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ABSTRACT

As adults, today's students will have to deal with emerging problems societal changes are creating. Improving public education for all will require educational reform that better accommodates under-served American youth. This chapter discusses the educational standards movement, which assumes that virtually all learners can achieve educational benchmarks through assessments at set points in the elementary- and secondary-school continuum. Most states cap that with high-stakes testing near the conclusion of high school. This chapter addresses the approach in New York state as an example of what is occurring across the nation. It is proposed that changes in the current American school model must accommodate the difference-of-kind educational demands faced as we enter a new century and millennium. The goal for all American students to achieve higher standards will require a school paradigm that is, in some respects, similar to those in Germany and Japan. American teachers need extended time and opportunity to plan instructional means that increase success across the range of their students. (Contains 16 references.) (GCP)

Paradigms for Future Guidance Programs: A Longitudinal Approach to Preparing Youth for Employability

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Conrad F. Toepfer, Jr.

Will Rogers reportedly once quipped, "Things aren't as good as they used to be, but then they never were!" However, it would seem that the goal to educate all the children of our nation at public expense was more achievable in the past. Levels of learning required by the masses early in the twentieth century were far lower than what present and emerging needs require. Urban industrialization was beginning to encroach on a largely agrarian society. There was little scholarship opportunity for bright but impoverished students. Those who completed high school usually possessed both the intellectual ability to complete high school and the financial ability to enter a college or university.

Those who had the first but lacked the second of those qualifications usually dropped out of school to enter the workforce. Learning targets beyond basic ciphering and literacy were largely reserved for affluent students. Prestigious private colleges and universities accommodated able upper-class students. Unskilled labor needs, not academic success, afforded less affluent students with opportunity to achieve economic self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.

In 1900, approximately 25% of American youth entered ninth grade and as few as 12% completed high school. The economic need for unskilled labor easily accommodated such dropout casualties. While concerns for better educated masses

gradually increased, the 40% of Americans not completing high school in 1950 still posed no problems in post-World War II America. However, the shifting world economy since then has reversed that situation. The disappearance of well-paying unskilled work and the inability of schools to assist less able students to achieve economic self-sufficiency now risks creating a virtual impoverished caste.

Today, schools are criticized for failing to achieve universal high school completion of increasingly rigorous post-secondary preparatory curricula. Yet efforts to do so are being attempted within the same school model from which large percentages of students dropped out earlier this century. The prospects for this model preparing virtually all students for the demands of life in the twenty-first century are not encouraging.

In defending the difficulty of that challenge, some say, "We have different kids today." What is the nature of those differences from students in the early twentieth century? Both were children of poor immigrants, but earlier immigrants were predominantly from European backgrounds. However, most of today's "new Americans" are from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Their cultures, mores, and customs differ greatly from those of the largely White earlier European immigrants.

Aside from dissimilar geographic origins and cultural backgrounds, the critical difference may be in the circumstances faced by today's new Americans. Earlier immigrants arrived when unskilled labor needs allowed them to achieve elevated economic status for themselves and their families. Their children were motivated to complete public school and enter college, and their grandchildren are among the best of today's public school students. Today's immigrants lack that opportunity to move their children to middle-class circumstances.

With 20/20 hindsight, descendants of earlier European immigrants may extol "the good old days" and the accomplishments of their parents and grandparents. The experiences of diverse Americans, however, particularly Native Americans and Americans of African descent whose grandparents were already here when the waves of earlier European immigrants arrived, gave them a different hindsight.

Their legacy was one of unequal access to employment opportunities, lack of equal protection under laws, no access to common public facilities, and denial of voting franchise. Those conditions persisted into the second half of the twentieth century. Many of today's immigrants and their children learn that history

from the ghettos in which they now live. These and other societal changes pose critical challenges to our nation's schools.

