

**DON'T BLAME IT ON READING: AN ANALYSIS
OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FAILURE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN ONE LARGE CITY**

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For students in the schools in which I work, lack of reading ability is like the tip of an iceberg; everyone wants to talk about the part of the iceberg they can see, and are either unable to talk about, or unaware of the larger part beneath the surface.

Without belaboring the iceberg metaphor, I would like to label the iceberg "Schooling in America," the sea in which the iceberg floats as "society," and examine, subjectively from a perspective somewhat removed, the forces impinging on each.

One of the ringing tenants of the American system, and one which attracts the attention and envy of underprivileged people the world over is "A free and liberal education for all children to the extent they can profit from it." Moreover, the common school is the great "leveler" in a free society, one in which the rich man's son and the poor man's son rub elbows as a result of the common experiences they share in school.

Students in the schools in which I work are sons and daughters of poor men and women. And most of them are black. They do not go to school with the sons and daughters of the well-to-do. Children of the well-to-do, for the most part are white and live in suburbs which surround the city.

The school buildings in the city in which I work are old, worn, and dilapidated, like the surrounding neighborhoods. People in charge say there is no money to fix up the schools. The atmosphere of most schools is depressing. The school buildings in the newer suburbs are bright, spacious, modern, and inviting.

Students in the suburbs can choose courses in math from pre-calculus to differential equations. There are computer labs in almost every school. In my city, most high schools have only one advanced math class, and they rarely include anything beyond college algebra. Few computers are available, and little interest is shown in them. In the high schools in my city

there are few if any advanced placement classes in the disciplines. Little interest is shown in taking difficult subjects.

Admittedly, the things I have mentioned could be described as surface features. It is possible that excellent education could be going on where there are dilapidated school buildings and where pupils lack the fancy frills I have mentioned. And, it is possible that if school boards, parents, pupils, teachers, and patrons in the city in which I live would make up their minds to do so, they could turn their schools into excellent schools, equal to or better than some of those in the suburbs. The raw material is there. The boys and girls of the urban center have great potential.

What is lacking? Purpose, self-confidence, hope. These factors are lacking in students. They are also diminished in teachers, parents, administrators, and school board members. It is upon this trio of elements, purpose, self-confidence, and hope that I want to elaborate, and, in so-doing, point out the futility of attempting to improve reading from a narrowly academic-cognitive-linguistic perspective.

Purpose: to place before oneself as a thing to be done or attained.

The definition of purpose embodies a personal commitment to accomplish some end result. The word "oneself" clearly indicates that intent in the definition. However, in reading pedagogy and practice, the responsibility for establishing or setting a purpose is often handled by the teacher in a didactic manner; "I want you to read to find out . . ." It is possible that many pupils have no experience in "having to place before themselves" a reason or purpose for reading any material or subject matter all day long in school. They merely read because the teacher directs them to do so. We, as teachers, believe, perhaps, that students lack the maturity or the experience to read for valid purposes. Therefore, in an attempt to circumvent students' inefficiencies and irrelevancies, we take from them the most important reason to do the thing we want most for them to do, to become independent, that is "purposeful" agents in their own task, reading.

And, what are the consequences? Recently, in a study designed to develop a metacognitive strategy in high-achieving fifth grade readers, I was told by one such student who had read a selection about koala bears who prefer to eat leaves from the blue gum tree that the selection was about Coca Cola bears and blue bubble gum trees (Leibert and Sherk, 1984). I laughed, and the student became angry because he thought I was putting him down. I replied that I had understood what it meant and that he had to accept responsibility for not understanding, and why didn't he? When he calmed down, we agreed that his recall of the selection was asinine, and that he was capable when reading carefully of understanding and recalling accurately. He went on to tell me that he often did not understand what he was reading, that whether he did, or didn't usually was of little consequence. He said the teacher most always could be relied on to tell what it meant afterward. Reading, for this student, was not a search for meaning. It was an exercise. If it made sense, fine; if not, no matter. "Someone will always tell you what makes sense."

