GOOD HIGH SCHOOLS
Education That is Comprehensive, Effective on All Levels, Simple, and Inexpensive

by Clarence A. Crawford

Preface

This essay is written from the standpoint of a retired public high school teacher (twenty-six years) who became, briefly, an educational consultant (four years).

Concerning school reform, my experience as a teacher parallels what I read in the newspapers and middlebrow press in one important regard: the people who know the most about public education are the last to be consulted about how to improve it. Where I worked—and this seems to be true in most school districts—anyone with a loud enough voice, or political influence, or bureaucratic power, was an educational expert; only the teachers were excluded from that category. Because teacher's voices were submerged, I decided, when I parted ways with public education, to write a summary of what I had learned near the end of my career, when I was part of a successful educational experiment, one that I think bears examination and emulation.

This essay is not written from the kinds of evidence cited in the journals. My twenty-six years as a teacher, first, had taught me more about education than I could possibly fit into a long article or a book; my research was extensive and first-hand. Second, I gained additional insights into the workings of high schools during my final four years in education, at Robert Service High School, a large high school in Anchorage, Alaska, (student population then about 2200). Because of the conditions of my employment, I had been free to move from room to room throughout the building, acting upon the invitation of classroom teachers and with the support of the building principal. I had previously taught at Service High continuously since the time that it opened, in the fall of 1971, until I retired in the spring of 1994. I therefore knew the staff very well, and the staff respected and trusted me. Both of my children attended Service High and were taught competently by my colleagues. I had lived in the neighborhood of the school for more than 26 years and many of my students were my children's friends, many students were my neighbors. By the time I retired, I was teaching the children of students I had taught in the '70s.

Anchorage at the time was a medium sized city, (population then about 260,000) with a very large school district (more than 50,000 students). Although

its geography makes it unique in many respects, it is not unlike many school districts in America. The population is exceedingly diverse, including Alaskan native groups, Caucasian migrants, Filipinos, Samoans, African Americans, Mexicans, Russians, and so on. (In recent years demographers have declared that three of Anchorage's high schools are the most diverse in the nation.) Anchorage is as much or more of a melting pot as most places in America. Service High in particular did not have quite the same diversity as the rest of the city, being more suburban and white, but it was not exclusively so. I think many American schools share its problems.

As I say, I was in a position to develop an unusually comprehensive view of the workings of high schools. I saw the school from the viewpoint of a teacher, a parent, a long-time "insider," and an "outsider." Also, when I was invited into classrooms, my view was different from the only other groups who are free to move from room to room: students and principals. I differed from students because I wasn't under the compulsion of authority. I differed from principals because they are authority, and their presence tends to change the behavior of people in any situation they observe.

Part I
Clearing the Ground

School reform is one of those topics that will never go away. We will always debate the purpose and manner of schooling. This is as it should be. However, I would like to insert a few qualifiers into the debate, before I launch into my own analysis.

First, there is a vast difference between elementary and secondary education as they are currently organized. Elementary schools are small and somewhat communal, whereas our secondary schools tend to be large and bureaucratic. I suggest that school reform should focus on secondary schools; they are the locus of our real problems; and when elementary school reform is discussed, it should be done so separately from secondary school reform.

Second, we need to recognize that there are vast differences in quality from school to school and from school district to school district. In our national debate, we criticize public education in general, creating the impression that all schools are failures. This is untrue and unfair. When public figures make blanket condemnations, they skew public attitudes in damaging ways.

Third, schools cannot be "fixed" from outside. When public figures begin to crusade about education, the only kind of remedy they can visualize is one that

they can enact through legislation; simple answers look like good answers. Hence legislatures are mightily tempted to impose simple bureaucratic procedures such as testing. Here is a simple, relatively easy way to give the appearance of implementing educational reform. After all, aren't we all in favor of Higher Standards? Another way of appearing to improve education is to spend money on hardware: put a computer at every student's desk, or connect every student to the Internet. Like testing, these proposals sound good, and lend themselves to simple slogans: "preparing every child for the next century," or some such. These approaches to educational reform appeal to lawmakers because they are simple; they appear to be doing something about the problem; and wouldn't Apple just love to give you a big fat discount on all those computers they get to put in front of all those young minds? I will insist below that school reforms must occur locally, and that genuine school reform is less expensive than the usual way of doing business, and much simpler.

I am beginning with the assumption that most difficult problems resolve themselves in the direction of simplicity. I am also beginning with the assumption that our educational system should be designed according to human nature: shaped around what people are.

As far as educators are concerned, what is *Homo sapiens'* most significant characteristic? Our ability to use our brains. Our most important organ is our brain; the human brain is one of the most astonishing organs in existence; *Homo sapiens* owes its unique evolutionary development to this organ. We have flourished as a species because of the remarkable creativity, flexibility, and power of this organ. *Learning is our nature*. Learning comes at least as naturally to us as any other human activity.

If my assumptions are true, it should be the easiest thing in the world to design a successful school. So why are so many schools struggling to educate our students, when each of those students carries within her the most powerful learning tool in the known universe? Failing to learn is a perversion of human nature. The fault is not in the student; the fault is ours.

When I worked in a foundry, I became immediately aware that industry is designed to accomplish a set of fixed and narrow goals. The people who work in industry must conform to that circumstance. If industry requires robotic people, then people force themselves to behave robotically, submerging other parts of their humanity while doing their job. American high schools reflect this circumstance; I call them the Large Industrial High School. It is fitting that the Large Industrial High School be administered by a Large Educational Bureaucracy. (When I was a graduate student at Lehigh University the old-time public school administrators referred to their building as the “plant.”)

We build a system. The system satisfies many needs and constituencies. It therefore becomes rooted and develops a life of its own, making widespread educational reform almost impossible. This is why legislators favor top-down bureaucratic changes; they know they can't change the system from within. But it must be changed from within if it is to change at all. It must be altered from the inside, locally, piece by piece.

My analysis is confined to schools themselves, not their neighborhoods, or problems with parenting, or pressure brought to bear on young people by their culture. Of course, students are profoundly affected by all these forces, and more, but my concern is pragmatic: to fix what we can fix. We can fix schools. They are in our hands, they can be examined and analyzed, they can be made better in a short period of time, and they can be improved at no additional expense. The job of making better neighborhoods or making better parents or making a healthier culture is important, but also far more amorphous, and difficult; but schools are concrete entities and we can shape them as we will. If we want to build the strongest military machine in the world, we do so; if we want to put vehicles in space, we do so; we can perform medical and scientific “miracles.” By contrast, educating the world’s smartest organism is easy, if we want to do so.

As with many of our national obsessions, we complain and fulminate about the "problem" but rarely act effectively to correct what is wrong, or we devise fixes that don’t work and then are reluctant to fix the fix. One reason for this failure is that we are determined to treat symptoms rather than causes. More testing, for example, is like placing a thermometer in the patient's mouth. It is no more a treatment for the ailment than the thermometer is a treatment of disease. Our current testing programs already provide us with the information we need. We need cures, not more thermometers.

I need to insert several qualifiers here. First, unlike the current political right, I do not think that public schooling generally is a catastrophic failure. My experience is that schools generally give the public what the public wants, and that is particularly true in Anchorage, which has a multitude of choices for students (and parents). I am interested in school reform not because I am convinced of failure, but because, like most teachers, when I went to work in the morning I always thought about how things could be improved. Thinking about improvement was built into the job. Improvement and reform weren’t ideas that suddenly occurred to outside critics.

Second, I have become deeply suspicious of the right-wing assumption that public school failure is universal, because it has become clear that such claims are a cover for the right-wing thirst for privatization, and privatizing public education is the ultimate corporate prize.

The Four Major Systemic Problems

I think that there are four major impediments to education in the modern high school. These four problems are connected, and there is a way to fix them.

The Fortress Classroom

Almost all secondary schools generate stress, or are the receptacles of stress brought to them by outside forces, or both. As one example, in my experience, self-caused stress at Robert Service High School in 1971 was generated by its opening as a new school: it was initially disorganized and without direction. To make matters worse, stress from outside sources was severe. The student body was composed of rival student populations, which had been transferred from other schools. And to intensify the problems even further, the student population was somewhat transient because the trans-Alaska oil pipeline building boom was in progress. Take a disorganized building, add students in conflict with each other, factor in utter lack of loyalty and commitment on the part of many students, and you have a recipe for educational disaster. Similar problems, unique to each locale, likely apply to many large high schools in many parts of the United States. Although Service High may or may not be typical of many or most high schools, the point is that all high schools are stressed by some circumstance or other, stress severely undermines the workings and success of schools, and it seems likely that schools respond to stress in similar ways.

It was natural that the teachers on the front line—and daily life at school was a battle—would try to create safe havens. If the building is out of control, then teachers do the one thing possible: protect the integrity of their own classrooms. I did what all the teachers did: hustle the kids into class, shut the door, and control what I could. Some teachers went as far as locking their doors during class, and covering windows that looked out onto hallways. Some even disassembled the intercom. (The intercom was always a universally despised intrusion into the classroom, and remained so throughout my teaching career.) I call this the Fortress Classroom.

The purpose of this short history is not to dredge up the unpleasant past, but to point out a contemporary problem. *Thirty years later, the Fortress Classroom still exists as the prevailing classroom model at Service High.* This illustrates the appalling fact that once the status quo is established it will persist unchanged for decades. I suspect that the Fortress Classroom is the prevailing model in the United States.

A second appalling fact is that there are understandable reasons why the Fortress Classroom still exists. My observation of our teachers, and they are good

teachers, is that they spend a large proportion of their time defending the integrity of their classrooms against forces that try every day, every hour, to tear them apart. Some of these forces are generated by the community, but many of these forces are generated by the school itself. The teacher must fight tardiness, which is caused by students, the office, other teachers, and parents. (It doesn't matter if the student has a pass, or if the tardy is "excused." A late student is a problem regardless.) Other ongoing and predictable interruptions include runners delivering messages from the office, intrusions over the intercom, car alarms, fire alarms, changes in the daily schedule, special events which pull students from class, and absenteeism and all the resultant make-up work which this requires. This list is by no means comprehensive. (Since I retired the presence of personal electronics has created yet another point of stress.) My subjective but experienced observation is that our best classrooms, run by our best teachers, are functioning at 70% efficiency ("efficiency" referring to daily routines such as taking roll, dealing with unavoidable announcements, moving paper around. I can't attempt to measure the "efficiency" of learning.) Although Service High, like most high schools, eventually ran pretty smoothly after its difficult opening, education at the classroom level was still a battle.

Although there are strong reasons for teachers to build fortresses, conducting a defensive campaign against the stresses within a school is not a necessary response if the entire building is properly organized. Most schools are fairly strong and durable institutions, and are in a position to move to a more effective type of education, away from the fortress mentality. In a healthy school, the elimination of the Fortress Classroom would eliminate some or most of the problems that it was initially designed to fix.

The Myth of Vertical Organization

We teachers once received a piece of paper from a former superintendent of schools that claimed to show how the Anchorage School District is organized. We learned, first, that the school board decrees, the superintendent executes. He or she does so by the familiar process of delegation as expressed in that old fiction, the organizational tree, through assistant superintendents, principals, and so on. At the bottom of the pyramid, down there with the bus drivers and custodians, and just beneath the teachers, are the students. This vertically organized scheme indicates that the teachers and students are at the "bottom" of the bureaucratic ladder. At the "top" of course is the school board, and just beneath are the superintendent and her assistants, the highest paid employees. The implication is that these people are the most important in the organization: they make education happen. Aside from indicating status, this scheme also implies that education is passed by decree from

the voice of the community, via the administration, to the teachers, and finally to the students, like God's finger touching Adam's on the Sistine ceiling.

I suppose that there are some people who believe this myth, perhaps because it might convince someone at the "top" of the pyramid that they are really in control. Reality, however, is organized differently.

If you study the way people actually behave within the organization, as opposed to how they are assumed to behave, you will observe that most school districts are in fact made up of layers of groups of people who function horizontally. Administrators talk to administrators and secretaries, consultants talk to other consultants and secretaries, students talk to other students and to teachers, custodians, bus drivers. (When I was in high school, the most important personalities as far as the students were concerned were certain bus drivers, a custodian, gym teachers, and coaches.) The people who are making what are supposedly the most important educational decisions are those who stay as far as they can from schools and students.

Not only does the organization in fact consist of horizontal layers, but just as important, those layers exist in parallel to each other. (Please allow me some license in my metaphor. I know that parallel lines never meet. In the school district they occasionally meet.) The lines of force that eventually result in the education of our children do not flow from our school board or from our highly placed administrators. People who function at that level can create the conditions for something to happen by funding money and making organizational decisions; they can prevent something from happening either by choice or because of inattention and neglect; or they can make education more difficult (say by adding a requirement to a curriculum which is already overburdened). But they cannot make students learn. Legislative decisions made from afar are even less effective, or more intrusive.