Educational Standards: Tilting at Another Windmill

As adults, today's students will have to deal with emerging problems societal changes are creating. Improving public education for all of the children of all of the people will require educational reform that better accommodates under-served American youth. Educational policy seeks to accomplish that for the mass of United States students through higher assessments and exit standards implemented at fixed times in schools.

The educational standards movement assumes that virtually all learners can achieve those benchmarks through assessments at set points in the elementary- and secondary-school continuum. Most states "cap" that with high-stakes testing near the conclusion of high school. This chapter will address the approach in New York state as an example of what is occurring across the nation.

In accordance with New York State Education Commissioner Richard P. Mills' recommendations, the Board of Regents has enacted fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade standards for students at large. The late architect Frank Lloyd Wright stressed the need for "form to follow function." The "function" of educational standards reform is for schools to enable students at large to achieve those higher learning standards.

Lacking the "form" of a school model designed to accomplish that, how will merely raising standards help those students presently unable to meet existing ones? Such an expectation could be as hazardous as expecting propeller-driven aircraft to perform better using fuel developed for jet engines.

A study just released by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education identifies serious concerns about New York state's educational standards initiative. The study was developed by educational specialists familiar with the details of reform plans in New York and elsewhere. Simon (1999) summarized their concerns as follows.

Senior Research Fellow and former President of the Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management Richard E. Elmore stated: "Pretty soon, there's going to be a very large backlog of kids who have failed one or another of the required exams. We need to face the fact that teachers and schools are

being asked to do something they don't know how to do" (p. A22). Harvard researcher Gary Orfield cautioned: "It's going to ruin a lot of students' lives and not have substantial benefits. If you have just one standard, you're eventually going to find the inner city schools with high concentrations of poverty and identify them as failures" (p. A22).

As adults, today's students will undoubtedly need skills and knowledge beyond those achieved by past generations. However, the present school model was not designed to accomplish that for the masses within a common time frame. The naiveté of assuming that it can could doom possibilities for students at large achieving higher learning standards.

Accommodating the learning needs of all the nation's youth will necessitate shifting from an instructional to a learning paradigm. Lasley (1998) noted:

Most teachers and a majority of administrators focus on the instructional paradigm. That is not their espoused theory, but it does emerge as their theory-in-use. They and the larger community they serve (parents and a variety of significant others) want to see students looking busy and getting their work done.

Far fewer teachers embrace the learning paradigm. Teachers who are oriented in this way function very differently in their role as facilitators of learning. They are constantly "reading" the students to determine how to create a better atmosphere for student growth. Learning paradigm teachers get outside themselves and get inside the *needs of students*. They continually ask, How do they learn? How do they construct knowledge? How do they make sense of the world? How can I, the teacher, participate in the learning process with students?

The classroom that operates according to the learning paradigm is emotionally and intellectually demanding. The demands on a teacher who seeks to foster a learner-centered classroom are numerous. More time is needed to plan lessons, more effort is needed to reach the students, and less teacher control can be used to force students to conform to the will of the teacher.

The learning paradigm teacher takes more

personal risks and creates more administrative challenges. The curriculum of a learning paradigm teacher is a guide, not a dictate, and, as a consequence, the sequence of learning often conflicts with the prescribed learning paradigm of the school. (pp. 84–85)

Rather than pursuing a learning paradigm, current reform has chosen to increase singular educational standards for the vast majority of students. Moving toward universal high school graduation will entail more than tinkering with yesterday's education model. A "zero-defect" education model needs to provide the masses with improved skills for continued learning.