The learning of purposive reading proceeds from a social-external context to become a personal-internal process, the same way that language is learned first socially-externally, then

is internalized and personalized. What is the social context for purposive reading beyond the classroom walls? What models are available for pupils of the use of purposive, independent reading which stimulates thought, engenders problem solving and/or critical discussion? Teachers? Administrators? Politicians? Journalists? Sports celebrities? Entertainers? The answer apparently is, "none of the above." The President states that he is not a reader. Reading is rarely mentioned on television, and people are almost never shown doing it. In fact, it is fair to say that there is no compelling social context for purposive reading in this country, and no viable models for students to emulate in its use. Purposeful reading is one of those things we all talk about, but which, in the everyday life of urban pupils, simply does not exist.

If reading is not purposeful, it is merely an exercise; a schoolhouse game with no relevance in the larger, waiting world.

Beyond this is the question of the purpose of schooling itself for students in urban centers. There is little doubt that there is a difference between what we as teachers, administrators, professors, and school boards see as the purpose of schooling, which is to learn, or to learn how to learn and, possibly, to learn how to think, and what parents and students see as the purpose of schooling, which is to obtain a credential which permits employment. This means-ends difference in viewpoint has much to do with the manner in which teachers, administrators, professors, and school boards view students and vice-versa. The main purpose of the great majority of students in urban schools is to get a high school diploma. They must have a high school diploma, they believe, or they won't be able to get even a menial job. If one fills out a job application which indicates the applicant does not have a high school diploma, the application usually ends up in the waste basket. So the task for urban students is to hang in there until graduation, which is almost inevitable. Many students choose easy courses over difficult ones because it is safer; if one fails a difficult course, one might not graduate. For most students, graduation means only that they endured, that they played the game.

In my opinion, one of the challenges of the next generation is to recapture the purposefulness of schooling. This challenge involves the classroom teacher engaging students in purposeful reading-thinking activities, as well as the larger society resolving the difference of viewpoint about what schooling ought to be.

Thus, one of the parts of the iceberg which lies beneath the surface is purpose: What is the purpose for reading? What is the purpose of learning? What is the purpose of schooling?

Self-Confidence

Persons who possess confidence in themselves are ready to try, to invest energy, to venture forth, to take a chance. A chance of what? Of failing. The reason that self-confident persons are willing to try at the risk of failing is because they know, through experience, that they possess inner resources which will eventually enable them to succeed. It is, therefore, largely a matter of the balance between past success-failure experiences which determines whether one will keep on trying or whether one will withdraw. Those who withdraw, do not try, have become convinced that they cannot succeed, or

that there is too high a personal price to pay for success to be worth the effort.

Reading, learning, and thinking require effort, energy, a willingness to try, to expose one's thoughts to others; in short, risking failure. In order to learn, one must be aggressive, particularly in a competitive academic system. If one ceases to be aggressive, one does not learn very much.

Most teachers in urban schools in my city try to encourage pupils to exert effort to learn in their classes. Pupils in the lower grades respond well to such encouragement, and social reinforcement is a well-established part of their school experience. These younger students have not reached a well-developed state of self-awareness. When they are in school, they learn as they are able, but they are not aware that learning is happening to them. They work hard to satisfy the teacher's requests of them, and they are pleased when the teacher reinforces them with praise for their efforts.

Somewhere along the line, probably between fifth and seventh grades, these pupils begin to become aware of themselves as persons, and they construct an image of self. Such pupils begin to see themselves in relation to others and in relation to their social context, rather than, as was true in earlier years, as being the center of all events and activity. In this period, students begin to interpret what happens to them differently than they formerly might have. Frequently teachers are not attuned to these subtle changes, and are surprised when pupils react differently to things they and other teachers have been doing and saying all along.

Language usage may serve as an example of this phenomenon. Urban pupils frequently bring street language to school with them. In the primary grades, teachers work on shaping street language toward more commonly accepted language of the dominant culture. Young children's speech is routinely corrected by teachers in the classroom, and such correction is accepted by children as a matter of course.

Pupils in the upper elementary grades and in junior high school do not accept correction of their language as readily. Why should this be the case? These students begin to notice that their classmates, friends, siblings, neighbors, and relatives speak the way they do. In fact, many know only one person or group that uses language different from their own; the teacher or teachers in school. At first this may not be conscious awareness, only a vague feeling that something is wrong. But when teachers, who feel they are doing the right thing, continue to demand standard English in the upper elementary and junior high levels, students who are the objects of this well-intended procedure feel they are being "put down." Students also notice at this stage that grades teachers give for participation in class and on tests have a bearing on their status. Students who are able to adjust their language to conform to the teacher's expectations are rewarded; those who are not, are not.