What happens to students who inhabit the Myth of Vertical Organization? They walk into classrooms that are supposedly organized to carry out the dictates of the school board, but they continue to live in the reality of their own parallel universe. Word hasn't gotten "down" to them that they are supposed to be following the program. If the school board and the administration own the school district and the building, then the students might just decide to step aside and occupy a parallel space, thank you very much. You can make them sit in your seats in your classroom in your building, but you are not going to own their minds or their social lives, their friendships and their loyalties, the values that they live by. Under the present system, it is your school, not the students' school. It is your idea of teaching, not the students' idea of learning, which is being promoted. The building is your building and the students spit on your walls, break your windows, trash your hallways. The walls, windows, and hallways aren't theirs.

Society has already communicated clearly to adolescents that society doesn't much like them. So adolescents bond with people they can trust: themselves. The real lives of students have little or nothing to do with the decisions of the people who think they are in charge. This problem is intimately connected to what follows.

The Unnatural Separation of Adolescents from Adults

In recent years, I often went to Service High at odd hours that didn't coincide with the bell schedule. For an old teacher, this was a very strange experience. For most of my teaching career I had my Fortress that I could control on my schedule and I thought things were running pretty well. Now when I come to school I tend to see other things: mobs of kids huddled like refugees around corners and behind buildings to smoke tobacco and probably ingest other chemicals; kids devising ways to be truant; kids trying to seduce each other; kids trying to figure out how to get away with parking violations; kids trying to figure out which lie will work to get the teacher to overlook a tardy. On a bad day, when class is not in session, Service High looks more like a pathology than a school. (When class is in session, all is well.) I sometimes am tempted to see the kids as inmates. They often act like people who have been institutionalized. On such days I have no trouble whatsoever understanding the home school movement, or the drive for charter schools, or the desire for vouchers. The behavior of students I saw from my perspective in my classroom was entirely different from what a parent or visitor would observe during a visit to a school when classes are not in session. I am a lifelong advocate of *public* education, and all that the word "public" implies, but sometimes I am oppressed by the apparent failure of the status quo.

I imagine a time in the unspecified past when adolescents and adults occupied the same world. I imagine a time when girls worked side by side with women, boys worked side by side with men. They talked to each other while they worked or hunted, cooked or gardened. They ate together, traveled together, suffered together. The adolescents went through an initiation period of some kind and became adults much like their parents. The young people knew that they would be cared for, and they knew that they in turn would care for the old people. The community was whole. I don't insist on the precise accuracy of my imaginings; but I do think that there was a time when children and adults were less separated from each other than they are now.

An Aleut I once worked with, a biology teacher and a priest, once told me, "In our culture, we do not prepare our children to perform a function. We teach them to become men and women."

I hear people talk about how terrible adolescents are. I have heard educated professionals claim that the behavior of the typical adolescent resembles the

symptoms of certain emotional pathologies. People have expressed pity for me when they heard that I worked with adolescents every day. People have told me that "They couldn't pay me enough" to work with adolescents. On a bad day at Service High those sentiments are understandable, on a superficial level.

Yet my empirical knowledge tells me that adolescence does not need to be any more traumatic than any other stage of life. I have worked with, observed, and lived with adolescents who were perfectly delightful and whose company I thoroughly enjoyed. If adolescence were a pathology, then wouldn't the illness be universal?

The truth is that we adults have created an unhealthy situation for our children. We are responsible for the adolescent behavior that we don't like. We have created an institution which is not a community; or, to the extent that it is a "community," one which is not whole. (One reason administrators like sports, especially glamour sports like football, is that they create the illusion of community; this is called "school spirit," which consists in part of hating another school or team.) In short, our children are extensions of ourselves, and their behavior is consistent with the system we have created for them, both in and out of school.

We have created a world in which we have decided that we shall select one age group of our population and segregate that age group in one physical location for a fixed time each day. In other words, we have created an utterly abnormal situation. Imagine what would happen if society decreed that *everyone* aged 36-40, or 60-64, must by law spend a fixed period of time in a single confined location for four years. This form of institutionalization would be thought of as bizarre. The only other institution like it in our society is what is optimistically called Long Term Care, for people waiting to die (though they are not there by law).

It is therefore no wonder that adolescent behavior is often also bizarre. Our society, by segregating a certain age group in such a way, has communicated certain powerful and damaging ideas to adolescents:

1. Adolescents are people with whom most adults would rather not associate.
2. Adolescents must look to other adolescents for advice and guidance.
3. Society feels most comfortable when adolescents are safely confined to schools. Society is least comfortable when adolescents are on the loose.
4. Education is something that adults do to students.
5. If adults don't like adolescents, why should adolescents like adults?

Is it any wonder that many adolescents feel that their first loyalty should be to each other? That only reluctantly will they team up with adults, and only when they have come to trust the adult? We teachers often wonder: “I work hard for the betterment of my students. If only my students cared as much about their educations as I do! Why can't the students do what it is clearly in their self-interest to do! Aren't we all on the same team?” From the standpoint of many adolescents,

the answer is no, we are not on the same team. There is a disjunction between adults and students in our society that should not exist.

We can see why such a situation produces vandalism, discipline problems, and a lack of trust between adolescent and adult. Many adolescents assume that lying to adults, for any reason and in any circumstance, is the preferred way to behave; almost a code of honor. Adults are someone to hide from, to lie to, to manipulate. False relationships between students and adults occur at least as frequently among the "honors" students as among the rest of the student body, because many honors students think that manipulation is necessary to success.

We can see how the Fortress Classroom reinforces this problem. Although the Fortress Classroom is a useful way of preserving the integrity of a classroom, it also separates student from student and adult from adult. If the teacher is not skillful at establishing good relations with the inmates, the classroom can become a battlefield.

Furthermore, it should be clear that adhering to the Myth of Vertical Organization aggravates this unhealthy situation. While the school board and administration think that they are passing education down to the students, the students simply step aside into their parallel worlds.

As it is, the status quo can only serve the students who, because of their family life, come to school already feeling comfortable with adults, or are equipped and motivated to exploit the system to get the education, or the educational credentials, they want. I don't know what percentage of the student body is so motivated and equipped; my guess is less than half.

The Fallacy of the Curriculum-Driven Classroom

One's first thought after reading this heading might be, "Of course classrooms are curriculum-driven. How else could it be? There can't possibly be a fallacy involved." When people are critical of educational performance, one of the easiest ways to supposedly strengthen a program is to establish "high standards," one sub-category of which is "cover a lot of material." A political school board can't go wrong if it adds requirements ("strengthens the curriculum"), and a teacher can't go wrong if she gains the reputation that she covers a lot of material, come hell or high water. Attaching the word "fallacy" to "curriculum-driven" is like attaching the word "failure" to "Abraham Lincoln."

Please note: to point out that a classroom should not be curriculum-driven is not to argue against having a curriculum. Of course every subject must have a curriculum. But the key word is "driven."

What does the curriculum-driven classroom look like?

1. The teacher and students both adhere to the idea that "material" is something to "cover." The goal of "covering" the material is to get it behind you so that you can go on to the next "unit."

2. After you "cover" the material you have a test. The students cram for the test, the teacher tries to make the test challenging, and the day of the test has the aura of a crisis. Then the test is over, students can eliminate the "material" from their short-term memories, and the teacher can restart the treadmill. The goal is to get to the end: of the semester, the school year, high school itself; when you can put it all behind you and get on to something better.

3. A really good teacher can simply speed up the treadmill, thereby "covering" even more "material." A teacher who runs a fast treadmill has high standards. The students become exhausted by running in place so fast for so long, but the tough kids will succeed and become brain surgeons.

4. A really good teacher in a curriculum-driven classroom will have "projects." The "projects" vary in form, from "hands on" activities like building a replica of Jamestown out of Popsicle sticks, to printing a very long and sophisticated "research paper" off the Internet. The primary value of a "project" is to produce an artifact that is visually pleasing and can be displayed as evidence of accomplishment (or "excellence.") A good way to appear to be making significant educational advances is to load up the classroom with computers. Adding hardware to the school is the easiest, though not the cheapest, way to establish the appearance of educational quality.

5. A really eager student will demand "extra credit" to appease his thirst for knowledge. One way to garner "extra credit" is to write book reports. These book reports usually command about ninety minutes of a student's time, about the average length of a video of the book.

6. The best curriculum-driven classroom is run by a teacher with a strong personality who won't stand for any nonsense about "getting off the subject." This teacher always has students "on task." Students remember this teacher as being "tough but fair." In hindsight, students remember the personality of the teacher as being the dominant force in the classroom.

I often discuss their educations with my children and my children's friends, now grown and out of college. While in high school, they all had some teachers who were model practitioners of the curriculum-driven classroom. They can remember almost everything about those classes: the routines, the test anxiety, the projects, their effort, the time they spent doing homework, how hard the class was, how difficult it was to get an A, the teacher's strong personality. They all worked very hard and got good grades. What they can't remember much of, though, is the content of the course. It is no accident that these teachers ran a Fortress Classroom

and were firm believers in Vertical Organization. For these teachers, *education was something that was done by the teacher*. They were very professional and worked very hard, were well prepared and well educated, were highly respected by students, parents, administrators, and other teachers. But students have trouble remembering what they taught.

I would like to offer an alternative for each of the six points I listed above.

1. "Covering" material and learning material are not the same thing. When students "cover" material, they are doing something that may or may not have any meaning for them. What they do know for certain is that they are following someone else's agenda. Some students, usually honors students, accept that agenda, or pretend to accept that agenda, in order to play the educational game successfully. Many students accept or reject that agenda willy-nilly, as just another thing that adults do to them.

Why do students learn? One way to answer the question is to ask, "Why do *I* learn?" When I answer the question for myself, I find upon reflection that I know what I know because I wanted to learn it, and I wanted to learn it because it was useful or interesting. I know for a certainty that what I have learned and carried with me for decades of my life is knowledge that was and is *meaningful*. There are vacancies in my mind where I am missing entire courses that I took in college. On the other hand, there are other courses the contents of which I can narrate almost word for word and point for point after nearly four decades. We remember what is meaningful. More importantly, we *actively seek to learn* what is meaningful.

2. Students benefit little from the exercise of the short-term memory. We do a great disservice to our students when we imply that the reason for "covering" a "unit" is to pass a test and then put the "material" behind us. In a classroom where real education is occurring, the substance of a course of study remains relevant in the future, is repeatedly referred to as the student enlarges his knowledge, and becomes a foundation for and a supplement to what the student learns in the future. One fallacy in education is that we think education is linear. Education is not linear; the mind is more like a map, and the more detailed the map the better our education. A map is a true picture of the world because, unlike the linear approach, a map establishes relationships. To improve the metaphor, make the map a globe. To assume that the acquisition of knowledge is linear is to profoundly misunderstand the nature of the human brain.

3. Students need to reflect on meaningful ideas, and they need time to incorporate those ideas into what they already know. The attainment of thoughtfulness, reflectiveness, good judgment, wisdom, is utterly unrelated to speed of execution.

4. As in #1, I am convinced that all or most learning stems from meaning. Every activity should be meaningful, including "projects." "Busy work" falls into the category of the meaningless. "Busy work" typically degrades the educational process, serving as a time-killer and a mind-number.

5. Implicit in the curriculum-driven classroom is the assumption that the purpose of going to school is to get good grades. The student knows that he should play any angle if it helps his transcript. The "successful" student in this kind of classroom becomes an expert at gamesmanship, from gathering in extra credit points, to debating the teacher's judgment about the grade which should go on an essay (some students take the view that every grade should be disputed on principle; you should never pass up a chance to pressure the teacher; after all, education is political), to becoming a teacher's pet, to cheating. The curriculum-driven classroom often establishes a false relationship between teacher and student and between student and student.

6. The personality of the teacher can have an enormous effect on the quality of a classroom. However, if the teacher's personality becomes in effect the subject of the course, then the real subject matter of the course loses its value. The teacher should live in the shadow of her subject; the teacher should not cast her shadow across the subject. Students should get to the point where they see the subject as being useful, intrinsically valuable, or both, rather than being an extension of the personality of a popular or respected teacher.

Conclusion

I have not attempted to reveal every problem in our system of secondary public education. However, these are the four areas of greatest concern.

Also, I have not mentioned the numerous things that are good about public education. I think my readers will understand that we educators are habitually concerned with problems rather than successes. I think that is true of any profession. We have a professional obligation to focus on what needs to be fixed.

Nor have I mentioned the consistently high level of commitment and expertise that I have observed in almost every classroom I have worked in. One strength, frequently overlooked, of our educational system is its teachers. I have worked with dozens of teachers in a number of different disciplines, from foreign language to history to biology, and the one constant that I have observed from classroom to classroom is the excellence of our teachers.

The other major strength, likewise overlooked or tragically neglected, is the potential of our students.

By and large, we already have most of what is essential to excellent education: students who possess enormous potential; good teachers; the administrative

infrastructure; and a substantial investment in real estate and supplies. We simply need to reorganize our assets according to an educational philosophy that breaks down the Fortress Classroom, abandons the Myth of Vertical Organization, discourages the Unnatural Separation of Adolescents from Adults, and corrects the Fallacy of the Curriculum-Driven Classroom. That may seem to be difficult or impossible, but in fact these four problems are very closely connected and can be corrected with one remedy. The reforms can be accomplished effectively and quickly, and we can reduce educational costs in the process. Models for this kind of success already exist, as I will show in Part 2.