What Educational Standards Can and Cannot Do

Classroom teachers have been largely excluded from planning educational standards initiatives, which are primarily defined by other stakeholders. As Wood (1999) noted:

This school year, Massachusetts fourth graders will spend close to 15 hours over the course of two weeks practicing and taking standardized assessments to measure their proficiencies against state curriculum standards. It is a scene repeated across the nation, as the "accountability" approach continues to grow stronger in the powerful educational establishment, which consists of state school boards, national policy groups, politicians, and the "trade" media of education. It is a sad fact that teachers, who often have the clearest insights about children and the most direct contact with them, are seldom included in this powerful group. (p. 38)

Paul Houston (1997), executive director of the American Association of School Administrators and the first spokesperson of a national educational association to voice caution about the educational standards movement noted:

Standards, higher standards. World-class standards. Standards have become the mantra of school reform. They have replaced apple pie and motherhood as the one thing no educator can be against. We do need to

improve what we are doing, though, and improve it dramatically, because incremental improvement will not suffice in an exponential environment. Expectations for all children have skyrocketed against the past, and we have not kept up with those expectations. So, improvement is needed, but not for the reasons the critics assume. And if we have misdiagnosed the problem, we are likely to prescribe the wrong treatment; a blind call for higher standards without examining what children need to know how to meet. (p. 44)

Dewey (1917) commented that "when shooting at the target, not the target, but hitting the target is the end in view" (p. 123). From that perspective, Tanner (1997) identified "tunnel vision" possibilities in the educational standards movement:

In effect, the formulation of standards without the means serves to perpetuate a dualism between ends and means that is counter-productive for education. To conceive of knowledge as merely results as measured by "standards" neglects the processes or means through which the learner is to become increasingly knowledge/able (the capacity of putting knowledge into use). For the processes or means is the truly significant aspect of giving meaning to experience and the outcomes of the educational journey. (p. 120)

The fourth and eighth grade assessments being implemented in New York state are of particular concern here. Integrated language arts examinations were instituted at those levels before new curricula were fully developed and teachers prepared to implement them. What was served by the "ready, aim, fire" administration of new assessments before students experienced the new curricula and teaching strategies? Considering children grow up, not down, shouldn't educational standards be raised in a bottom-up sequence?

As educational standards initiatives are being implemented, they may increase the success of many motivated, high ability, and some average ability students. However, the challenge persists to help less able or unmotivated students with whom schools have never had substantial success. The latter will require extended time to meet higher standards, something that the current model of American public schools was not designed

to provide.

What about students who score poorly on those assessments in high-performing suburban schools? They risk being overlooked or passed by in the context of successful and superior performance by the majority of more able or more affluent students in those communities. Clearly, the schedule for meeting higher standards needs to provide flexibility of time, which individuals with varying capacities shall require in order to achieve the standards.

In view of the notion that all students can meet common standards, Gran's concerns (1970) about the varying capacities of the masses persist: "Amazing, how we go about clucking that the modern school respects the dignity of the individual, then march all the individuals into some sterile central spot, slap a standardized test before them, snap on the stopwatch, and complacently sort and classify children by percentiles, grade placements, deciles, stanines, and other e bins and boxes contrived to house individuals" (p. 53).

Consider the physician who would require all his patients to undergo a tonsillectomy at age 6.6, since this is the age established as readiness for tonsillectomies. Or imagine a lawyer who tells you that today everyone will be tried for petty larceny, for this is the day he has decided to offer that particular experience—even though what you want is help with your income tax. Absurd? Then why are teachers asked to hammer and tong children into reading at age 6.6? Why is Grade 5 the right time—the only time—for Book 5 in Arithmetic? (p. 53)

Today one might ask why must *all* students take the fourth and eighth grade assessments at the end of those school years? If some require longer to master that content, why couldn't they be allowed to take the first in 5th or even 6th grade if that is when they reach those levels? Again, Gran (1970) gibes about the expectations of everyone meeting common standards at the same time.