Recently in a seventh-grade social studies class, I witnessed the following exchange: Teacher, writing on the board, CANAL — "What does this word mean?" Class: no response. Teacher: "Ralph, I think you might know. Give it a try." Ralph: "A dish of water." Teacher: "What?" Ralph: "A dish of water." Teacher: "How did you ever get that idea? All right class, turn to your glossary and look up the word, 'CANAL'."

Two questions: What is going on here? What is the effect

on Ralph directly and on the class indirectly? Answers: When the teacher asked the question, there was no response. By this time, students have learned not to risk exposure by answering questions of that type. So Ralph was put on the spot. When he tried, saying "A dish of water," it did not register with the teacher. Ralph was saying "A ditch of water." Ralph says "dish" for "ditch," "muss" for "must," "mo" for "more," "flow" for "floor." The teacher's problem was that she could not cope with Ralph's rich vocabulary of homonyms. But all the other students knew exactly what Ralph meant because they speak his language. But no one came forth to enlighten the teacher. Guess why. What was the effect on Ralph and the class? How would you feel if, when looking in the glossary, you found the definition, "A trench or ditch filled with water."? You might mutter to yourself, knowing that you and the class were had again. You don't get any credit even when you do know the answer. It doesn't do much for your self-confidence.

This matter of self-confidence and how it is eroded by schooling is not confined to language. The discussion could have focused on world knowledge, values, behavior, or any of a number of other topics. It is sufficient to say that the current arrangements in place for the schooling of students in the urban center have the effect of diminishing self-confidence at the very time when it is most crucial that ego strength be enhanced. In turn, teachers interpret students' reluctance to respond as indifference rather than lack of confidence, and they gradually come to believe that such students really can't learn or won't learn.

Finally, in my city the local newspaper is kind enough to publish detailed information on test scores, by grade level and school, for the benefit of the public at large. Detailed analyses of how far below some "norm" these students are and how poorly they are all doing in school are provided. Presumably there is no bad news from the suburbs in this regard because the scores of students in suburban schools are never published. This public service does great things for the morale and self-confidence of parents, teachers, and students in my city.

There are some aspects of the organization of schools which serve to undermine the self-confidence of many students. One of these is the exclusive use of the competitive system for assigning grades for class work and for report cards at the junior high and high school level. In this competitive system each student must earn his own grade. There are only so many A's and B's to be given out, and only the top students can ever hope to attain them. Another version of this system is that students are awarded grades based on the number of assignments they complete and are penalized for the ones they don't complete. Either way, it is every student for himself, in accordance with tradition and the American way. In the worst cases, teachers use grades as weapons against students in an effort to control their behavior.

Many students interpret the competitive nature of grading and classroom activity as impersonal and evidence of the fact that teachers are not interested in them as persons or in what they think or know. Outside of school, students function best in their group. They receive support from the group and frame their self-concept in the context of the group. Many students are from single-parent families or are members of extended families. They are valued, and in turn, value group identity.

For the majority, this orientation to group membership and group identity is not simply a matter of choice; it is a matter of survival. They rely on the group and the group reciprocates. Emphasis upon competition in the classroom and the reward for individual initiative, hard work, and deferred gratification are lost on them, and these practices serve to strip the students of the strongest support they have, their group orientation and the support derived from it.

The emphasis on competition in the classroom and the virtues teachers accord to individual effort and initiative have another, less obvious, effect. In groups, leaders emerge. Outside of school, in groups the natural leaders come to be recognized by group members, for whatever reasons. In every group, each member can identify the formal or informal leader. The leader is also aware of his position. In school, the individuals who are the natural leaders on the street frequently have no status in the classroom. This makes no sense to them and to others who recognize leaders as such. These natural leaders, in fact, are often accorded the status of troublemakers by the teacher. Because of their informal status, accorded to them by the others, they are in a position to undermine or sabotage the teacher's efforts. In effect, the classroom teacher who is insensitive to the informal power structure because he/she overlooks the natural leaders who form it, inadvertently strengthens the resistance to the competitive system, and may not even be aware of doing so. The virtue of enlisting the support of the natural leaders, and enabling students to make use of their natural inclination to work cooperatively in groups remains largely unrealized in most of the classrooms of the secondary schools in my city.

Self-confidence, or the lack thereof, is one of the elements of the iceberg which lies beneath the surface.

