resolution in July 2000, calling on trustees, state administrators, and citizens across the country to address America’s historical illiteracy. Prominent historians—including David McCullough, Gordon Wood, and Oscar Handlin—endorsed the effort.

Citing these precedents, on September 17, 2002, President George W. Bush announced a major initiative to restore historical and civic understanding. In pursuit of that pledge, on May 1, 2003, historians, educators, and civic leaders from across the country convened in Washington, D.C., for the White House Forum on American History, Civics, and Service to build coalitions and promote an understanding of America’s history and civics.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni has prepared this *Resource Guide* in support of the President’s ini-

tiative. This report includes citations to ACTA’s two studies on historical illiteracy, the Congressional Concurrent Resolution, and a toolkit that can be used on the local level to draw attention to America’s historical amnesia.

The *Guide* also lists premier web-sites that bring America’s history to life. Through these sites,

teachers, students, and the public at large can gain access to hundreds of other sites with unique resources—primary documents, personal letters from figures in our history, facsimiles of the

foundational documents of this nation, photographs and other illustrative material. The *Guide* seeks to focus on outstanding programs and projects in American history and civics, based on their substantive content, pedagogical effectiveness, delivery systems, and ability to reach a wide and diverse range of students, including underserved and non-traditional students. The resources cited feature not

only print materials but also films, tapes, computer software, and the Internet. In many cases, descriptions are drawn directly from their own web-sites.

It is our hope that this booklet, while not exhaustive, will serve as a helpful guide for students of all ages seeking to learn more about America’s unique history and heritage and to policymakers who are interested in ensuring that we restore America’s memory. **EM**

*ACTA is an educational nonprofit organization dedicated to academic freedom, quality, and accountability. ACTA, 1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20036; 1-888-ALUMNI-8.*

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The Guide also lists  
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# A Few Things All Educators Should Know about Teacher Unions—

*But the National Education Association Won't Tell Them*

By David Denholm



Most public school teachers, whether or not they are members of the National Education Association, are aware that in many respects the NEA has become a controversial organization.

David Denholm

The NEA's own surveys show that many teachers regard their union as something apart, something in which they have little or no interest. They see union officials, union staff, and the activities of their union, whether at the local, state, or national level, as something over which they have no real influence. They regard union dues as just part of the cost of having a job.

One of the things that makes the NEA so controversial is its use of confrontational tactics advocated by Saul Alinsky and codified in his book *Rules for Radicals*.

Saul Alinsky didn't "invent" radicalism any more than Isaac Newton "invented" gravity. What Alinsky did was to study it and put it in a system others could use. He literally "wrote the book" on radicalism.

Even though he passed away 30 years ago, Alinsky continues to have a strong influence on American labor unions. This influence is particularly strong among public sector unions like the National Education Association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, (AFL-CIO), which includes the American Federation of Teachers.

It is quite likely that the training of many public sector union organizers includes a crash course based on Alinsky's teachings. Some confirmation of this is contained in an interview with John Lloyd who was once a NEA Uniserv director of an NEA state affiliate. He warned:

To understand the NEA—to understand the union—read Saul Alinsky. If you read *Rules for Radicals*, you will understand NEA more profoundly than reading anything else. Because the whole organization was modeled on that kind of behavior which was really begun when NEA used Saul Alinsky as a consultant to train their own staff.

Because an understanding of Alinsky is so central to an understanding of the NEA, here are a few of Saul Alinsky's rules taken from his book *Rules for Radicals*, published in 1971 by Vintage Books:

- Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
- Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
- Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.

For example, Alinsky taught organizers that:

Before men can act, an issue must be polarized. Men will act when they are convinced that their cause is 100 percent on the side of the angels and that the opposition are 100 percent on the side of the devil.

Alinsky says that, even if the decision is a 48 percent to 52 percent, once it is made, the opposition becomes "100 percent devil." He calls any effort to be objective or fair about your opponent as "political idiocy."

In discussing how this applied in a particular case, Alinsky said:

Many liberals, during our attack on the then school superintendent, were pointing out that after all he wasn't a 100 percent devil; he was a regular churchgoer, he was a good family man, and he was generous in his contributions to charity. Can you imagine in the area of conflict charging that so-and-so is a racist bastard and then diluting the impact of the attack with qualifying remarks such as "He is a good churchgoing man, generous to charity and a good husband"? This becomes political idiocy.

Alinsky emphatically states that the end justifies the means, but he professed a concern about the ethics of tactics.

Here are a few of Alinsky's rules to test whether the means are ethical:

- One's concern with the ethics of means and ends varies inversely with one's personal interest in the issue.
- In war, the end justifies almost any means.
- The morality of means depends upon whether the means is being employed at a time of imminent defeat or imminent victory.

- You do what you can with what you have and clothe it in moral garments.