Next time you shop for shoes, insist on the standard size for your age and the number of years you have worn shoes. If the miserable things pinch, don't complain. If you don't like the style, keep still. After

all, the shoes are standard and right for your age and period of non-bare-footed-ness. The problem is not the shoes; it's your feet. Anyway, eventually your feet will become so numb you won't notice them or even care about the shoes. Eventually, they'll take on some kind of bizarre shape that fits the shoe. The shoe is the important thing. Adjustment is up to the individual. Standardization is the key. Above the median is the place to be. (p. 54)

European and Asian educational systems provide substantial educational opportunity in technical and vocational areas for students with the interests and abilities to study and develop employability skills for such careers. However, in the United States, lower public esteem for both technical-vocational education and occupations often encourages students with such talents and interests to pursue college preparatory programs, regardless of their potential for success. All students will need improved academic skills, but standards also need to be defined for those who will pursue post-secondary vocational study and careers. Light (1999) noted, "Not all students are academically oriented but many can do well in vocational schools and a separate set of standards. There is a great need for students in skilled trades and these students must not be abandoned" (p. H2).

The singular focus on academic standards risks creating (a) a surplus of overqualified people for employment opportunities requiring academic preparation, and (b) a substantial population of others unable to achieve those standards who have not developed other employability skills. More than preparing rocket scientists, our society needs to provide all students with basic technological literacy. Mishodek (1999) makes a strong case for the latter.

Imagine every child's being successful in the current American model of education. All children would graduate from high school and go to college, preparing for professional careers. A vision of heaven? Think again. Who would repair our plumbing, fix the car, hang the signs over our stores? Who would enter data in our computers, style our hair, paint our houses? Our world would be in utter chaos without people in these careers; indeed all societies are built on a solid base of

manual labor, agricultural jobs, and trades. We would not survive without them. But politicians and cultural attitudes would have us think otherwise. Academic standards are being raised all the time to produce college-grade high school graduates. And what parent today brags vociferously, "My son is a welder!"

I *do* have a welder for a son, and am exceedingly proud. He does his job well. I know what he does is as important as designing a new freeway overpass, or splicing genes. But I have been anguished watching him falter through school, as I have seen so many other students do, with little interest in what is being taught. He is a "hands-on" guy, but schools are not set up for those kinds of students. Generally absent from today's schools are courses like shop and home economics. But over and over, I have seen students who slowly lose interest merely because they are forced to sit without any kind of physical engagement. It's a perfect setup, for some, for behavioral problems. Yet, these same students have shared with me how they built their own bikes or computers, created beautiful drawings, learned how to get a cranky VCR to work. Why not offer more classes—or tailor existing ones—to appeal to *their* talents and skills? Are we not supposed to educate every child and help them all become fully actualized?

I propose that our reform efforts include *all students* by offering more options to serve individual needs: a return of truly hands-on classes, such as industrial arts; academic classes tailored to support vocational education training; and more apprentice-style programs, such as are envisioned in the school-to-work model. These reforms should begin in middle and junior high school. Why? As a teacher, I know that too many students in the bloom of adolescence give up on school because it doesn't meet their needs, talents, and interests. At an age when they are trying to "find themselves" as individuals, what a crime it is to impose a one-way ticket for their education. (p. 37)

Should not public education be obliged to help all students develop skills for continued learning in school, the workplace, and adult life? The United States needs an educational system

that can help all students (a) discover who and what they want to and can become; (b) learn as quickly or slowly as they are able; and (c) meet higher standards appropriate to their individual needs and interests.

Light (1999) endorsed the need to compromise on the current timetable for implementing the New York state education standards initiative.

What is overlooked, however, is that not all are created equal. Some have lesser intellectual capacity than others. Some from disadvantaged social backgrounds are not as prepared as others for the challenges of learning. What do these new standards do to these youngsters? In New York state alone, about 28,000 students drop out of school each year. It's almost a certainty that with new tougher standards, the number will increase significantly. That's not a goal anyone should consider desirable. (p. H2)

Dropping out is not a high school problem in itself. Students drop out in high school because that is when most reach legal school-leaving age. Many reveal that they made the emotional decision to drop out in their middle and even elementary school years. Not being able to keep up with "one-size-fits-all" learning schedules, many simply gave up. Feeling it useless to continue trying to achieve what they could not do in the time given to do it, many developed a sense of learned helplessness. Unless they experience subsequent success in learning, their self-concepts as learners will not improve.