Hope:

In my city the unemployment rate for black teenagers is approximately 36%. Among black adults the rate exceeds 18%. If one is black and poor, what is the route to a better life? A good job. When teachers admonish students to study their lessons, they often do so in the sincere belief that, cumulatively, such effort will result in improving the quality of their lives. In this respect, I find that often students are less naive about the realities of the world in which they live than are the teachers. Many teachers, including black teachers, do not live in the city; they only work there.

Education and community leaders in my city tend to think of the educational problem of blacks and certain other minorities, such as Hispanics and native Americans as similar to those of the poor in general. This may not be true. These particular minorities may be what are referred to as "Castelike" minorities (Ogbu, 1984).

"A castelike minority group is one incorporated into a society involuntarily and permanently and whose only means of escape from its enforced subjugation is through 'passing' or emigration routes that are not always open." (Ogbu, 1984). It is characteristic of castelike minorities in most societies that they face a job ceiling. "It appears that there are highly consistent pressures and obstacles that selectively assign such groups to jobs at the lowest level of status, power, dignity, and income while allowing members of the majority to compete more easily for more desirable jobs above that ceiling."

(Ogbu, 1984).

Whether or not one accepts the assertion that there are differences among minorities regarding their status in this society, a more important consideration, particularly for schooling, is how such minorities see themselves. We are told that such minorities (referred to above as "castelike") do not accept their low status in occupational areas, for example, as legitimate outcomes of their individual failures and misfortunes, but rather see barriers in employment, education, etc. as the primary causes of their low status and poverty. In other words, these groups blame the system. This is in contrast to the views of other minorities, and of the larger society, that the system is open and that it is up to each individual to take charge of his destiny and to, in effect, "play the cards he is dealt in life."

One more of the complexities teachers face in the classrooms of urban schools is that seated in the same classroom may be students influenced by or actively subscribing to these differing points of view. In urban schools, students who want to work within the system, who respond positively to schooling and who attempt to give their best efforts are confronted with classmates who continually try to put them down, to convince them that they won't make it, or suggest that their efforts are making everyone else look bad, the "if no one does much, no one will expect much" psychology. Furthermore, the pressure on the student who is actively involved mounts as he/she progresses through the grades. Those who are convinced the system is to blame and nothing is to be done, learn "survival strategies" which are incongruent with competencies required for school. Meanwhile those students who are striving to succeed encounter more severe tests of their commitment, at the same time their experience with the world is telling them that, in fact, they may be chasing rainbows.

It may seem that these matters are far removed from the day-to-day experiences that students have in school. But they are not. Students who are taught subjects in school which are at odds with their own experiences in the world outside become confused, discouraged, cynical, and frustrated. Many students learn principles of social justice in school and see in the world that the school itself is an instrument for the replication of an unjust system. Students learn about careers and study subjects which purport to prepare them for careers they know they will never enter, for jobs they will never get.

Beneath the surface, one of the elements of the iceberg is hope. If there is no hope, how can teachers convince students they should expend effort, take risks, invest themselves in one of life's most difficult tasks: the attainment of literacy in its fullest sense?

I want to return to an idea mentioned earlier in this paper. That idea is the futility of attempting to improve reading from a narrowly academic-cognitive-linguistic perspective.

Reading is not the most important factor causing schooling to be dysfunctional in the urban districts. It is the tip of the iceberg, the most obvious factor, but, in reality, reading is only a symptom.

Reading is at least as much a sociological phenomenon as it is a linguistic, cognitive and/or academic one. For most of the six or seven decades of this century, during which the research in our field has been produced, we have defined reading solely in linguistic terms. Recently we have begun

seriously to consider cognitive factors in reading. Affective and sociological considerations have never been paramount in our thinking about reading.

We have reached a stage in the evolution of our discipline where it is necessary, I believe, to inform others that reading is not the remedy for all educational ills. I encounter an attitude, particularly among teachers at the secondary level, which holds that if the reading ability of students could be improved to what it formerly was in their perception, then school would work again. By that I take it to mean that teachers believe schools can become what they used to be, and teachers can teach the way they used to teach. I do not think that reading improvement alone will make that much difference. Reading improvement would probably have some positive effect on schooling at the lower grade levels. But at the secondary level, reading becomes a tool for independent learning. In order to use reading effectively and to function independently as a learner, students need strengths which go beyond reading: they need a background of knowledge and information to take with them to the text; they need facility with language, particularly aural-oral language transactions; they need skills in inquiry, so that when they engage text, they are able to extract from it that which will satisfy the requirements of the task; they need to, when appropriate, be able to reason, to conclude, to infer, to summarize, etc., in short to manipulate elements of text and prior knowledge to demonstrate competent critical thinking and reasoning abilities.