Part 2
Some Practical Guidelines

In the foregoing I have suggested that educational reform is not a hopeless task; we can shape schools to do what we want them to do; but we need first to identify what needs reforming. I identified four institutional problems: 1) that teachers are often locked into a Fortress Classroom mentality, in which they focus on controlling their classrooms as a way of controlling their potentially chaotic situation; 2) that the educational bureaucracy adheres to The Myth of Vertical Organization, holding that school systems should be organized as a pyramid, when in fact a horizontal structure works better; 3) that we create The Unnatural Separation of Adolescents from Adults by institutionalizing our children in such a way that they are inevitably alienated from the larger society; 4) and that, in the interests of "excellence", we have failed to recognize The Fallacy of the Curriculum-Driven Classroom, which holds that a narrowly defined syllabus and a rigid classroom structure produces an educated child.

In order to offer some correctives to these institutionalized problems, I have examined two educational programs that have gone a long way towards educating their students well. What follows is an analysis of what these programs did to lay the groundwork for a new system, and then how they implemented those systems in practice.

Creating a New Program: First Steps

My interest is in the public schools at the secondary level, because I am convinced that education in America will continue to be administered primarily by

the public at the local level, and I am also convinced that most of our educational problems occur in the junior and senior high schools, not in elementary schools. Indeed, it may be useful for our secondary school administrators to study some of our best elementary schools to find some useful ideas about developing school communities, involving parents in the educational process, and developing good working relations among the staff.

In the public schools, someone must initiate change: a principal, a parent or group of parents, a district administrator. In the heavily bureaucratic system I worked in for most of my career, it was very difficult for teachers to initiate change. They were charged with educating children, but did not have the power to use their knowledge or expertise fully. Power was in the hands of someone with political leverage rather than with the professionals.

If someone with administrative, bureaucratic, or political power decides to initiate change, they must delegate the formation of a new program to a set of experts: a carefully selected group of seasoned teachers. These teachers must be given the time and the incentive to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the problem of designing a school.

An important incentive for these teachers is that they must know that they are wielding real power. They must be convinced that they are not rubber-stamping an administrator's prior decisions, and will not be overruled by some authority that will step in after they have invested their time and effort and undo their work. On the other hand, the administrator must have complete trust in the teachers she has chosen for the job of reform. If the administrator wants to place her stamp on this effort, she must work with the teachers as the early planning occurs and not step in late to "correct" their work.

Why not involve parents at this stage? Because, if the initial cadre of teachers is properly selected, they will have more experience than anyone else in the community. The process cannot be political at this stage of program development. The experts should be allowed to do their work with reference only to their immediate task. The community, particularly the parents, should become involved at the next stage, that of actually implementing the program.

The initial planning group needs to be big enough to generate ideas, small enough that the ideas are communicated. Ten or twelve might be a good number. Their backgrounds should be diverse, and the English-social studies experts should be able to communicate with and understand the science-math experts, and vice-versa. It is especially important to have a special education expert in the mix, as I will explain below.

The Importance of a Philosophy

During my thirty years in the classroom, I spent little time as part of a coherent group of professionals. For twenty-four years I was a member of a typical high school English department, but it wasn't until I was involved in a reform program (six years) that I thought that I was part of an educational system that had a clear vision of what it was and what it wanted to attain; that is to say, an explicitly expressed vision and methodology that was agreed upon by all the staff. This differs from a typical English department or most academic departments because in the conventional departmental organization the "vision" is usually implicit.

The English department, as all the academic departments, had a clearly defined curriculum that was overseen by a competent, indeed outstanding, department head, which answered to a competent curriculum principal. There was coherence in the subject matter itself, and a clear understanding of our major educational goals. A list of goals is not a philosophy, however, and there was never a clear philosophy that guided the direction of the department or the school, and that was shared by teachers and teachers, students and teachers, or students and students. You might say that the school practiced a philosophy by default. There was no clear educational vision. In a large and heavily bureaucratic high school, the staff often assumes that the only practical course of action is to maintain the status quo, strive for stability, and perpetuate the past.

As we all know, the way we learn (and teach) is an outgrowth of what we are as human beings. However, there are many views of what it is to be human, and those various views transform themselves into undeclared classroom "philosophies." If humans are naturally unruly creatures burdened by original sin, or some secular equivalent, then it is best to treat the child with a heavy hand; if they are machine-like creatures, develop an assembly line-like institution which resembles a factory, run on the bell and by the numbers; if they are destined to be cogs in a great economic machine, treat them as young consumers whose jobs in life are to get and spend; if they are to become part of a level democracy, treat them as young conformists.

These are prevailing views of what young Americans are or should be, and most large public high schools probably make all of these assumptions, and others, in varying combinations and with varying emphasis; but mere assumptions they are. These models indicate more about what society wants youngsters to be than what they are in fact. I have rarely heard educators discuss the essential question "What is a human being?" Yet that is the most fundamental question of all, because its answer explains how we learn, and should therefore determine how we teach and how we design our schools.

I cannot, should not, attempt to answer that crucial question in this space. That question should instead consume much of the time of our panel of experts. When they have come to an understanding of what it is to be human, then they are ready

to design their school. I will venture, however, to suggest one characteristic of adolescents that might help form a school philosophy. I will call this characteristic

The Adolescent as Hero

I will ask my readers at this point to revisit their pasts and try to recall their adolescent years. Were you dissatisfied, uneasy, edgy? Did you have a feeling that you wanted to get on with life's serious business instead of standing in place? Did you feel that your life was trivial, that there were serious, even great, things to be done, but you weren't doing them? Were you angry that someone was willing to waste your time, i.e. your life?

If any of these statements were true of you and your friends, shouldn't we assume that they might well be true today?

Our bureaucratic high schools have trivialized our children's lives. The students are told to wait, their time will come; they are not ready for *real* life, first they must lead a pretend life to rehearse for the reality; they must tread water, fill in all the dead time in their days with television, aimless driving, mall walking.

Students often occupy a false position. For example, everyone in the school, except the students in student government, knows that the student government has no power, that it is the tool of the administration, a showcase for essentially useless people. Everyone knows that student publications will be censored by the administration, that the student writers will not speak in their own voices, and are likely practicing a form of self-censorship. Our children, though as large as adults, intelligent, and able, are kept in a state of prolonged infancy for the convenience of adults. True, they are in transition, not ready for full responsibility, but they are certainly capable of far more than we adults ask of them.

As far as many students (and many parents, and some staff) are concerned sports is the social and psychological foundation of most American high schools. Why? *Because it is the one place in the schools where students are allowed to do something real*. In the competitive arena the student can strive, sweat, bleed, suffer, test himself or herself. To be involved in athletics means that the student must commit to attending difficult practice sessions for weeks on end, run the risk of injury, feel physical and psychological pain. In most sports they have the camaraderie of sharing their success and difficulties with friends. In short, they have the chance to lead the heroic life. It is important to realize that sports are both *difficult* and *popular*. Our students want to be tested, and to test themselves. Athletic competition is the one area of school life that hasn't been trivialized (I mean the engagement in the contest itself, the *agon*, not the embarrassing cheerleaders and majorettes) and it is the one thing that the student-athlete is passionate about.

Must this kind of authentic experience be restricted to the playing field? You might say, the serious academician has the same kind of challenge but in a different sphere of life. True, except that our most intense academic work is usually done in "honors" or "upper track" classes where the emphasis is often on resume building and classroom gamesmanship, and so is also trivialized. Who knows where our real geniuses spend their time? Yes, some of our students are passionate about music, drama, poetry, math, but unfortunately that passion is often unrecognized by most of the school, which means that most students overlook academic or artistic excellence as a legitimate heroic quest.

In an interview with students on this subject, I was struck by the remark "I want more responsibility." The students did not say that they wanted more freedom, less homework, more free time, easier classes. They wanted the chance to lead authentic lives where their actions have meaning. They wanted responsibility, which means that they wanted the chance to succeed—or to fail—on their own terms. To be responsible is to accept consequences, and not to play someone else's game. They wanted something real.

I am convinced that every student needs to have the chance to embark on a heroic quest, to set sail, take risks, suffer, succeed, fail. This quest should not be confined to the athletic field: not every student is fulfilled by athletics, and athletics itself does not provide full satisfaction for anyone. The quest should be conducted in the classrooms, the hallways, the lunchrooms; in every student meeting place; and in the community. Our students should be on a mission, and our school philosophy should take this into account.

Characteristics of a Good School

A good school does what professors of education have always said it does: it provides for academic development, emotional development, and physical development. This tripartite division of the person into the intellectual, emotional, and physical spheres is not trite. To paraphrase Plato, an individual, and a society, is out of balance—unjust—to the extent that any of these areas are either neglected or magnified. A person who is grossly deficient in one or more of these areas is in a sense monstrous: physically overdeveloped but emotionally undeveloped; intensely emotional but intellectually shallow; intellectually active but emotionally isolated. I think Plato was right to claim that the injustice in a society that is out of harmony is reflected in the microcosm: individuals who are likewise unbalanced and inharmonious.

The school is a community, and the health of the community will be reflected in the health of each individual within that community. The practice of education must be based on the way individuals associate with each other within their

community. How is a school community developed? What should be the nature of that community?

The Socialization Model. This describes most large American high schools. The job of this school is to shape well-socialized citizens who live in a democracy. Academic rigor occurs at the next level, in our excellent universities. Schools teach conformity, economic materialism, and the attainment of social status. Students sort themselves out into a social hierarchy based on popularity: cheerleaders, student government, athletes, prom queens: what you might call a democratic aristocracy. Quite a bit of good academic work goes on, but behind the scenes. Much real success goes unrecognized; materialism takes center stage: athletics, physical appearance, cars, etc. occupy the foreground. It is natural for an undeveloped mind to place a high value on the material world; this school does not want to lead young people beyond that notion. This "community" reflects much of the larger society and represents the status quo.

I suspect that the quickest, cheapest way to reform public education is to eliminate all interscholastic sports everywhere. This would immediately grant to principals the ability to hire teachers based on their academic credentials and teaching ability, rather than shopping for coaches/teachers. Teaching staffs would thereby quickly be upgraded. It would also strip the schools of degrading institutions such as, on the female side, cheerleader squads, majorettes, and so forth, and, on the male side, macho sports icons. We should simultaneously strengthen the physical education programs, providing real, healthy physical development for all students.

This proposal is, of course, ridiculous. The public outcry would be louder in opposition to this proposal than against any educational change imaginable, which clearly illustrates exactly what are the dominant values in the Socialization Model.

The Happy Family Model. This is a small school run by a strong and humane principal who sets the tone for the entire school. His staffing decisions, policy decisions, methods of discipline, etc. all stem from his clear vision of what education should be. The school is a happy family run by a strong, wise, and humane leader whose values are seconded by his staff. This model is rarely found among public schools, because most public schools are too large, and there is a dearth of strong, wise, and humane principals.

The Methodology Model. The principal, staff, and students of this school are convinced that a sound method of teaching and learning determines the rest of the educational system, including the development of intellect, social behavior, and character. The resultant community is based not on the personality of a single strong leader, as in the Happy Family model, but on the school philosophy itself. However, this school is also a "happy family" with a strong sense of community.

Please note: educational reform is a reform of systems, not people. And educational success, and educational reform, cannot be carried on the shoulders of a few outstanding people. We can use John Gatto as an example; a man who has courageously and energetically carried on his own campaign for educational reform, using his classroom as a base. So, should this exceptional person represent the norm? Ask the question: why should educational success, and reform, be exceptional, or rely upon exceptional people for its execution? If improvement in education depends upon recruiting, hiring, and retaining educational stars, then educational reform is doomed. The *system* needs to be reformed, so that well-qualified, committed, and fairly ordinary people can function well as teachers. We cannot hire millions of exceptional people; that is a logical contradiction. It is too much to ask that out teachers perform as altruistic heroes. We must create systems that are realistic, that function with real people who get up in the morning, go to work, do their daily tasks, and are not asked to heroically carry the educational system on their shoulders single-handedly.

Methodology

I am convinced that the key to developing a whole community, unfragmented and focused, lies in the methodology that permeates the entire school. The key is to adopt a methodology that is both simple and comprehensive. I have become convinced after my three decades in schools that *complex problems resolve themselves in the direction of simplicity*; and that in education, as in life, *only a few things are really important*. Our new school needs a simple, comprehensive, and elegant methodology that is compatible with these truths. The models that I will use in this essay are derived from a combination of the "great books" approach, and the practice of Socratic seminar, as I have experienced and observed them in two programs. Many of the practitioners I have worked with have been profoundly influenced by their experiences at the University of Chicago and St. John's (Santa Fe). They in turn have influenced the views of me and many of my colleagues, and the programs I have worked in and observed.