Often, a slower pace can bring beginning success to such defeated learners, causing them to believe they *can* learn. Schedules for assessing the progress of such students toward meeting higher educational standards can be formulated based on their demonstrated improvement in learning. People from all sectors need to coalesce in trying to persuade Commissioner Mills and the New York State Regents to put aside the current one-size-fits-all schedule for meeting higher standards. Light (1999) concluded, "There is no shame in setting standards designed to meet the needs of all students. What is in place now is unfair to too many" (H2).

Raising educational standards in itself will only exacerbate the achievement gap between high ability and other students. It is suggested that developing zero-defect schools will help

virtually all students achieve appropriately higher learning standards, something the current American public school paradigm is ill equipped to do.

Taking Time out of a Bottle

Systemic reform that markedly increases school achievement by the masses will require long-term effort. Reville (1999) reported the failure of a promising idea that was too much, too soon:

Several years ago, I chaired the Massachusetts Commission on Time and Learning, which was charged with guiding the commonwealth in re-designing the structure of classroom time. Taking our cue from the national commission, which called for a “new paradigm” in the nation’s approach to educational time, our commission urged the development of an educational system that ensured each student the amount of instructional time that he or she needed in order to master a certain standard of performance. School time in such a system would not necessarily be the same for everyone, as in our current system, but rather would be “consumer-” or need-driven. Students would get as much time as they needed in order to achieve mastery. The goal would be to ensure that each and every student leaves school capable of the educational equivalent of that reasonably competent game of chess. (p. 39)

As Reville noted, public and community orientation to, involvement in, and education about this dramatic shift was insufficient and too hurried:

The pressure to stick with the status quo is enormous and has resulted in nearly uniform and highly ineffective school practices across virtually all school jurisdictions in the United States. Our commission’s failure to prompt the “paradigm shift” in Massachusetts and elsewhere mirrors the failure of similar efforts around the country, and demonstrates just how hard it is to achieve dramatic changes within a system that has amassed decades of inertia. (p. 39)

That inertia continues to hinder attempts to alter or replace the persisting American public school model. Eventually, those efforts regress to the mean of existing practice. Although adult society embraces advances such as online Internet shopping, satellite television, and cellular telephones, it fiercely guards efforts to change and improve schools. "If it was good enough for me, it's good enough for my children" reflects parental wishes to retain what they feel was adequate for their own educational needs. Were he to awaken from his lengthy sleep today, schools would be among the few things the legendary Rip Van Winkle would probably recognize in our nation.

The critical task is to help parents and adult society understand the need to make changes in schools to better meet the educational challenges facing today's youth. As the core of general education and common knowledge needed by almost all students continues to increase, the success of students in adult life will depend upon how well they learn and master those skills and that information. It must also be recognized that not all students can learn and master that core in the same amount of time.

To succeed in continued learning in the workplace and in adult life, some students will require more time to learn, master, and apply what they have learned. Thirty years from now it won't matter if individuals took a year or two longer to complete school. It will matter if they did not have the time they required to gain the background necessary for success in their adult lives. Parental understanding and support of that reality is central to developing a zero-defect education model that can significantly assist American youth at large.

Referring to the course on which chariot races were held in Roman civilization, *curriculum* is defined as the "course to be covered." The idea of covering or completing school courses has persisted in educational practice with students who "finish first" being considered as "the winners." In motor racing, vehicles with similar power compete together within particular classifications. A Honda Civic, for example, takes longer to complete the same course than a high-powered automobile does. Yet schools expect virtually all students, despite their varying intellectual abilities, to achieve success on standardized assessments in a single time frame. Shouldn't it be obvious that students with lesser "intellectual horsepower" may need extended time to complete the same course than higher ability learners require?

To help all students become "winners," American public

education might better adapt the long-distance marathon paradigm. After runners cross the finish line, wheelchair competitors are celebrated as they complete the same distance. In like manner, our schools need to help all students stay and complete the course as their abilities allow.