In urban schools today the majority of high school students have an inadequate fund of general knowledge, lack effective communication skills, do not know how to ask questions or to clear up confusion, and most do not reason effectively. Yet they are exposed to the same curriculum and curriculum materials as other students. They are expected to, at once, learn the subjects they are studying, and learn the skills necessary to learn the subjects.

Under these circumstances it seems to me evident that urban secondary schools can never again be what they once were (if, in fact, they ever were). At one time the secondary school, or the comprehensive high school, was an academic institution designed for the needs of the whole individual, in the words of James Conant, the "crowning jewel" of the American educational system, unlike anything to be found elsewhere in the world (Conant, 1959). In a simpler age there were academic standards, tracks for students of different abilities, school dances, clubs, balanced intramural and interscholastic sports and physical education programs, driver's education and counseling services. Today the urban secondary school, the comprehensive high school, is but a shadow of its former proud image; it is no longer very comprehensive and certainly no longer the "crowning jewel" Conant described.

It seems appropriate at this point to offer some suggestions which might have the effect of improving some of the conditions outlined previously. The premise upon which these suggestions are based is: a single secondary school model, such as the comprehensive high school, is dysfunctional for the urban population it must serve. In its place, less comprehensive but more effective, narrowly-focused schools should be

established.

As I have not thought about names for the various schools, I'll simply refer to them as Type A, B, C, etc.

Type A High School

Purpose: High School Equivalency and Job Entry Skills.

This type of secondary school should be established for students who want to leave school as quickly as possible and enter the work force. It should be a four-year school, but organized in such a way that many students could be finished in three years. Four components of the school program should be emphasized: (1) Individual counseling. (2) Group career counseling. (3) Minimum high school competencies in English, social studies reading, science reading, and math, including computation, concepts and problem-solving. Students successfully completing the program in this school would pass a test similar to the GED High School Equivalency exam. This high school should have a large staff of counselors (twenty for a school of 1000 students), and the counselors should individualize the instructional program of each student. (4) Work experience.

A Type A High School would function much like currently existing, successful adult education ABE and GED programs. This type of High School would probably best be run on a year-round basis with a school day no longer than about four hours. The instructional staff would be made up of teachers interested in basic skills instruction and working with non-traditional students. There would be few, if any, elective courses, and none of the usual elaborations of secondary schools such as art, music, or physical education.

Job entry skills would be learned at the workplace in a kind of apprenticeship arrangement. Potential retail clerks, mechanics, receptionists, maintenance engineers, health service workers, etc. would be receiving their initial job training on site and earning some token compensation from participating agencies in the private sector. The money saved because of reduced instructional costs, on a per-pupil basis, could be used to set up a network and incentive system for businesses and industries in the local area to participate in the program.

What the program for a Type A High School represents is what many students say they want, not what educators want. Traditional comprehensive high schools of today are not set up for the 25% of students who would attend a Type A high school. Efforts to teach these students and meet their needs have not been successful. An attempt should be made to give these students a school of the type they say would be useful to them.

I make a case for the Type A High School recognizing a legitimate fact of life in America today. That is, prior to about 1960, the students for whom the Type A High School is organized were never seen in the high schools. In earlier times, the lower 25% to 30% of the cohort of any school community dropped out at the eighth or ninth grade level, or at age 16, whichever came first, and entered the work force. It has only been in the last 25 years or so that these students have remained in school, mostly because compulsory attendance laws are being more rigorously enforced (this because school budgets are built on state reimbursement formulas, of which average daily attendance in school is a major factor) and because the job market for day labor and domestic service has largely dried up for these students because of a surplus of older workers in the labor force.

The comprehensive high school stresses an academic curriculum little different from what it was in the early years of this century. Students at the lower end of the achievement and ability range, who today remain in school for twelve years, have never been able to cope with this curriculum. But they can learn, and what they desire is to learn

things that are within their ability to achieve, that will enable them to work productively, and that will give them dignity and a sense of accomplishment. What they don't need are the irrelevancies (for them) of homework assignments they can't do, report card grades and test scores which degrade them and simply illustrate the inappropriate nature of the standard curriculum for them. The Type A High School, or something like it, in my view, does address their special needs.