I should add here that perhaps I should have substituted the term "great texts" for "great books" in this essay, because most of our readings are in truth selections from the great books. I decided to keep the more familiar term.

Also, we included some readings that are, shall we say, less than great. We recognized that many works will never make the canon, yet nevertheless have great meaning or utility.

The great books approach, as I have seen it in practice, recognizes that there are great ideas that have formed the development of all human cultures; that the influence of those ideas may wane but never disappear; and that most human

problems or questions resolve themselves into those ideas. The phrase "great books" simply recognizes that those ideas have been articulated in certain works that we recognize as great; but those living ideas are by no means restricted to that single work. The living ideas are not artifacts or historical curios, and the books we find them in are not old dead objects in an arbitrarily determined canon. The books live because the ideas live, and recognizing the importance of those ideas does not lock one into a dead past, but enables one instead to reach out with greater understanding to new knowledge.

The key to this approach is that great ideas are *compelling* to the student. "Compelling" means that the idea demands the student's attention and concern; it grabs the student and won't let go.

A corollary of this statement is that the student responds to material that is *meaningful*. When we examine our own lives, including our own classroom experiences, we know that one of the two qualities that lie at the core of our educations, which we crave above all else, but which is desperately lacking in many classrooms, is meaningful thought. The other quality that we desire is utility. All effective education is the result of the student's desire for meaning and utility. Sometimes utility can occur without meaning, but it is hard for me to think of a meaningful idea which lacks utility at some point in my life. When students don't learn, it is usually because they think the material is meaningless or useless, and the process of education is painful. On the other hand, learning that includes great ideas as its foundation is successful, and also joyful.

The Socratic seminar is the appropriate place to explore great texts and great ideas. My conviction is that the content of the conversation that occurs in a Socratic seminar has three bases: the text, the experience of each participant, and the genius of the group.

The text should be the constant reference for the seminar participants, and each participant should know the text well and refer to it regularly. The school should spend considerable time preparing for the seminar by establishing a method for the students to master the text. The programs I am familiar with call this "coaching" and I will discuss this very important activity below.

The student's experience is of two kinds: prior academic knowledge, which should be brought to bear on the conversation in the seminar; and empirical experience of life. This latter point is important. The discussion that unfolds in seminar needs to be tested by the experience of each participant, and the testing works two ways: the participant should bring his experience to the discussion, in the form of examples and facts; and he should take the content of the discussion and place it beside his previous experience, as a form of verification, and apply it to future experience, as a tool. There needs to be an ongoing interplay between the truth of the text and the concrete experiences of the student.

(A word of caution here: many students fail to distinguish between an empirical example and a hypothetical case. In a discussion of King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," for example, instead of a student saying, "I once experienced, observed, or read such-and-so about racism," they will say, "Yeah, just like in the movie such-and-so where they clubbed that guy." Unfortunately, for many students movies are a surrogate reality. They will often credit the movie with having more validity than their own experience.)

What is the genius of the group? This is one of those things that is hard to define but you know it when you see it. In my experience, the totality of the minds present in a seminar is more than the sum of its parts. If there are fifteen participants, there is more at work than just fifteen discreet minds. In a good seminar, those minds meet and, in combination with the wisdom of the text, form something greater than existed previously. The activity of minds working together can be a powerful educational engine, stimulating great things.

We are asking our students to join the Great Conversation that has been occurring throughout history. The history of ideas is not The Great Monologue, or The Great Solitude. The exchange of ideas that has occurred around the globe and throughout time can be continued in the microcosms of our classrooms; our students can be full participants; the greatness of the past is gloriously accessible to everyone.

Approaching the Text

It is time here to look at specific activities.

When the staff has selected the text (see ***Curriculum,*** below) each teacher divides her students into groups of 5-10. Their job is to examine jointly and cooperatively, preferably but not necessarily with a mature leader, the text in detail. The text will probably be difficult: Aristotle for fifteen year olds? Can they do this? Yes. The previous evening's homework assignment was for each student to examine a section of the text for vocabulary, syntax, and meaning. They will undoubtedly be puzzled and somewhat confused. Good. Their job, as they read, is to develop questions that arise from the text, not necessarily high-level philosophical questions, but basic questions, such as "What does this phrase mean in this context?" These questions should be written on the text, and important passages from the text should be marked for easy reference.

If the text is "Letter from Birmingham Jail," for example, questions might include, "Why is he writing this to fellow clergymen?" "How did he end up in jail anyway?" "What place does Christianity have in civil disobedience?" "How does Christianity connect to Socrates?" "How do you expect to be able to teach when you are in jail?" "Who is this Bull Connor guy?" "What is all this talk about

Birmingham? Why Birmingham?" Or if the piece is less accessible, such as something from Aristotle, there will be a much greater proportion of questions dealing with vocabulary, syntax, and the logical unfolding of the argument.

The students present these questions to the group, and the group works to clarify the meaning of the text. This lesson is, first and foremost, a lesson in the study of language. The students are learning to read.

Some will say that it is ridiculous to ask a teenager—any teenager, of any ability—to decipher the most difficult texts our culture has produced. But test this against your experience. If you were like me, you gravitated, when young, to texts which were "too difficult" for you. I spent many hours poring over books that I couldn't fully understand, fiction or non-fiction. All my life I gravitated to the more difficult. I don't think this is uncommon.

The best way to learn to read is to read. When the students grapple with the most difficult texts, in conjunction with the guidance of interested peers, they are learning vocabulary, syntax (including the complexities of subordination), and logic (following the progression of the argument). They are learning to speak, because they must contribute to the group, and their contributions must be coherent. They are learning to listen to, and to accept advice from, their companions. They are developing friendships and strong emotional bonds with their mates. They are getting enormous emotional satisfaction from succeeding at a difficult task in concert with their friends. And the foundation for this is the text. The profound meaning of any great text provides the content, the fuel, the motivation, the ultimate satisfaction for the student.

All of these qualities are carried forward to the next level, the Socratic seminar itself. Once the paper has been "coached" it is time for the seminar.

When should this happen? When has the paper been "mastered" by the students? In truth, never. But there comes a time when the students know the literal meaning of the text well enough that they must move to the next level. A short paper may require four hours of coaching, a larger and more difficult text may require twenty hours. *It is important that mastery takes precedence over time.* Great texts and great ideas must not be rushed.

Let's examine this point. In most classes, the teachers use the treadmill approach to learning: block out a proportion of course time for a "unit," at the end of the "unit" administer a test, then "go on" to what's next. This progression seems logical, even necessary, but the effect of "moving on" is to abandon what we have learned while the treadmill moves forward. When what has been "learned" is neatly concluded and left behind, it is often forgotten, rarely carried forward into future learning, rendered irrelevant. That is the psychology of test day: thank God that's behind us, let's move ahead.

Our approach is never to abandon our knowledge. The text that we have just "mastered" will be with us into the indefinite future. What we have learned the past two weeks will be applied to the next text, and the next, not through the semester, or graduation, but all our lives. Great ideas are truly meaningful, and therefore always relevant, now and always, in school and out of school, in the classroom or on the playing field, with school friends or on the job.

So. After coaching the teacher assembles the students into one comfortable space, and the students (ideally no more than twenty) commence a seminar.

The Seminar

I think that the physical spaces we occupy, and the way we position our bodies in those spaces, affects our emotional attitude and our capacity to think well.

The room itself should be well lit, not with glaring bright light but not dim. An abundance of natural light is refreshing. The walls should be attractively decorated but not cluttered. Machinery such as computers or televisions should be unobtrusive or absent. Most important, the furniture should be simple and functional. I have been in too many classrooms where the furniture obstructs human activity rather than serves it, and where students spend too much time maneuvering around sofas, chairs, tables, televisions, and general clutter. A simple space is best. I prefer a simple conference table that is big enough to accommodate all the participants, yet small enough that no one is separated from the group. Chairs should be comfortable—most activities I describe occur in two-hour segments. Having a table allows students to place their materials conveniently in front of them. They need to be able to read their text during seminar, and to write. They also need to be alert, and an upright posture encourages that. I am convinced that a cluttered and slovenly space encourages a similar attitude in the student. We want a clean, comfortable, and focused space to encourage a like emotional and mental attitude in the student. (By "focused" I mean that all the participants must face each other at a good distance for communicating verbally. Without the focus of the table, some students will withdraw into an obscure corner of the room or try to sit behind someone.)

Part of the comfort of students is a full stomach. I have noticed that many students will skip breakfast and then need to snack in the mid-morning. I think it is likely that they skip breakfast because they are too tired to get up in time to eat before school, because they stay up too late at night. The problems of fatigue and nutrition are I think closely related, and they certainly undermine all school activities, including seminar. I don't know how to correct this essentially social problem, but it is one to be aware of and to attack. Ideally, though, students should

come to seminar well fed; otherwise they will be tempted to eat during the activity, which I think is a bad-mannered distraction.

Keep in mind that in this program, although the students will spend large blocks of time physically inactive (up to two hours, hence the need for comfort), more often they will be moving to a variety of activities throughout the school (and away from school) and the space for student use should be designed with flexibility in mind.

On the day of the seminar, the students must enter the space with a few vital tools: the text, writing materials, and an attitude of anticipation. They are coming here to engage the text and each other. Their engagement will be uninterrupted (unless individuals slip out for a quick bathroom break). They must be prepared to get down to work quickly; the tone is high seriousness.

By the time the students have finished coaching, a number of *compelling questions* should have arisen from the text. These questions go beyond the task of establishing the literal meaning that has occurred so far. Dealing with a compelling question, or several compelling questions, is the heart of the seminar. For example, a thoughtful student might ask, "Why would King endure hardship for the sake of civil rights? What motivates him?" "What is real teaching?" "Who is it that King wants to educate? The African-Americans or the whites?" Notice that these questions occupy different levels of abstraction, the last occupying the lowest level, the second occupying the highest level. A seminar might deal with all three, but would tend to focus on the highest level of abstraction as it evolves.

Please note the importance of the word "question." The focus of the seminar, indeed of the entire school, is that learning is a form of exploration; posing questions is the engine of exploration. This is true in science, history, literature, life.

The word "seminar" has been degraded in common usage. You are invited to attend "seminars" in financial planning, weight loss, hair care. These are merely lectures disguised as a group activity. Let's keep in mind that "seminar" as I am describing it is *not*: a bull session; an encounter group; a place to unburden yourself of your deepest emotional problems; a form of New Age salvation. Nor is it a law school-style session where a sharp professor fires challenging questions at his nervous students while imagining that he is playing the role of Socrates, making sure that the "discussion" adheres strictly to his agenda. Rather, let us define it as a conversation, conducted thoughtfully and deliberately by all the participants. The basis of the conversation is the text, supplemented by the knowledge and experience of the participants, and the driving force is the compelling question(s) to which we seek an answer.

Notice that to this point our activity has, on the cognitive level, "taught" reading, speaking, listening, logical thinking, and the acquisition of the content of

the text. It has also required additional learning as we have had to bring additional knowledge—historical and factual points of clarification—to the text during coaching. It has provided us with rich emotional bonds as we have developed rich relationships with our companions. Some of these relationships are simply friendships; all of the relationships are to a degree Platonic, having intellectual content in common.

I have avoided a discussion of the specific manner of conducting a seminar because a written description cannot explain in adequate detail the nuances involved. A teacher who wants to adopt this methodology should seek direct seminar experience.

Responding to the Text and to the Seminar

When the seminar ends, we must write.

At the end of the seminar, there will be no clear conclusion. Upon reflection, students will be able to identify what they have learned—they will learn it now and forever—and they will apply what they have learned to their future activities. But there will be no "closure," no definitive "summing up." There will, however, be a restless feeling that more needs to be said, a feeling of dissatisfaction that many questions remain unanswered.

Immediately after the seminar, no later than that evening, the students must write about these nagging, unanswered, compelling questions. They must write honestly, from the heart, not in order to fulfill an assignment (though this activity is required)—to write for the teacher—but to write for themselves. Their essay must be driven by their desire for meaning.

You might think there is a contradiction here: how can they write for themselves if a teacher requires the assignment? The answer is based on simple pragmatism. Most people need a nudge, sometimes a strong one, to sit down and write; yet once one starts to write, and gets drawn into an essay, one develops ideas that would otherwise never have occurred to him. This same argument applies to the length of papers. I think a minimum length should be required simply because the writer needs to get into a paper a certain distance for ideas to emerge.

About once a month, or after every three or four seminars, a larger writing assignment should be undertaken. As the students accumulate knowledge and ideas, they need to connect those ideas. Themes will emerge from their reading and discussions, and these themes must be explored in a larger, more comprehensive paper. All knowledge connects. These essays will attempt to establish some of those connections.

(I will not attempt to offer an opinion on grades and grading in this essay, except to assert that all testing, including testing in science classes, should be in the form of essays or sentences.)

Also, as the students learn to write, they must learn to write for correctness: spelling, grammar, correct subordination, paragraphing and organization: all the nuts and bolts of writing. They should also move towards developing a style.