Furthermore, should it matter whether an individual takes a particular course (e.g., algebra) in seventh or tenth grade? That should depend on when the student develops the necessary background and demonstrated readiness to take that course. Again, flexibility of time for students to learn and progress, as best they can, is essential. The extremes might be that some can complete a course in 20 weeks while others may require as many as 60 weeks. Current New York state education law allows students to remain in high school until age 21. Thirty years from now it won't matter whether some students required two or three additional years to complete school successfully. However, it will matter if they did so earlier but, in barely scraping by, failed to develop the skills they needed for continued learning and achieving personal and economic self-sufficiency.

In the present school model, time is the constant. To make learning the constant, time needs to become a flexible variable that enables students to learn at the rates they are able. To meet the needs of the masses, educational standards should appropriately encourage students to learn and master necessary skills and information as quickly as they can or *as slowly as they must*, at rates that do not violate their abilities and readiness for particular educational challenges.

Improving Learning for All

Today's graded-school model cannot provide the time flexibility necessary for students at large to achieve proposed higher standards for high school graduation. Goodlad and Anderson (1959) defined a flexible-time continuous-progress model that still surpasses the limited graded-school model.

That flexibility will be essential in zero-defect schools for the masses. Students with more intellectual abilities will be able to progress in adaptations of today's educational paradigm. Others, however, will require multi-age, continuous-progress settings that provide the additional time they require to learn and master specific skills, concepts, and information. Such approaches have been in place in some schools for as long as 40 years. Their success is reflected in the fact that significantly higher

numbers have completed high school, even though some students needed extended time to complete required curricula. Dropout statistics have also decreased in these schools.

Eliminating single school-grade learning quotas enables individuals to progress as their abilities allow. In the continuous-progress model, students with similar current achievement and learning needs work together. Individuals move on and regroup with others in terms of their achievement progress and readiness. That genuine success overcomes social promotion of individuals who know they have neither learned nor can do what other age-mates have achieved.

Cohen (1989a, 1989b) examined the success of schools using continuous-progress, multi-age approaches. Contrasted with students in graded schools attempting to memorize information to pass year-end tests, student progress in continuous-progress schools is based on what they learn and can apply. In reviewing the results in multi-age, continuous-progress schools since 1969, Cohen (1989a) noted:

To proponents of ungraded or mixed age classrooms, letting pupils develop at their own pace helps those at differing ability levels push and pull each other along. Programs built on such a philosophy shun the restriction of individual grade levels. They offer, instead, flexible groupings that encompass a two- to four-year span, allowing movement between levels for those pupils ready to advance or needing more help in decades of inertia. (p. 9)

Lilian G. Katz, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois, says the arrangement is "emerging as a possible trend for a number of reasons." Conventional grading, she explains, assumes "that if you put children with the same age group, you can teach them all the same thing, at the same time, and on the same day, and that's an error. We're missing a bet by trying to educate children in litters," Katz argues. (p. 1)

In a companion article, Cohen (1989b) discussed the success of such efforts in two K-6 elementary schools, one in Lake George, New York, and the other in Brooklyn, New York.

On the surface, the Lake George (NY) Elementary School and the Walter F. White Elementary School in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn are a study in contrasts. One is set in a striking one-level building on a wooded road in a quiet resort town. Its pupils are predominately white and middle class. The other is housed in a three-level structure bordered by factories and housing projects on a stark urban street. Most of its pupils are low-income Blacks and Hispanics. Inside, however, the schools share a common philosophy that officials say has reaped promising results.