Type B School-Within-A-School High School

The purpose of the Type B High School (Boyer, 1983) is to prepare every student for some type of higher education, whether it be junior or community college, four year college or university work or a combination of both.

The Type B High School is organized in clusters of roughly 250 students in grades nine through twelve and eight to ten teachers who form a school within the larger school. These teachers share the teaching of all subjects in the basic curriculum. They are: four years of communications studies (traditionally called English), four years of mathematics, four years of social studies, and four years of science.

Students and teachers stay together for the entire four years. As each class of sixty to sixty-five students graduates, a new group of ninth graders joins the students who have moved into the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, respectively.

Because students and teachers stay together for four years, group cohesiveness and group identity are allowed to develop. The emphasis is on cooperative learning groups in the classroom rather than on the exclusive use of the individual and competitive model of learning used in today's secondary schools. Each unit develops its own administrative and organizational arrangements. They are, in effect, a school unto themselves. This includes, among other things, such aspects of schooling as testing and grading practices, monitoring attendance, reporting to parents, counseling services, and the like.

Reasons for clustering students and teachers this way are several. Clustering permits an alternative to the impersonal atmosphere of the strictly age- and class-graded traditional high school of 1500 to 2000 students. Instead of having to identify oneself as a member of a class of 500 ninth graders, it would probably be more comfortable to identify with a school group within the larger school of only 250 students of different ages and grades, knowing that in this group there is stability. Furthermore, by having students in clusters, feelings of isolation and alienation can probably be reduced and modified. Teachers can get to know their students and parents better, older and younger students can influence one another more easily, and greater flexibility can be achieved in providing for the special needs of individuals. Perhaps, in a manner of speaking, some of the more desirable features of smaller, rural schools can be recaptured within the context of the larger, more complex urban high school.

Regarding the curriculum, it is purposely restricted. Elective courses are rare. The reason is that students need time to master the core subjects. Students need time to acquire background knowledge, to refine oral and written communication skills, to learn to inquire and to reason. By requiring four years of study in each of the four core areas, teachers can afford to go into greater depth in each lesson and/or unit of study because they do not have to cover the amount of material they would cover in two or three years in the traditional program with its elective features, which enables students to avoid math or social studies or science for a whole year. By not allowing students to opt out of, for example, math, there is a greater possibility of achieving the kind of continuity in math education which most students need in order to function effectively in the higher order math they will en-

counter at the college level. The same can be said for social studies, science, and English (communication studies).

It should be noted that the Type B High School is to prepare students for some type of higher education. In my state only 32% of high school graduates apply for college admission. This fact, in itself, is evidence of the dysfunctional nature of our public secondary education program. For urban high school students, the percentage applying for college admission is even lower. As many as two-thirds to three-quarters of these students should be prepared for some form of higher education. It is the only avenue open to them for better jobs and a better life. In my view, the Type B High School, or something like it, offers some possibility for the attainment of this goal.

Type C High School - The Academy

The purpose of the Type C High School is to educate the academic and intellectual elite of the urban community. It is curious that we have difficulty measuring or even objectively defining what we mean by the academic and/or intellectual elite, but when you go to a school and ask, just about everybody knows who they are.

It would be my estimate that three percent of students in any age group would be selected. Thus, an academy might be comprised of only about 450 to 500 students. These students should receive a rigorous program of study including classical literature, composition, mathematics, chemistry, physics, history, and foreign language.

Since it is true that these students would be successful and would achieve recognition in any school, why have a special school for them? The answer is so that they will be challenged to produce their best efforts. In most comprehensive high schools there are so few of these exceptionally talented students that most of them never learn what it is to compete with their equals. Many of these students never have to extend themselves to excel; they simply are excellent by comparison. By the time they reach a level where there is a significant number of others equal to them in talent, they find it difficult to develop the intensity needed to achieve the goals they and others have come to expect. In fact, some of these students are underprepared for college. They are not prepared psychologically because, in their experience, success has come with too little effort. They are not prepared academically because many have not developed the habit of broad reading, skills of analysis and synthesis, and/or the tolerance for having their work criticized. Some of the very brightest graduates from urban high schools fail in college because they cannot adjust to the new, more competitive academic climate. These students need to have years of experience in competition with others of similar ability in order to be ready for serious, productive academic work at the college level.