Even a cursory review of these rules for radicals reveals that a union activist schooled in them will have no compunction about using almost any tactic in a conflict. In fact, radicals must often create issues to stir up problems in order to radicalize their potential followers.

This is exactly what unions do. A reporter who made extensive investigations into teacher union activity said, "Angry members are the currency, the stock in trade, of unionism. There is no future for a union that represents contented workers. But angry, frustrated, victimized workers who feel threatened? That you can plan your career around."

It doesn't have to be this way. There was a time when the NEA was a professional association representing a broad spectrum of interests in public education.

In the 1960s, in response to competition from the American Federation of Teachers, the NEA transformed itself into a radical, militant labor union.

The mechanism for consolidating control of the union was called "unified dues." Before unified dues, a teacher could voluntarily belong to a local classroom teachers association—and most did—and/or to the state and national organizations.

Under "unified" dues, to belong to the local organization, teachers were required to belong to the state and national, too.

This unification took place at the same time as the NEA's transformation and the advent of laws granting teacher unions monopoly bargaining privileges.

It is a legitimate question as to whether teachers would have approved the institution of collective bargaining if there had not already been an organization in place with which the teachers were affiliated or there had been an alternative professional organization in place to point out the flaws in the process.

*Continued on page 7,  
See "A Few Things"*

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# More Continuing Education Units Online

## Barnes & Noble Offers New Courses

**In** case you haven't heard, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available for all Premier Courses offered through Barnes & Noble University®, for a fee of \$25. Barnes and Noble University has been rated "Best of the Web" by *Forbes* magazine.

The number of CEUs offered per course varies depending on the length of the course. The number of CEUs offered for each Premier course is listed on the Overview page for the course.

To be eligible for CEUs for a course, you must sign in to the message board for the course session as many times as there are lessons. For example, if a Premier course contains five lessons, you must sign in to the message board for that class at least five times.

Once a course session has ended, and you have met the sign-in requirement

listed above, a link to Purchase CEUs will appear in the Course Completed column on your transcript for the course.

When you click on the Purchase CEUs link, a form will appear that includes your name and the title of the course for which you want to purchase CEUs. You will be prompted to add your address information if you have not included it in your user profile and to add credit card information, as both are required to process your CEU request. After entering this information, click on the Submit button to enter your request for CEUs.

Students using Internet Explorer who want to purchase CEUs must make sure their browser is configured properly. To do so, go to Internet Explorer's Tools menu and select "Internet Options." A pop-up box will appear with several tabs; click the "Advanced" tab. Then, scroll

down in the resulting window to the section marked "Security" and make sure that the box labeled "Check for server certificate revocation (requires restart)" is checked. As indicated, you must restart your computer before you will be able to purchase CEUs.

Upon receipt of the CEU request form, your CEUs for that course will be registered with the American Council on Education (ACE). Once ACE receives notification of your course CEUs, it will send a confirmation of this information to the address provided when you submitted the request form for CEUs. The confirmation letter from ACE will also include information on how to receive an official ACE transcript that contains all of your CEUs.

For further information about ACE, visit [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu). **EM**

## A Few Things...

*(Continued from page 6)*

The NEA tries hard to keep its members from learning that there are competitive, nonunion professional educator organizations in many states and that while the number of teachers supporting the NEA is declining, the number joining the professional organizations is increasing.

This is particularly true in states where teachers are free from monopoly union bargaining laws. In fact, in several of these states, the professional teacher organizations have grown larger in membership than the NEA's state affiliate!

Some indication of the NEA's problem in this regard came to light in their 2002 national meeting when NEA's executive director mentioned that NEA had appropriated millions of dollars to assist with recruiting campaigns for state affiliates that were losing membership.

Teachers who wish to learn more are invited to review "Teachers, Teacher Unions and Professional Alternatives: A Question of Choice" on our web-site [www.psr.org](http://www.psr.org) under "Issue Papers." **EM**

*David Denholm is the president of the Public Service Research Foundation, a nonpartisan research and education foundation that studies public sector unionism and union influence on public policy. For more information contact: Public Service Research Foundation, 320-D Maple Avenue East, Vienna, VA 22180; (703)242-3575 or visit their web-site at <http://www.psr.org>.*

## Reading Comprehension—

*(Continued from page 3)*

For example, one first-grade public school teacher in California supplements her classroom program only fifteen or twenty minutes a day with a simple explicit phonics text, and has all of her first-graders reading in only three months. She then has a literature evening for parents, whereby the children pour hot chocolate for their parents, and all thirty-two students, including ESL and dyslexic, get up on the stage and read selections from Bennett's *Book of Virtues*. This teacher is experiencing the unique joy and fulfillment that results from seeing 100 percent happy faces and starry eyes all busy reading!