One of the failings of the teaching of writing is that students usually write for a severely restricted audience. Usually they write for an audience of one: the teacher. Unfortunately, this means that the students ask themselves, what does the teacher want to hear? The results too often are essays written without sincerity, to provide what the student thinks the teacher wants, solely to fulfill the requirements of the assignment, for the grade.

Most of the problems that we associate with the teaching of writing can be solved by enlarging the audience. The teacher must remain part of the audience, especially to reinforce adherence to rules of correctness. But we want the student to write from *meaning*. We need to develop the idea that the student writes in order to communicate something of value to someone who cares. *The student needs an audience*. That audience should be the entire class. (Perhaps the entire school, through a school-wide publishing program.)

Furthermore, our school must adhere to the very important principles that all teachers are students; all students are teachers; being a lifelong student is perhaps our highest vocation. There is a corollary statement: no teacher or student can be a hypocrite. Sincerity must permeate this program from top to bottom. Hence teachers are writers too.

Most teachers balk at this idea, with some justification. After all, they probably work harder than their students do, and they have a different set of tasks and obligations than their students. Nevertheless, I found time to write responses to many seminars, which I shared with my students. More importantly, I *always* wrote a major essay when I required one of my students. When the essays came due, we spent one or more hours reading each other's papers, including mine.

There are numerous benefits to this approach:

1. When the students know they have a guaranteed audience of substantial size, they want to write well.
2. They are more likely to do the assignment. This is an important point. People who don't work in schools may not realize that most failure in schools is not the result of bad work, but of negligence.
3. They are all stimulated by an exchange of ideas, especially since they are sharing common experiences.

4. They have a clear reference point about what is good and bad writing. They can see for themselves how people their age write, and they can establish a point of reference for themselves. Norms go up, not down.
5. If you are using a graded system with a standard rubric, you will have few students who dispute their grades. One conviction held by many students is that grading essays is done arbitrarily by the teacher. This activity will help dispel that falsehood. They will have seen the full range of writing quality and will know where they stand. They will see that there is a difference between good and bad writing, that the differences can be clearly identified, and that judgments about writing are not strictly subjective.
6. The students will know that the teacher is sincere. If it is good for them to write, it is good for the teacher to write. I believe in the value of my assignment: they have the proof in their hands.
7. Do I have something to offer my students? Do I possess more knowledge than they do? If so, perhaps they will learn something from my essay that I otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to communicate.

These are the two most important things I have ever done as a teacher of writing: enlarge the audience; and be a writer.

The third important thing I did as a teacher of writing was to require that my students write often. I trust the simple statement, *People are good at what they do a lot of.* Some people are expert television watchers; they know a lot about it, they get a lot of practice. Some people are very good at doing drugs; they work at it. Many people want to be musicians, but only a few practice enough to actually become good. In the practice of education, we gain our freedom by submitting to discipline. If this point seems ridiculously obvious, observe how rarely it is followed.

It may be argued that I am creating problems for some students by requiring them to share their writing; perhaps the less able students will be held up to ridicule.

For the last fifteen years of my teaching career, I had students share their major papers with their classmates. I have *never* found that students were harmed. (Occasionally, and rarely, a student would approach me privately with a request that I keep his or her paper confidential; I honored those requests.) First, I found that the students were kind to each other. Second, as the students worked hard at their writing, there was little to ridicule. On the contrary, students were gratified that, after their hours of effort, more than one person would actually read what they wrote. After all, the purpose of writing, if it is to be meaningful, is to communicate. All writers seek an audience.

Creating a School Community

When I worked in the program that inspired this essay, I almost always awoke each morning before the alarm went off. I was up at 5:00 AM, reading, thinking, writing, ready to get to work. I think that most of my colleagues and students were glad, if not positively eager, to go to work each morning. This might be one definition of happiness.

One key to creating a school community lies in its methodology, and I hope I have suggested in the foregoing section how this may occur. The second key lies in the makeup of the staff. This staff needs to establish a true, functioning sense of collegiality. The teaching staff must run the school (the principal must allow this to happen) in all matters not narrowly administrative. Each staff member needs fully to cooperate with the staff as a whole to contribute ideas and to plan. This is no small task, because a living program must evolve, change, improve, and that can only happen well if everyone continually monitors the program. The Fortress Classroom must go, and with it any vestiges of Vertical Organization.

In the old bureaucratic high school the teachers' first thought would be, "Oh no, more work, and I can barely keep up as it is." True, in this system teachers must spend more time together in meetings, but they have the added benefit of human companionship, warm relations, and a sense of autonomy. Also, I found that adopting this teaching methodology made my job simpler in many ways, because *this method is simple and elegant.* The methodology, and the text, did much of the work I had previously taken on, such as preparing lectures. Also, "busy work" disappears in this program. I always kept before me the idea that *only a few things are really important.* Most teachers work very hard at *teaching*, but that doesn't always translate to *learning*. Perhaps we are tempted to see teaching=learning as an equation. If so, we should abandon that misconception. I can remember in many classes the immense energy I put into teaching, teaching, teaching. But I don't know if learning occurred. I do know that my students were not expending the energy I was. This methodology places the focus on *students learning* rather than on *teachers teaching*.

The other segment of our community is, of course, the student body. I think the rule of thumb should be, the greater the diversity in the school, the more your students will learn.

I hesitate to use the word "diversity" because it has become a buzzword. I will use it in the literal sense, meaning "various."

There are two kinds of diversity in schools. The most obvious includes racial, ethnic, sexual, economic, religious, and social differences. We want as many of each as our community offers. In our school all groups should be in a position to learn from the others.

It is more difficult to recognize and honor the other kind of diversity. We need to develop the ability to recognize that there are numerous kinds of intelligence, many different ways of learning, many aptitudes. We need to recognize that simple IQ is an inadequate way of indicating human potential. (Steven Pinker calls IQ a "crude consumer index.") People learn in many ways, think in many ways, communicate in many ways. Our school community must recognize that we all can learn more if we allow ourselves to gain insights from people who, because of the structure of their brains, see the world differently from ourselves. This kind of richness is much more important than the somewhat artificial categories listed in the previous paragraph. Acknowledging these kinds of diversity should not be confused with some attempt at political correctness, which has no place in this school.

Pure intelligence represented as IQ does not adequately represent human potential. I remember the words of one of the most intelligent students I ever taught, in a Philosophy course. The discussion concerned intelligence. This student maintained a 4.0, had high AP scores, was a math whiz bound for Cal Tech. He said simply, "Everyone is very intelligent."

A group of thoughtful students once told me that intelligence includes the following qualities: strength, flexibility, creativity, quickness, the ability to see connections, and awareness. I would add retention, and the list can no doubt be extended. Though many of these words are metaphors, I think those students were right.

One of the most important components of this school is its "special education" students. In the program I worked in, up to 20% of the students were so classified. Not every SE student will function well in the type of program I am describing, but those who are suited flourish amazingly well. Their biggest gains came in the area of language, but they did well in other areas also. They did well partly because, in a program like this, no one is ignored, everyone receives attention from someone. They were also carefully monitored by an excellent resource teacher, an essential part of the program. I cannot over emphasize the importance of these students, and their resource teacher, to this school.

They learned, and they promoted learning. In this program, everyone must give as well as receive, and I recall quite clearly the intellectual and emotional benefits I received when working with them, as with all my students. Indeed, I think that all the students came to recognize that they were indebted to the SE students for some portion of their educations (although the SE students were not explicitly identified as such). Not only were the educations of the "normal" students enhanced intellectually, but also emotionally and morally. Decency, patience, mental flexibility, even love, are all essential parts of education, and cannot in reality be separated from intellectual content.

It must be clear by now that this program cannot track. Fears of parents of the high-achieving-honors-track types that the "smart kids" will be "held back" by their intellectual inferiors are fantasies (though they might be justified if their children were in a treadmill system and the treadmill slowed down to accommodate someone). Using this methodology, everyone gives and everyone gets. The only person who loses is a person who can't give, and that person would lose in any case.

One of the fallacies accepted by most aggressive honors-track parents is that education is a zero sum game. They are convinced that if their child is to win, someone else must lose. If their child is to be accepted into Harvard, then some more inferior person must be excluded from Harvard; and the ultimate value of Harvard, as opposed to Landgrant State, is unquestioned. Likewise, they will scramble to obtain the largest share of whatever resources the high school has to offer; someone must win, someone must lose; the fact that you have won is implicit proof of your superiority. I reject this notion. There are many, many ways to succeed. Social life is a zero sum game if we choose to make it a zero sum game, but it is not intrinsically so. Likewise, life, and education, can be win-win situations if we choose to make them so.

An important aspect of our school community will be based on a recognition by each student and teacher of what is in her true self-interest as opposed to her narrow self-interest. In most school environments, the students pursue their narrow self-interests, which means that they will take care of themselves first and other people to the extent that it benefits them. But a person who recognizes what is in her true self-interest will not see education as a zero sum game. Instead, I win when my colleague wins; the student wins when her classmate wins; when I give I don't lose something, I gain something; but if I don't give I lose. Relationships will evolve which are not based on egotism and institutional status (student government, cheerleaders, athletes, other forms of popularity contests) but on ideas and honest emotions.

What about the kids who will not go to college?

The program I worked in has been doing Vocational Mentoring continuously since 1992. The school places students in a variety of work environments for some part of the day, for credit. The work environment isn't just a job—it is a placement that allows the student to develop some special skill or experience that is important to that student. Another activity outside the school is mentoring for some skill not necessarily work-related, such as photography, taught by a private citizen. And finally, there is always the likelihood that students would enjoy, and benefit from, a community service project. My guess is that a school like this will have a number of students who want to act altruistically in a good cause. Beneath the overpowering materialism of our society, there is a strong undercurrent of good

will waiting to be tapped. I think that many of our young people want a meaningful life based not on the endless acquisition of material wealth, but on some more substantial form of human development. We can appeal to the idealistic and benevolent impulses of our students and not merely prepare them for a life of materialistic consumption. Our young people are desperate for meaningful work. I understand, for example, that the Peace Corp has a long waiting list.

E. F. Schumacher wrote that, according to Buddhism, every good job has at least three characteristics: it allows one to bring forth the goods and services necessary to a becoming existence; it allows one to develop one's potential; it forces one to control one's egotism by cooperating with other people in a common task. Our school provides all three of these characteristics for the teaching staff, and two of these three characteristics for the students; one hopes that when they too go to work all three can be satisfied for them as well.

The Art of Conversation

One part of the foundation of our school is that we all talk to each other.

But not all talk is equally valuable. What constitutes a true conversation?

Content. Our school, in coaching sessions, in seminar, in other classes, and in meetings, relies on conversation. But, although polite talk and small talk is necessary, there will be a predominance of conversation that comes out of our learning, especially our texts. Because the tone of the school is serious, our talk is founded on ideas.

Sincerity. We must always assume that the person we are listening to is discussing every subject in good faith. We must assure someone who listens to us that we are approaching our subject in good faith.

Attentiveness. We never give half an ear to the speaker.

Responsiveness. We hear people talk about their "reactions" to an idea or a presentation. Sometimes teachers ask students to "react" to an idea. I suggest that we encourage instead a thoughtful *response* to a situation, one that is not delivered in haste, nor with heat, but calmly and thoughtfully.

Direction. A good conversation is similar to a play or a story in that it unfolds in a certain way; it develops according to a certain logic; it has a form; it has a theme. The participants in a conversation should be *attentive* to this development and encourage it; build on it; don't damage it with distractions, egotistical insertions, or irrelevant comments.

Expansiveness. Although it is important to help a conversation evolve in a certain direction, it is also important that a good conversation be allowed to expand into larger topics. An unfocussed conversation is bad, but a wide-ranging conversation can be extremely satisfying.

Define what an "argument" is. For many people, especially young people, an "argument" is a "squabble." One engages in an argument to win, which of course never happens. Let us make clear to our students that an argument is a logical course of thought, a process of reasoning. We can examine an argument for logical consistency and empirical truth; we can test it; we can then reject it, accept it, or accept it provisionally; we can use an argument as the foundation of a conversation; but we will never squabble over it. We want to learn and understand, not win or lose.

Develop an open not a closed mind. An open mind is willing to explore an idea and test its truth; a closed mind is afraid of a new idea because it already possesses the truth. Dogmatism and ideological thinking kill any good conversation and severely impede learning. One characteristic of a dogmatic mind is that it is afraid. We must never be afraid of ideas; courage is one quality of the open mind.

Fight egotism. I think that our culture does not make a clear distinction between legitimate and illegitimate authority. Sometimes we want to rebel against all authority, which often means that we as individuals set ourselves up as the ultimate authority without questioning if such an authority may be illegitimate. A legitimate authority has a clear grasp of his area of expertise and I will defer to that person; I will not assume that my knowledge is best simply because it is mine; but if, after careful consideration, I think I can trust myself, I will establish myself as my guide. This problem of knowing when to trust yourself, or whom to trust, is a difficult problem for anyone but particularly for adolescents, and particularly in a culture where thoughtless rebellion or blind individualism are often held up as models of behavior. Yet our intellectual models are often people who had the courage to defy authority and function as nonconformists. I think this question will be an ongoing theme in a good school.