In the same way that new types of schools are needed to serve students in urban areas, so too are new types of teachers.

Traditionally the image of a good teacher has been closely associated with expertise in a subject-matter field. Rewards and recognition have gone to secondary classroom teachers who have pursued the study of a particular body of subject-matter at the graduate level. In many large school districts it is not uncommon to find teachers who have doctorates in such fields as chemistry, mathematics, biology, psychology, and English. Frequently, these teachers represent the model of professional attainment for their younger colleagues. I am not suggesting that this model is not appropriate, or that the excellence in scholarly work which these individuals represent is not important in public schools.

What is important to recognize, however, is that the current emphasis which is on attainment of expertise in academic disciplines does

not provide enough diversity in pedagogy and the psychology of learning. In short, in urban secondary schools most of the teachers know more than enough about subjects they teach, but not enough about cognitive and psychological growth and development, learning theory, and pedagogical models for the effective delivery of instruction in their subject fields.

First on the list of needed new specialists for urban secondary schools is the reading specialist. In my city there are no reading specialists in the secondary schools, but every elementary school has one. This is true despite the fact that there are more students with reading problems in grades seven through twelve than there are in grades one through six. Two kinds of service are needed in reading at the secondary level. One service is basic instruction in reading in grades seven, eight, and nine for students who have not finished learning to read by the time they finish sixth grade. There are many students in the city who require seven or eight years of instruction in reading in order to learn what we might ordinarily consider six years' worth of reading. This is not meant to reflect negatively on reading in the elementary schools. It is simply a fact we should learn to live with. Another type of service needed is that provided by content-area reading specialists. The services of such specialists have an important positive impact on classroom instruction at the secondary level directly, as these teachers work with students in helping them to learn to deal with textual materials, and indirectly by helping other classroom teachers learn how to incorporate reading and study skills into daily lessons in the content area classrooms.

In reading, we need to achieve a more favorable "balance of force" in the employment of our human reading resources between the elementary and secondary levels of schooling.

Another kind of specialist is needed in urban secondary schools: one who combines knowledge of and expertise in cognitive growth and development with knowledge of text structures and appropriate instructional strategies. Specialists with this combination of knowledge and skills are not available at the high school level. Such specialists could be employed to bring about a change in the organization and thrust of many classroom activities. For example, these specialists could assist classroom teachers in evolving a better balance between activities which are competitive and individual with those which are cooperative and group-oriented. Further, these specialists could be used to help achieve parity between the difficulty level of textbooks used in content areas and the reading levels of students in the classes. In many classrooms, textual materials used for instruction are too difficult for some students to read on their own. Thus, they never read; it follows that their reading never improves. In order to improve reading, one must read occasionally.

Current research in reading comprehension has demonstrated the crucial role of prior knowledge and the application of appropriate personal strategies in learning from text. Classroom teachers in secondary schools have little knowledge of this research and its implications for instruction. Specialists in cognitive growth and development and instructional strategies would be able to facilitate instruction in classrooms in the secondary schools by working with classroom teachers to achieve better outcomes in students' text processing.

Other less-well defined specialists could be mentioned. Among them are: instructional motivation specialists, instructional design specialists, evaluation specialists, and so on.

It is clear, at least from my perspective, that attention needs to be given to the development of new types of teaching roles in order to better serve the needs of students in urban secondary schools.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have made an attempt, crudely perhaps, to indicate that there is a set of conditions which impinges upon the achievement of students in urban secondary schools and which almost precludes the development of high levels of reading comprehension and high-order thinking skills of students in such schools.

The attribution of all educational disorders to poor reading alone is simplistic and will not serve to improve the status of our schools or the students in them.

I have the strong belief that reading does not follow simply from an instructional event or program divorced from the social and/or educational climate in which it exists.

Rather, more likely, in my view, is the possibility that, if the right kind of school is developed, with the right kind of purpose, that is, a purpose which makes sense to those who attend and patronize it, which includes the right kind of teachers prepared to do the work necessary to promote learning and thinking, then reading will no longer be the focus of primary concern in urban secondary schools. Reading is merely one part of a larger process; education is, in part, operational sociology. When we begin to consider social groups and the uses they make of reading, then we will be in a better position to understand how schools can promote reading, learning, and thinking for the benefit of those who attend.

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