As Mark Twain once said, "The difference between reading and almost reading is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug." **EM**

*Dolores G. Hiskes, author, illustrator, and creator of Dorbooks, Inc., has been involved with education most of her adult life. She has tutored reading for over thirty years. During this time, she developed a unique teaching method that prevents or corrects reversals, which is similar in effect to exercises often prescribed by specialists to treat dyslexia. Finally, she organized and simplified all of this information into one comprehensive reading and spelling text—the award-winning and best-selling Phonics Pathways. [www.dorbooks.com](http://www.dorbooks.com).*

## The Little School That Could

*(Continued from page 1)*

What made this seismic change possible?

On July 1, 1993, following an overwhelming vote of the teachers, Vaughn "became the first independent, urban conversion charter school in the state of California and in the nation," and Principal Chan says it was becoming an autonomous public charter school that made the success possible.

"It's not the kids who have changed; it's the adults who have changed. It's a different culture. I've died and gone to heaven," says Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Principal, Yvonne Chan—an All-American educator! **EM**

*David W. Kirkpatrick, a former public school teacher who has been actively and extensively involved in education reform, previously served as the editor-in-chief of SchoolReformers news. Dave was recently appointed senior education fellow at the U.S. Freedom Foundation in Washington, D.C., 202-547-2200.*

## Quote of the Month

It's time for United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) to release its grip on a labor union model better suited for factory workers assembling widgets than college-educated teachers shaping young lives.

—Los Angeles Times editorial

# Many State U.S. History Standards Woefully Inadequate—

Only six states given an “A” on new Fordham report: twenty-three states receive an “F”

**In** a comprehensive state-by-state analysis of K-12 education standards in U.S. history released by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, six states earned A's, while a disheartening twenty-three states received F's.

The new report, *Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*, authored by Sheldon Stern, former chief historian at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library in Boston, rated U.S. history standards in forty-eight states and the District of Columbia on comprehensive historical content, sequential development, and balance. Only six states—Indiana, New York, Arizona, California, Alabama, and Massachusetts—received A's, meaning they earned a combined score of 26 (out of a possible 30) or above.

Bringing up the rear, earning only 2 out of a total of 30 points, are Alaska, Arkansas, Maine, and Wyoming.

“Americans deserve to know whether schools are really doing their job or evading accountability by hiding behind often hollow rhetoric about ‘excellence’ and ‘standards,’” Stern writes in his report. “Teachers, of course, should have wide latitude in the selection of materials, points of view, and interpretations for their classrooms. But that latitude does not include a lack of knowledge of essential historical material.”

As Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Fordham Institute, said, “This report shows clearly that in this era of standards-based reform, too many states just aren't doing what they must to raise the bar for teaching about U.S. history. For a nation that is faced with incomparable global challenges that require an active, engaged, and historically literate citizenry, the vacuous guidelines that many states are passing off as U.S. history ‘standards’ are downright frightening.”

Full details and specific state analysis are available on the Fordham web-site at [www.edexcellence.net/socialstudies/standards.html](http://www.edexcellence.net/socialstudies/standards.html). **EM**

Source—*The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is a nonprofit organization that engages in research and public policy programs that advance knowledge and reform in elementary and secondary education. The Institute is not affiliated with Fordham University.*



## Goal Setting for Students

By John Bishop

**In** order to get students to “buy into” the importance of setting goals, you have to help them answer three questions: “Why is this important?,” “How to set goals,” and “How do I use this today to make my life and the lives of those around me better?”

In this rapid-paced MTV world of today's youth, simply telling students they need to set goals is not enough. It is important to get students involved by using open-ended discussion-stimulating questions that give them an opportunity to express themselves while you guide or facilitate the discussion. Possible topics for teachers should include:

1. Discuss the key elements of setting goals and give students samples and practice.
2. Discuss the importance of minimizing the “Bummer Words” words—*no, can't, won't, never, maybe, and if.*
3. Assist in a discussion on how to develop an “I'll Make It Happen” attitude for the classroom and life.
4. Facilitate a discussion on how students can improve their self image, take more responsibility, and eliminate excuses.
5. Discuss how they define success—now and five years from now.
6. Help students understand ways to measure their progress toward reaching their goal.
7. Help students understand some potential roadblocks to reaching their goals and how to overcome them.
8. In today's world people belong to the “It's All about Me” club. Facilitate a discussion about the importance of helping others.
9. Together develop a checklist of items to keep students focused on how to implement goal-setting habits in their lives.
10. Include parents and other caregivers in this collaborative educational experience.

Teachers will reach more of *their* goals when more students in the classroom are taking ownership of their education. Having students understand that success in the classroom means they must take personal responsibilities for their education will have a positive impact on attendance, discipline problems, personal decision making, test results, etc. Students who know how to set and achieve goals realize that there will be challenges in their path, but they will not allow them to be insurmountable roadblocks to their future. **EM**

*John Bishop is the Executive Director of Accent on Success™ and author of the Goal Setting for Students® program. For more information, please visit <http://www.AccentOnSuccess.com>.*



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