Their operative principle is that children's development does not always match their grade level—and that they learn best when allowed to develop at their own pace. While neither school has spurned standard grades completely, both cluster children by age groups and allow movement between levels for pupils ready to advance or needing more time in a given subject. And both try to individualize learning, so that a child entering a new age group can proceed from where he or she left off at the last level. (p. 1)

Cohen further noted:

Because the [Lake George] school allows movement among the age levels for children ready to accelerate or needing more time on a concept, about 6 percent of its pupils join older or younger groupings for some subjects, Mr. Ross [the principal] said. A small number may remain in a grouping for more than two years, but others have moved into junior-high work by 6th grade.

The local junior high school has worked with the elementary school to accommodate pupils of varying progress levels, Mr. Ross said. Faculty members sometimes keep a child in an accelerated program rather than send him to junior high early, he noted, or promote a child of junior-high age they feel would not benefit from retention in elementary school. To foster a climate in which the "youngsters are not threatened by comparison," Mr. Ross said, the school has no "pecking order that awards kids responsibility because of age, there is no graduation or special privilege by

age." (p. 1)

The Walter F. White school, also known as Public School 41, served 561 of the school's 925 K-5 pupils through its "core" project. The project organized "cores" of classrooms serving children in age groups five and six, six and seven, seven and eight, and eight and nine. Each day, core teachers shared lunch and preparation periods together.

PS 41 teachers also coordinate instruction around common themes and share information, so that "a child who needs more help or enrichment in a subject can be moved around within the core," said Principal Herbert Ross, who is not related to Mr. Ross of Lake George. The school also has committees to help make decisions on pupils' movement between age groups and some ability grouping in the cores. (Cohen, 1989b, p. 10)

Movement toward a continuous-progress model must be initiated from the bottom up, beginning at the earliest programs in the school district. Plans to replace the graded-school model in district middle-level and high schools should be designed upon results of student progress through such earlier school programs.

In contrast, educational standards initiatives set top-down fourth and eighth grade and high school achievement standards and assessments. The keystone should be defining realistic expectations in the early school years for developing school practices that help students achieve those benchmarks. Standards at later school levels should be formulated upon student progress at earlier levels.

Parents and their children perennially breathe sighs of relief when the latter either "pass" year-end tests or "make" honor rolls. However, the nature of students' persisting deficiencies is often not scrutinized. Assessment results should be used to identify the following:

1. In what specific areas do students have persisting serious deficits?
2. What do students and their parents or guardians need to know regarding those deficits?
3. What experiences will students require during the next school year to overcome those deficits?
4. What information do teachers receiving students the

next school year need in order to plan learning experiences to help them overcome those deficits?

Few people with a serious health problem would be satisfied if their physicians told them, "Well, the test shows you are a 65. That's a D- but don't worry, you passed." Most patients would press to know as much as possible about their specific problem, their progress, and what needs to be done to overcome that condition. However, similar attention is seldom given to students' persisting learning needs.

For example, one student scores 63% in a final examination or final average in a subject and repeats the course. Another scores 65% on the same test or final average and is promoted to the next grade in that subject. Despite the closeness of their scores, each student probably has critical needs in differing areas of that subject. The present school model seldom identifies those needs for students, their parents or guardians, or those who will teach them either in a repeat course or in the next grade level. As a result, neither student will probably receive the focused intervention he or she needs.

Rather than repeat the entire course, students who almost pass might better repeat and focus on those areas in which they have critical deficiencies. Such focused intervention will help develop the background necessary for success in later study in that subject. Likewise, students who barely pass the course probably have similar critical deficiencies in different areas of that subject. They also need focused intervention in those areas after promotion to the next grade.

Either-or options in both situations will not help students learn the skills and content necessary for continued school success. Common lock-step exit assessments in the graded-school model make that success virtually impossible for the masses. In light of the new educational standards assessments facing students, significant progress toward the goal of universal high school graduation seems unlikely.

The goal for all students should be to conceptualize and learn skills, processes, and information, and be able to apply them in subsequent situations as best they can. That will require teachers to develop individual and group experiences in response to specific learning needs of the students coming to them.