It is very difficult to establish one's proper place in the world, to have a true sense of one's own proportions relative to the universe. It is easy to place one's self at the center of the universe and assume that the world revolves around that self. For this reason, I think it is harmful for teachers to lavish praise on students. I know it is fashionable to dish out praise. This is, or was, taught in schools of education ("positive reinforcement"). But I think it harms young people to ask them to bear the burden of egotism. I have seen many "gifted" and "honors" students who were told by adults that they were special, indeed uniquely valuable. It is too much to ask a young person to accept these statements and also retain a sense of their own true place in the world. We corrupt young people when we create the conditions for their own egotism to flourish. All of our language should be honest and as close to the objective truth as possible. And one truth is, humility is more valuable than pride.

Say what is valuable. Many people think that the idea of "free speech" releases them from the obligation to develop well-considered speech. Just as the listener has an obligation to attend to the speaker, the speaker has an obligation to the listener to try to say what is worth hearing, and to say it concisely. A windbag kills conversation. The speaker should try to take the focus off himself. Questions are often more valuable than statements. Practice silence.

Listen carefully. As S. I. Hayakawa pointed out, there is more to being a good listener than simply waiting patiently. One must attend carefully to what is said, without interrupting the speaker, and without spending the intervening time formulating counter-arguments; one must not only wait politely, but attentively. *We are listening to learn*, not eventually to shove ourselves into the spotlight. (Hayakawa's essay "How to Listen" is one of those important texts that have great utility within a school without being part of the great books canon.)

When these principles of speech become habitual, they eventually will have an impact on character, creating a calmer, more thoughtful personality. They will also contribute to closer human relationships because good communication is essential to any working relationship or friendship. When we communicate well, we build right relationships between people. We also learn to formulate judgments in a clearly rational way, based on information that is evaluated by a clear and calm mind.

The Supreme Value of Sincerity

I indicated above that there are a number of forces in the schools that prevent right relationships from occurring between students and students, students and teachers, and teachers and teachers in public schools. Eliminating the fortress classroom, abandoning vertical organization, ceasing to unnaturally separate adolescents from adults, and abandoning the curriculum driven classroom, should break down the institutional forces that prevent right relationships from occurring.

When right relationships are sought, the foundation for them is complete sincerity. One way to illustrate this point is by quoting the teachings of Confucius as recorded in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, from Chapters XX-XXV (Legge translation). I excerpt freely.

"If a man does not understand what is good, he will not attain sincerity in himself.

"Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity…is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains to sincerity, is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast.

"To this attainment there are requisite the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.

"To the superior man, while there is anything he has not studied, or while in what he has studied there is anything he cannot understand, he will not intermit his labor. While there is anything he has not inquired about, or anything in what he has inquired about which he does not know, he will not intermit his labor. While there is anything which he has not reflected on, or anything in what he has reflected on which he does not apprehend, he will not intermit his labor. If there is anything which he has not practiced, or his practice fails in earnest, he will not intermit his labor. If another man succeed by one effort, he will use a hundred efforts. If another man succeed by ten efforts, he will use a thousand.

"Let a man proceed in this way, and, though dull, he will surely become intelligent; though weak, he will surely become strong.

"When we have intelligence resulting from sincerity, this condition is to be ascribed to nature; when we have sincerity resulting from intelligence, this condition is to be ascribed to instruction. But given the sincerity, and there shall be the intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be the sincerity.

"It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature. Next…is he who cultivates to the utmost the shoots of goodness in him. From those he can attain to the possession of sincerity. This sincerity becomes apparent. From being apparent, it becomes manifest. From being manifest, it becomes brilliant. Brilliant, it affects others. Affecting others, they are changed by it. Changed by it, they are transformed.

"Sincerity is that whereby self-completion is effected, and its way is that by which man must direct himself.

"The possessor of sincerity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality he completes other men….The completing himself shows his perfect virtue. The completing other men…shows his knowledge."

In more prosaic language, in my experience, students and teachers who are sincere are willing to trust other people, and can be trusted; they will not manipulate other people, nor will they be manipulated; in the process of becoming whole people, they will assist others in becoming whole; they will carry on their quest outside of the classroom, and after their formal education has ended. They know that their quest is of absolute importance. Their models are Socrates, Buddha, Jesus, Galileo, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Darwin, Freud, Einstein: indeed, every passionate and committed mind they encounter.

What is going to foster this kind of sincerity, one which leads to a life-long search for knowledge and wisdom, one which forms one's character according to a

healthy code of honor and ethical behavior, one which establishes right relationships between people? The inspiration resides in the *meaningfulness* and *utility* of the texts, the intellectual growth that results from the oral and written communications that occur in connection with the text, and the emotional gratification that comes from mutual aid. Love in the Platonic sense is not too strong a word. We call such sincere people *true.*

Leisure, the Basis of Culture

Josef Pieper's book *Leisure, the Basis of Culture,* is one of the most important books I have ever read, and one that has a direct bearing on school reform. He points out that, in the modern industrial world, the concept of leisure as understood by the ancient Greeks has almost disappeared, and the word itself has been corrupted to mean simply "free time." (Significantly, he points out that the Greek word for "leisure" is the origin of Latin *scola*, and the English *school*. The names of institutions of education themselves mean "leisure.")

In the modern world of "total work," we have divided all time into "work" and "not work." The effect of this is to extend "work" into every area of human life, because the purpose of "not work" is to prepare for "work." Even when we escape from work we are defining ourselves in terms of work, as the word "escape" indicates. When we are not at work, our work nevertheless casts its shadow over what we do, as we all know when the end of the weekend or the vacation approaches. Work in the modern industrial world is essentially totalitarian, forcing its way into every cranny of life. When we are not at work, we are preparing for work, or recovering from work, or escaping temporarily from work. This problem is intensely aggravated when the work itself has no intrinsic value and is basically disconnected from our selves.

Pieper is convinced, correctly, that there is a sphere of human life that is neither "work" nor "not work" in which human beings can develop their essential humanity, and approach happiness. This sphere of leisure is not one of idleness (another way that the word has been corrupted) but one of effort and engagement. This is the sphere of intellectual play and creativity, where human beings are most intensely human. It is this sphere of human activity that creates the higher culture, that makes life worth living. This can be the enchanted realm of the school, the academy, the lyceum. The modern industrial high school runs exactly counter to this ideal, and is therefore perfectly suited to the world of total work, and mirrors it closely: the world of the institutionalized automaton. In this world everyone is busy, busy, busy, but no one knows exactly what value this business has.

I mentioned above E. F. Schumacher's summary of the Buddhist idea of what good work is. His words are worth repeating. 1) Good work enables one to bring

forth the goods and services necessary to a becoming existence. Not poverty, not superfluous wealth; not a wretched or an extravagant existence; a *becoming* existence. 2) Good work enables one to develop one's potential. 3) Good work forces one to subdue one's ego by requiring one to engage in a common endeavor with other people; and one thereby reaps the rewards of fellowship, even love.

Good work, therefore, allows one to provide for much more than one's material existence. It also allows one to develop one's potential as a human being (rather than as an automaton or *robot*), and provides for emotional growth and satisfaction. Work that only satisfies one's material needs is unsatisfactory; work that intensifies one's materialism or aggravates one's egotism is destructive of one's character.

Our school should be a place of *leisure* in the truest, most fundamental sense of the word.

Curriculum

This heading seems particularly daunting at first. How can I suggest the proper course offerings over eight semesters of school in a number of different courses? And then outline the syllabus for each course?

I won't. Instead, let's keep in mind our need for *elegant simplicity*, remembering that *only a few things are really important.* If we trust our methodology, establishing our curriculum is easy. (Keep in mind that many schools have burdened themselves with too many required courses. Indeed, school boards are under pressure to "strengthen the curriculum," and the easiest way to appear to do this is to add requirements. In our program, this is a false panacea. Simplicity is the watchword.)

For example, imagine that you are planning a course in United States Government. The mass of material and the scope of the course are overwhelming, including the history of the Constitution, the evolution of our legal thought, the organization of the three branches of government, the causes and effects of the Civil War, and on and on. If you follow the treadmill approach, you are simply overwhelmed by the syllabus and you need to move fast, and even then your students are unlikely to emerge with a whole picture of our system, its history and ramifications.

An alternative is to simplify and deepen the thought. For example, offer readings from the *Republic* of Plato, including particularly the Parable of the Cave, and Book VIII. Don't worry yet about the American Constitution. Then offer readings from Hobbes and Locke and discuss the social contract. Then something philosophical from a contemporary of the Founders, such as Kant on Enlightenment. When it is time to read and seminar, say, the Bill of Rights, the

students will have a foundation to work from, they can bring something solid to a discussion of the Constitution.

This is a good time to deal with a major criticism of our methodology: where, when, and how will students get the little facts that refer to the larger philosophy? For example, it is good to know Locke on government, but we also need to know how the Electoral College works. There are three ways to accomplish this: 1) during coaching, let's say of the Bill of Rights, students can learn the background of why the Articles of Confederation failed, why a Constitutional Convention was called, and what was necessary to get the Constitution ratified. This can be researched fairly quickly by some member of the group and presented to the group as background. Factual information like this does not require a lot of research and can be learned quickly. 2) As the semester advances, the teacher can see where there are holes in the curriculum. These holes can be filled by research projects. Each student can tackle some problem in government and present the results of his research to the group. Everyone can learn from everyone's findings. 3) A simple time line indicating the occurrence and sequence of historical events, prominently displayed, can provide an important point of reference throughout a study of the historical period in question.

This methodology uses primary sources first, secondary sources as supplements, unlike in most classrooms, where almost all sources are secondary. We don't want to read *about* Jefferson, we want to read *what Jefferson wrote*. Rather than investing in expensive (and inadequate) textbooks, establish a reference library in the classroom. One can learn facts, dates, and sequences fairly easily and quickly. This information should feed the larger and more important questions, such as, for example, the significance of the First Amendment in American life and how it is connected to Enlightenment thought.

This methodology rejects the notion that learning must be strictly linear. I am convinced that the human mind is not merely one dimensional; we can hold in our minds the teachings of Plato, Locke, Thoreau, and Martin Luther King Jr. simultaneously. As I mentioned in my previous essay, the content of the mind is more like a map than a set of parallel lines, and our job is to create a detailed map as our educations occur organically. By "organically" I simply mean that one thing leads to another, not because they are artificially sequenced but because ideas connect. There is a natural connection between why the original Constitution ignored the question of slavery and the subsequent events 1845-1865. There is no reason to defer the discussion just because we haven't yet "covered" the War of 1812.

Lest this approach seem random and unplanned (will my child get what she needs to do well on the SATs?) I can only say that in my experience there is much more logic to this approach than to the treadmill approach, where the clear

connections between ideas and events are often obscured or ignored. And examine your own education. Did your knowledge of history come according to a strict sequence, or have you spent your life filling in the blank spaces on the map? As for myself, the latter case is true. We must always remember, we are all more or less inadequately educated, and our students need to know that their high school educations, their college educations, are in no way complete. Our students need to *learn to want to learn*, and to *learn how to learn*.

I invite the reader, and our panel of experts, to simply extend this approach to any subject when developing their school curriculum.

I have added a four-year reading plan as an addendum to this essay to serve as an example.

The Special Case of Mathematics

When I discuss the great books/Socratic seminar approach with informed parents and teachers, all is well until the question arises, "How can you possibly teach math in a Socratic seminar? How will the students get 'the basics'? And sequencing in math simply cannot be ignored."

My response, first, is to divide the study of math into two categories. The smaller category includes those students who have a specific and narrow interest in using math as the basis of their future professional life: the engineers and other specialists. These students, a minority, should stay with the traditional math program after Algebra II to prep them for their college math work.

The larger group, people like me, will benefit from an entirely different emphasis and program.

Most non-specialists I know have a very limited need for sophisticated math. Arithmetic, of course, is a necessity of life. But, speaking from my experience, I find that I have only rarely used Algebra as an adult, and even when I used it I didn't need it. On the other hand, Plane Geometry has been exceedingly valuable to me in terms of utility. First, it was the only place in my high school curriculum where logic as such was taught. This was invaluable. Second, its utility is clear. For example, I am not a trained carpenter, but I can nevertheless, given enough time, construct buildings without blueprints or other instruction. I can do this because when I am stumped I can usually figure out what to do by reference to what I learned back in 10th grade plane geometry. Also, when I travel in the wilderness, I can triangulate with a hand held compass without an instruction manual as long as I take the time to think back through my geometry.

Euclid, therefore, is an excellent text for the young mathematician, specialist or not.

My next point is just as fundamental as Euclid's *Elements*, but much more radical in terms of modern education.

Mathematical expressions, I am told by mathematicians, underlie the universe. To understand reality, I need to understand math.

I live in a world of beauty and harmony. My sensory experience tells me so. I clearly see visual beauty in the natural world, and I see it in art and other human creations. I hear it in the form of bird songs and other natural sounds, and I hear it in music. Following the assertion in the above paragraph, can I assume that this beauty and harmony have a mathematical basis?

If so, can I apply this principle to the ordinary non-specialist like myself? What if someone in our reformed high school put together a math course for ordinary people in which the students studied the mathematical ground of our experience? The math instruction would coexist with and underpin the aesthetic principles involved. For example, could I teach math as Pythagoras might, by starting with a violin (lute?) string, and going from there to a study of harmonics? After all, music is the most mathematical of all the arts, so why is it that our schools separate these disciplines rather than uniting them? Math is everywhere, in our music, our visual art, the spaces we occupy, the forces that hold up our buildings and our airplanes, and on and on. I think, in combination with arithmetic, Algebra, and Euclid, this course would make mathematics meaningful for non-specialist students. *All mathematicians assert that math is among the most* ***meaningful*** and ***beautiful*** of all human pursuits, yet our students are told only of its utility; some small fraction of our students ever get as much as a glimmer of its meaning. This is tragic, and this can be changed.

PE for the Egghead

I accept the assertion that *Homo sapiens* is a tripartite creature: physical, intellectual, and emotional. I think that the reform program we develop will provide for the intellectual and emotional development of our students, but that it will require a bit of extra effort and creativity to provide for their physical well-being and development. That is so because, in my experience in reform programs, the main focus is on the intellect. Refreshing as that is, nevertheless there may be a bias against organized physical exertion.

I think that PE in this reform program should not be blocked out as a separate activity, but instead should be part of a larger focus on physical and emotional health. I have stated above that I suspect that many adolescents neglect their nutritional needs, skipping breakfast so that they can sleep a little later, because they went to bed too late the night before, which means that they are not sleeping properly, and so on. All of the health needs of an adolescent form a package:

social commitments often dictate nutrition and sleep, as does after school work, and a general sense that there are not enough hours in the day, so go short on sleep and skimp on food, or substitute fast food for real food. Added to this is our voluntary dependence on cars. Many adolescents, like their parents, in one sense live in their cars, which tends to determine nutritional, sleep, and exercise habits.

On the other hand, good health is a determinant in intellectual growth and emotional stability. Students learn more, and are happier, if they are well fed, well rested, and physically content. I think that the ideal attitude of students and teachers can be expressed by the term "alert relaxation" (an attitude appropriate to leisure). School, and life, should not be determined by stress; relaxation contributes to clear-headedness; a well-cared for organism is alert, fit, sound.

Each reform program will come up with an approach to PE and student health suitable to itself, but I would suggest that these concerns not be treated as "add-ons" to the program, something tacked on to satisfy state requirements. These concerns should be central. One way to start would be to break out of the formula of one hour of PE two or three times a week. The one-hour block is too short, and twice a week is not enough; three times per week is minimal. Perhaps two-hour blocks three times per week would be adequate. This would fit in with the idea that the school needs to break out of single hour blocks. Almost all activities in this school require at least two hours.

The real goal, of course, is to make healthy living an organic part of one's life. Teachers must make the same commitment as students in this regard. One need not be an athlete to be fit and healthy. Perhaps a range of activities could be offered, soccer and lacrosse at one end of the spectrum, Tai Chi and yoga at the other. People who are sedentary by temperament still want to be healthy. Weekend outdoor activities might be another option. Chances are, these students will have a bit of a nonconformist streak, and will eventually engage in physical activities which are unstructured and self-initiated.

Students and teachers who are on a quest may want to engage in self-discovery by challenging themselves in the outdoors, especially in the remote wilderness. I know of no better way to develop healthy habits, strength, and both self-reliance and cooperation, than during wilderness travel.

School Organization

School reform will occur one way in rural Nebraska, another way in suburban Connecticut, and a third way in urban Chicago. The principles of reform are the same everywhere, but the details of reform are manifold and flexible.

Probably the first consideration for a school board and administration is, how will the new program be connected administratively and physically to the rest of

the school district? Do we alter the existing high school (a likely prospect in a small district with a small high school) or do we acquire a separate building for our new program while retaining a conventional high school elsewhere (a plausible approach in a larger district)? Whatever the choices are, the worst choice is to attach a reform program to a larger existing high school. In this situation, teachers, administrators, and counselors will spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with administrative problems, such as meshing the two staffs, and meshing the two daily schedules; counseling problems, such as reconciling student schedules, or reconciling transcripts; and social problems, such as dealing with potential conflicts and jealousies between the two parts of the school. Autonomy for the new program is the only effective answer. (That said, it is also true that if the reform program is attached to a larger school, the students may have the choice of taking a wider range of classes part of the day, such as in the case of the math specialists above.)

The program I worked in was divided into two-hour blocks, three blocks per day. A class called Seminar met every day. All students in the school were scheduled into Seminar. (The Seminar reading program is appended to this essay.) The readings offered in Seminar provided the common methodology and content for the school. This was the heart of the school program.

Other classes were offered during the other two hour blocks, and they met every other day, so that in effect every student took five courses per semester, though they actually got credit for six, since Seminar met multiple requirements. These courses had conventional titles: Biology I, U.S. Government, and so on, but they were taught using the great books/Socratic seminar method. Also, among the electives, students could work out an Independent Study program with a teacher, or work at career training or on a project off campus, so that the curriculum was quite flexible while retaining its academic integrity.

Our panel of experts will need to organize their school according to their school philosophy, their own experiences, and the needs of the community they serve. I encourage them to block out long class periods, and to plan flexible working spaces. I also encourage them to plan a school that reduces paperwork and eliminates classroom interruptions. I append the organizational plans and four-year programs of two excellent programs with which I am familiar.

Student Problems

I do not think that there is such a thing as an educational panacea, including this new program. I will indicate here some problems that any school can anticipate. The staff must be prepared to deal with these problems as an ongoing and unresolved challenge.

The major problems that I have experienced, and that have also have been identified as problems by students and staff I have interviewed, are physical fatigue and poor nutrition; laziness, avoidance of engagement, passivity; unwillingness to share, to speak up, to offer themselves; lack of sincerity; lack of passion; unwillingness to assume the responsibility for one's education; assuming that the job of education is done through teaching rather than through learning.

My experience tells me that public education is an ongoing process of problem solving. The two ways that I know of to attack these problems are: 1) Give the methodology time to work. Most students who move into this program will be experiencing something radically new. It will take them time to grow into their new responsibilities. Not only do they need to grow out of their immaturity; they also need to grow out of old habits of mind, many of which were reinforced by their previous time in school. 2) A substantial portion of staff meetings must be devoted to developing strategies for improving student behavior.

Teacher Problems

Teachers need to face the fact that, just as a percentage of students fail, and a percentage of administrators are ineffective, a percentage of teachers are unfit for a role in this school.

This is a ticklish situation. In a large high school, with teaching staffs of perhaps 120, administrators and students can work around a few incompetent teachers. However, in a small program, one teacher may represent 20% of the staff. This program doesn't have the resources or scope to work around or "hide" an unfit teacher.

(Here the question arises, Why isn’t this teacher fired? Or better, how did this teacher survive the several years prior to attaining tenure? The answer varies from situation to situation. I offer my own observation, which I call the 5% Rule. A discipline principal once expressed frustration that she dealt with the same one hundred students over and over. These one hundred were five percent of the student body. The other 1900 students were rarely in trouble. I went directly to the faculty mail room and went down the names, identifying the teachers I thought were substandard in some way, and sure enough, that was five percent of the teaching staff. I occurred to me that this 5% Rule may apply to any profession or occupation. Of every one hundred lawyers, plumbers, brain surgeons, truck drivers, I think it is reasonable to suspect that five might be lazy, deceptive, unprepared, or flawed in some serious way. However, that may not be true of all occupations. The Alaska legislature was swept in the previous decade by a bribery scandal that vastly exceeded my 5% Rule; Congress at this writing has the approval of less than 13% of the electorate, far below the approval rating of public

schools; so it seems likely that at least some groups of politicians score much more poorly than other livelihoods in competence and honesty. Our right-wing legislatures may well be stocked with venal incompetents who thirst to fire teachers. If the Alaska legislature and Congress lived up to my 5% Rule, our state and national politics would be in exemplary condition.)

To complicate things, teachers on a small staff who work closely together are often friends, and it is a paradox of life that it is harder to tell an unpleasant truth to a friend than to someone more distant. Also, we are often blind to the failings of friends, (as we are of ourselves), and rather than counseling or replacing them we are tempted to protect them, even recruit them or promote them, thus undermining the work of the entire school. In my experience, staffing is the single greatest problem in education.

Again, my judgments are formed from personal experience, and student and teacher interviews. The major problems of weak teachers: fear; lack of organization; poor classroom management; lack of passion; lack of sincerity; laziness; lack of integrity, exhibited as hypocrisy; insufficient knowledge.

A teacher may be afraid for several reasons: that parents will complain about course content, that students will complain about grades, that they will be criticized by an administrator. But a good teacher will forge ahead fearlessly because she can trust her inner compass.

For example, I have seen instances where teachers were afraid to offer readings from Nietzsche, and from Genesis. Nietzsche, because of his radical tone, and especially his criticism of herd Christianity; Genesis because it is a religious document. (This in the same program! In the end, both were offered.) A fearful teacher will avoid both, a clear-headed teacher will offer both. Academic freedom must be preserved, the close-minded must not be allowed to intimidate the open-minded. When the open mind allows itself to be intimidated, and the teacher is fearful, the result is a form of self-censorship, a form of prior restraint, which is just as damaging as overt censorship. Perhaps it is more damaging, because it occurs willfully and secretly. At least overt censorship occurs in public, and prompts public debate. (Ongoing attempts to exclude or sanitize *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* come to mind.)

The best way to avoid fearfulness is for the teacher to use clear-headed good judgment, and to be backed by a strong administrator. The administrator needs to trust the teacher, the teacher needs to trust the administrator. For example, I think that the last portion of Plato's *Symposium* should be presented uncut, in spite of the homosexual references. There are sound scholarly reasons for doing so. But I can't offhand think of a good reason to offer something by Sade, even though many academics opine that he is a foremost literary artist. The administrator needs to

trust me to have the good sense not to offer Sade; I need to trust the administrator to back me on the uncut *Symposium.*

On the practical side, good teaching begins with organization and classroom management. An organized teacher is in control of her situation. This makes her life easier in many ways, one of which is that she has more time to do important things. Organization is also good for students because they have a clear idea of what is happening in the classroom, what they are supposed to do, where they stand. This is particularly beneficial to our Special Education students, who number perhaps one of every five of our students.

Classroom management includes organization but is much more. The most important part of classroom management is to establish a tone, a set of expectations. The students must feel that, in this classroom, serious business is being done, and they are part of that business. Your time is restricted and you use it all. The first important step is to start class in a timely manner; get right down to the task at hand; and then use all the time productively. The tone is set in the first minute of the first class of the semester, and is reestablished every day. The tone is high seriousness, and we are on a mission. If the teacher is willing to waste time, then why should the teacher criticize students for wasting time? If essays need to be turned in on time, why shouldn't they be returned to the students on time? If students are supposed to take the work seriously, and incorporate what they learn into their lives, shouldn't the same be true of the teacher? Adolescents can smell a hypocrite from a mile away, and they don't much like them. They know when a teacher is truly and fully committed. Passion and integrity are the watchwords.

When I was a student in the public schools, I was there by law. I didn't exercise a choice. Someone was commanding me to spend my time in a certain way. And I remember thinking, "This is my life and I deeply resent the fact that someone is willing to waste it. If you are going to command my time—my life—you had better have something to offer."

Sometimes we overlook the obvious. For example, when appraising new staff, a faculty might discuss the new person's: flexibility, amiability, willingness to adapt to a reform program, kindness, empathy with students, and so on. But in my experience, one question rarely asked is, *"Has he mastered his subject?"* Why do we tend to overlook such a fundamental question? Teachers who haven't mastered their subject lack confidence, have discipline problems, can't command the respect of their students, don't know how to put together a curriculum, and generally have little to offer a school. On the other hand, they draw away energy and resources from the rest of the staff, who must prop them up and carry them. All the kind-heartedness and good intentions in the world cannot compensate for ignorance in a teacher. Yet I have seen teachers brought into reform programs on this basis. When all is said and done, at the end of the day, "Nice" just isn't good enough.

In my experience, the key point, of course, is to select a good staff to start with, rather than assuming that a weak candidate can be counseled to success. If weaknesses in the staff occur, the administrator needs to deal with them, because the teachers probably will be too emotionally involved to deal properly with the situation themselves. Likewise, new staff members should be hired above board. In some situations friends arrange for the hiring of friends or protégés by promoting them behind the scene without fully consulting the rest of the staff. They do this with the best will in the world, convinced that their judgment is good, but the results are usually disastrous. Hiring should be done by faculty review, where the candidates are considered in an above-board manner, without considerations of cronyism or favoritism, or it should be placed in the hands of an objective administrator. If these points seem too obvious to mention, I can only point out that they are as crucial as they are obvious.