Moving toward zero-defect schools will require that testing and other assessment procedures include the following:

1. Review student test data to identify students' demonstrated proficiency and persisting learning needs

- in specific skill and information areas.
2. Apprise parents and students of those learning needs to be pursued in the following school year.
 3. Inform teachers of incoming students' persisting learning needs.
 4. Provide time for teachers who are sending and receiving students to discuss how best to deal with those individual needs in the coming school year.

In a lifelong learning society, zero-defect schools need to accommodate all of the children of all of the people. The goal to become lifelong learners through school, in the workplace, and in adult life will require invitational learning experiences that assist students in achieving their maximum potential as their abilities allow.

Consider the turn-around in the nation's automotive industry since 1965. Then, many Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors vehicles left production sites with serious defects. Purchasers had no alternative but to return to dealer agencies for corrections under warranty programs. Eventually, consumers refused to accept that corrections could not always be fully made.

Conversely, purchasers of Toyota and Honda vehicles found they seldom had to return to dealer agencies to correct production errors. As Japanese and other foreign automobile producers approached zero-defect production, sales of American-built vehicles declined severely and, by 1976, the Chrysler corporation was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Since then, the American "big three" automobile producers have regained a share of their market by emulating the foreign zero-defect production paradigm. The General Motors Saturn has been particularly successful. Accordingly, many people still believe that Americans cannot equal the zero-defect production of, for example, Toyota and Honda vehicles. However, it is American workers in Ohio, Kentucky, and Georgia Toyota and Honda production plants who now produce vehicles for both American and foreign markets.

The primary factor was a new automotive-production paradigm that required changes in the roles of workers. In like manner, American schools need to negotiate a paradigm shift toward a zero-defect model that prepares students to access increasing quality of life as adults. Our society can no longer tolerate the student casualties that were acceptable earlier in the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Wood (1999) reminds us: "The Greek word for the word 'school' is 'scoleri,' which literally translated as 'leisure.' Consider how far we've moved from our educational roots. Teachers who want to dedicate themselves and their classrooms to a pace that encourages investigation, contemplation, and community must struggle with social and educational influences that force them in the opposite direction" (p. 36).

American schools have taken on broader societal responsibilities that require teachers' time and energy. As Stevenson (1998) notes:

Teachers in the United States consistently suggest that one of the biggest constraints on the rate and success of education reform is their lack of time for professional activities other than the direct instruction of students. Instruction and the host of other chores required for the smooth running of their classrooms leave few opportunities for the other challenging aspects of educational reform. How, they ask, can they engage in thoughtful planning when no sustained blocks of time are available and work must be accomplished in short bursts of intense effort, and often alone? (p. 40)

Because the success of Japanese and European schools continues to be lionized, the professional responsibilities of their teachers with those of American teachers merit comparison (Stevenson, 1998):

Only about half of the Japanese teachers' daily eight or nine school hours are actually spent instructing students. In contrast, instruction typically occupies more than two-thirds of the school day of German and American teachers. But German students and teachers are generally through with school shortly after noon, while U.S. children and teachers remain much longer.

The short instructional day in Germany leaves teachers with ample amounts of self-directed time. Although Japanese teachers remain in school longer, their greater amounts of non-instructional time and opportunities to have sustained periods when they are

not teaching leave nearly half their non-instructional time for interacting with their fellow teachers and students, preparing lessons, planning, and grading papers. (p. 40)

Changes in the current American school model must accommodate the "difference-of-kind" educational demands faced as we enter a new century and millennium. The goal for all American students to achieve higher standards will require a school paradigm that is, in some respects, similar to those in Germany and Japan. American teachers need extended time and opportunity to plan instructional means that increase success across the range of their students. Our task is to make the journey to school completion one that captures students' interest and excites them to work at maximizing their talents and abilities. Let us develop a model that assists the mass of students in achieving appropriately higher standards as quickly as they can, or as slowly as they must.

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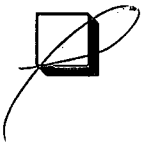


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