I repeat: staffing is the school's most important challenge. It needs to be approached in the most unbiased and clear-headed way possible. The rule of thumb should be: the needs of the entire school should never be subordinated to the "needs" of a single teacher.

Conclusion

We often despair of attaining true educational reform, but the good news is that schools already exist which have solved the problems posed by the Fortress Classroom, The Myth of Vertical Organization, The Unnatural Separation of Adolescents from Adults, and The Fallacy of the Curriculum-Driven Classroom. These programs have had years of success. Their first students have already graduated from college and begun careers. Once established, the effects of the programs were felt immediately. They are inexpensive, not requiring large investments in real estate, text books, and equipment. And they have done more for education than I have been able to indicate in this essay.

The Socratic Method, combined with the "great books" philosophy, is an elegant educational tool that does a great deal efficiently and cheaply.

1. This method has solved the problem of the Fortress Classroom by creating a collegial relationship among students and staff within the school. Also, since all classrooms share a common philosophy, and all students share a common fund of knowledge, there is always a common basis for discussion within the entire school. Our philosophy also includes the idea that we don't draw clear lines between disciplines; the humanities and the sciences are not at war with each other; we advocate the integration of all knowledge. You can't maintain these views and have a fortress at the same time.

2. We have avoided the Myth of Vertical Organization by turning our teachers into students and our students into teachers. Everybody teaches everybody. This means that the interests of the "teachers" and "students" are common. Education is something that students undertake to do for themselves. When I taught, I introduced myself to students as a man who is a student: life's highest calling. And they knew I meant it. My actions proved it.

3. We have avoided The Unnatural Separation of Adolescents from Adults by destroying the Fortress Classroom, by not pretending to be vertically organized (although the school does have clear lines of authority), and by respecting the fact that the students are educating themselves because the students have an interest in educating themselves. The paid staff respects the fact that the students are worthy colleagues. The students recognize that the paid staff is working in their interest. Because our interests are common, we can work together in concert. It is a community.

4. We have avoided the pitfalls of the Curriculum-Driven Classroom because we have recognized that learning follows from meaning, and that quality of learning is more valuable than speed, quantity, and sequence. One way that we have been able to emphasize meaning and quality is by acting on the conviction that we can offer any scholarly work to adolescents, regardless of how difficult it is, and, given enough time, they can understand the work if we all tackle it together. By doing this, we not only are able to learn the content of the work, but we are also able to learn the language skills necessary to read, speak, and write well, and we learn the value of developing the social skills necessary to accomplish a difficult task together. This is very like the working groups found in our most creative and prosperous businesses and scientific endeavors. We have also discovered that our methodology is suited to a wide range of abilities and can satisfy a large number of different educational needs. To mention one of these: our students gain a great sense of satisfaction from accomplishing the difficult task. Whereas most students read *about* Plato or Confucius or Lincoln, we read what they actually wrote. The fact that we deal with primary rather than secondary sources is an enormous advantage to any student, especially to the college bound student. Our students have consistently reported to us that, when they enter college, they have distinct advantages over their fellow freshmen.

In short, our methodology serves our students intellectually, socially, and emotionally. When we get up in the morning, we want to go to school.

Addenda

I have been regularly encountering articles in my magazines on the subject of education, and it has not escaped me that what the schools I have described are

doing is what is being advocated by some of our best thinkers. It thrills me to think that these two schools have been accomplishing what some of our best thinkers advocate for *future* change in education! But it also dismays me that successful experiments in education may be overlooked or undervalued by the people who are in a position to promote them, support them, strengthen them, and expand them. I recommend two articles to illustrate some of the points I have made, one by Earl Shorris, "In the Hands of the Restless Poor," *Harper's,* September 1997, and "Back from Chaos," by Edward O. Wilson, *The Atlantic*, March 1998.

The Four Year Reading Program

The following great books/Socratic seminar program is designed to be implemented during two hours of each school day. During this (uninterrupted) block of time, all students in the school read and discuss the same papers or books during roughly the same time frame (though not necessarily at the same time of day). This is important, because the readings become a point of commonality for all students and staff; there is always in the school a common point of reference, a common subject of discussion: in the end, all things connect. It is important to note that the students are not segregated by age. How can 9th graders keep up with 12th graders who are determined to go to college? How can that 12th grader tolerate that immature 9th grader? And doesn't that slow everything down? What we have found is that the young students are proud to raise the level of their game, the older students enjoy being mentors, and the community is strengthened.

The rest of the school day is taken up with other subjects. By no means is the following list offered as a complete education.

When I recalled my time working in a great books/Socratic seminar program, and then reviewed our reading list, it became apparent that most readings fell into at least one of eight categories. (Of course, many readings in fact span several categories.) I then developed a reading list whereby each semester included one reading in each of the categories. I have listed the categories below, and the readings for each semester are keyed to the list in the same order.

A number of teachers I worked with thought that there was a paucity of poetry and fiction in our list of readings. I think that this observation is correct. Reading poetry and fiction requires a different kind of thought, and in some ways more sophisticated thought, than reading non-fiction. A good reader of poetry and fiction can read on several levels at once, and reading at this higher level of

sensitivity and interpretation develops a mind that is richer than that of the person who reads strictly at the literal level. Reading should include much more than speed and a large vocabulary (though I fear that many high school students think that if they read fast they are good readers).

My criteria for selecting poetry was that it be challenging, of proven worth, and surprising. There are so many fine poems that I cannot provide a convincing rationale why these in particular should be on the list. One could substitute titles at will. I would also be hard put to answer the question: why only one per semester? The same observations could be made of the fiction.

I included a book-length piece of literature, or in two instances collections of plays, because a) I think that students should not get locked into the idea that their reading should be restricted to papers; b) If all students read the same book during the semester, this may reinforce the idea that our students have some intellectual anchor in common. Indeed, the papers already do that, but having a book in common may unite them in a larger project. Again, the titles are arbitrary and I could not well respond to the criticism of "why didn't you include this one?" My problem was exclusion, not inclusion. However, it is easier for me to justify the book titles than the poems and other fiction. For example, I think that *Anna Karenina* is the greatest novel ever written; *Bleak House* is a dissection of an entire society (as is *Anna*). And so on.

Certainly, readings will emerge during the four years that should gain inclusion here. Also, the staff should consider whether certain key papers shouldn't be offered repeatedly. A staff should never lock themselves into the next reading. The syllabus is not a fixed program.

My most difficult task was to arrange the readings thematically. I am not sure that this is entirely possible, or even desirable. When I tried to arrange readings thematically, I realized that the students could be absorbed in existential angst one semester, consumed by Greek thought another semester, brooding about personal identity another semester, and so on. Therefore, although I would keep the arrangement of eight categories I list below, I think that the readings could, perhaps should, be shuffled. So I have provided additional lists: readings listed by category rather than by semester. The current semester-by-semester list is arranged thematically to a small extent; I front-loaded some key readings; for the rest, I used my personal judgment.

I will conclude with a heretical thought: since all great ideas connect, and since our educational approach is not linear, the sequencing of these readings, with the exceptions of a few key texts, doesn't really matter. A staff could almost roll the dice and take them at random.

Categories

1. poetry
2. fiction
3. traditional philosophy
4. history
5. psychology, and the development and identity of the self
6. language and logic
7. the individual and society
8. the methodology of self-education

Sample Four Year Reading Program

Semester 1

1. W. H. Auden, "The Unknown Citizen" (poem)
2. John Barth, "Ad Infinitum: A Short Story" (story)
3. Aristotle, "On Happiness"
4. Johan Huizinga, "Historical Ideals of Life" from *Men and Ideas*
5. Lao Tzu
6. Hayakawa, "How to Listen"
7. Leopold, "The Land Ethic", from *A Sand County Almanac*
8. Thoreau, from *Walden*

Book-length reading: Jane Austen, *Emma*

Semester 2

1. Galway Kinnell, "The Bear" (poem)
2. Anton Chekov, "At Sea" (story)
3. Nietzsche, selections
4. Otto Friedrich, "The Kingdom of Auschwitz"
5. Buber, from *I and Thou*
6. Scudder, " How Agassiz Taught Professor Scudder"
7. Plato, "The Crito"
8. King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Book-length reading: Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

Semester 3

1. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (poem)
2. Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" (story)

3. Soren Kierkegaard, selections
4. Gibbon, from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
5. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
6. S. I Hayakawa, from *Language in Thought and Action*
7. Aristotle, "On Friendship"
8. Spinoza, "Preliminaries"

Book-length reading: Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*

Semester 4

1. Shakespeare, "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds" (sonnet)
2. Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (story)
3. Plato, "The Symposium"
4. Robert Graves, from *Good-bye to All That*
5. William James, "The Consciousness of Self"
6. Adrienne Rich, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying"
7. Plato, the "Apology"
8. John Stuart Mill, from *On Liberty*

Book-length reading: Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Semester 5

1. Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man"
2. Joyce Carol Oates, "Life after High School"
3. John Dewey, "The Virtues"
4. R. W. Southern, from *The Making of the Middle Ages*
5. Confucius, selections
6. Bertrand Russell, "Truth and Falsehood"
7. Plato, from *The Republic*, Book VIII
8. Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave"

Book length reading: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Semester 6

1. Alastair Reid, "Curiosity" (poem)
2. John Paul Sartre, "The Wall" (story)
3. Spinoza, from *The Ethics*
4. Johan Huizinga, from *The Waning of the Middle Ages*
5. Pascal, selections
6. Wendell Berry, "Standing by Words" (edited)

7. Alexis de Tocqueville, "What Sort of Despotism Democratic Nations have to Fear"
8. Marcus Aurelius, from *The Meditations*
Book length reading(s): the four great tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*

Semester 7

1. John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (poem)
2. William Faulkner, "The Bear" (story)
3. Kant, from *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*
4. Frederick Jackson Turner, from *The Frontier in American History*
5. Dostoyevski, "The Grand Inquisitor," from *The Brothers Karamazov*
6. Virginia Woolf, from "A Room of One's Own"
7. Aristotle, "On Politics"
8. Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"
Book length reading: Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Semester 8

1. Robert Frost, "Out, Out-" (poem)
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
3. Locke, "Of True and False Ideas"
4. Peter Green, from *Alexander of Macedon*
5. Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"
6. Euclid, from the *Elements*
7. Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"
8. Einstein, "Ideas and Opinions: Kepler"
Book-length reading(s): *Prometheus Bound*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hippolytus*

Readings Sorted by Category

1. POETRY

W. H. Auden, "The Unknown Citizen"
Galway Kinnell, "The Bear"
T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
Shakespeare, "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds"
Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man"
Alastair Reid, "Curiosity"
John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Robert Frost, "Out, Out-"

2. FICTION

John Barth, "Ad Infinitum: A Short Story"
Anton Chekov, "At Sea"
Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place"
Flannery O"Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
Joyce Carol Oates, "Life After High School"
John Paul Sartre, "The Wall"
William Faulkner, "The Bear"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"

3. PHILOSOPHY

Aristotle, "On Happiness"
Spinoza, from *The Ethics*
Kierkegaard, selections
John Locke, "Of True and False Ideas"
Dewey, "The Virtues"
Plato, "The Symposium"
Nietzsche, selections
Kant, from *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*

4. HISTORY

Huizinga, "Historical Ideals of Life"
Friedrich, "The Kingdom of Auschwitz"
Gibbon, from *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
Robert Graves, from *Good-bye to All That*
R. W. Southern, from *The Making of the Middle Ages*
Johan Huizinga, from *The Waning of the Middle Ages*
Frederick Jackson Turner, from *The Frontier in American History*
Peter Green, from *Alexander of Macedon*

5. PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SELF

Buber, from *I and Thou*
Confucius
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
William James, "The Consciousness of Self"
Lao Tsu
Pascal
Dostoyevski, "The Grand Inquisitor," from *The Brothers Karamazov*

Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"

6. LANGUAGE AND LOGIC

Hayakawa, "How to Listen"
Scudder, "How Agassiz Taught Professor Scudder"
S. I. Hayakawa, from *Language in Thought and Action*
Adrienne Rich, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying"
Bertrand Russell, "Truth and Falsehood"
Wendell Berry, "Standing by Words"
Woolf, from "A Room of One's Own"
Euclid, from the *Elements*

7. THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Aristotle, "On Politics"
Aristotle, "On Friendship"
Plato, "The Crito"
Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," from *A Sand County Almanac*
Plato, from *The Republic*, Book VIII
Alexis de Tocqueville, "What Sort of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear"
Plato, "The Apology"
Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

8. THE METHODOLOGY OF SELF-EDUCATION

Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"
Marcus Aurelius, from *The Meditations*
Albert Einstein, "Ideas and Opinions: Kepler"
John Stuart Mill, from *On Liberty*
Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden*
Spinoza, "Preliminaries"
Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave"

BOOK LENGTH FICTION AND DRAMA

Jane Austen, *Emma*
Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*
Dickens, *Bleak House*
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*; Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*; Euripides*, Hippolytus*

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